

A Light in the Valley

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

The Threat of Another Gospel...

by: Kris Brewer

Paul, as he wrote to the Galatian brethren, warned them that there would be some who would come to them and teach something other than the pure, uncorrupted gospel message (Galatians 1:6-10). From the earliest of times, the danger of mankind corrupting the true gospel was real, and it was dangerous!

While Paul was dealing with the specific problem of Judaizing teachers insisting that Gentiles follow the law of Moses before becoming Christians, the principle Paul was teaching continues on today. There are those who make changes to the gospel message, either by adding to or taking away from that which was revealed in the first century. The consequence of these changes is the same as it was when Paul gave his warning to the Galatians!

Paul made it clear that there was only one gospel message. There were some who were trying to teach “another gospel,” but Paul emphasized the point

that this “other gospel” was really not another gospel at all!

...which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:7)

To really understand the full import of Paul’s statement, we must understand what *the gospel* is. Essentially, *gospel* means: good tidings¹. The true gospel message was indeed a message of *good tidings* to those who heard it, and especially to those who obeyed. However, a corrupted message, while it may have made those proclaiming it, or those receiving it, feel good about themselves, would not provide true *good tidings*. The true gospel was a message of salvation, but the corrupted gospel led to destruction. Because of this, Paul declared that those who taught such a corrupted gospel were to be accursed (Galatians 1:8-9). This indicates just how seriously God takes the one true gospel message.

¹ *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*

Those who teach something that is different, something that corrupts the true gospel message, are accursed. Their message does not bring the true good tidings of salvation, but rather a message that leads to condemnation; for themselves and all those who follow after them!

The simple gospel message was one that was already delivered and widely taught by the end of the first century. Paul wrote the epistle to the Galatians by the mid 60s A.D. Already, by that time, he could warn them to ignore any message that was different from the one that he had already delivered to them. He was also teaching the same message that was taught by Peter and the other apostles, a message that can be traced throughout the New Testament, but most notably through Luke's history, the book of Acts. The true gospel message remains the same today as it was taught in the first century. In the first century, the gospel was taught, and then the audience had the responsibility to accept it (believe) or reject it. In Acts 2, there were some 3000 people who heard the message and believed what was proclaimed, so much so that they asked: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). They received the instructions that would bring them to remission of sins, and therefore salvation (i.e., the "good news"):

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

Once the hearers realized (from the message proclaimed) that they had severed their relationship with Jehovah, they wanted to know how to restore it! The message delivered by Peter made it clear: if they wanted to have a relationship with God, then they had to repent and be baptized!

Though we or an angel from Heaven...

The message of the gospel was not a difficult one. When it was preached, the listeners knew exactly what actions were expected of them. However, it didn't take long until the message began to be corrupted. That is why Paul had to write his warning to the Galatian brethren! By comparing the message they were receiving to the original message that had been delivered by Paul, they could know whether they were hearing the truth. If the message was something different, something "new" then it was not the true gospel message! We can do the exact same thing. We can compare a message that we hear today to the message that was preached throughout the book of Acts. If the message is different, then we know that it is not

the truth of the original gospel.

Paul warned that the consequence for one who would proclaim such a corruption of the gospel was to be accursed. It didn't matter whether it was one of the apostles, or even an angel from Heaven. If they spoke a message that was different than that which had already been delivered, and confirmed, they were to be accursed. There are whole denominations that identify as *Christian* that are based upon a claim of receiving further revelation from God to either a messenger (apostle) or through an angel. Even if it is granted that such a message was delivered, God made it clear in the first century that such messages were not to be trusted. They were not the pure, uncorrupted gospel that would save souls. That is why they were to be accursed!

Pleasing men...

Paul was able to pinpoint what is the most common problem when a corrupted gospel is preached:

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10 ESV)

Unfortunately, the pure gospel is not appealing to a lot of people. They want something more. They want something different. It becomes tempting to preach a message that is more appealing to man than the message that was sent by God, and obviously pleases Him! Justification is made to the changing of the message because more people are willing to respond to the updated message.

In the end, a message that is preached to please more men will lead to condemnation, not to salvation. That is not a message of good news, but rather a message of destruction. There are several popular messages that fall into this very category:

Faith only... Faith only is one of the most prevalent corrupted gospels in the world today. It is taught in some manner in many denominations. The idea is that all that is necessary is faith, and all actions are rejected as "works." This is contrary to what Peter told those first converts on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Peter said "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." Men today say, "Just believe, and you will be saved!" Clearly, the latter is for the appeasement of men, not for pleasing the Lord. We should stick with the message that was delivered by Peter and the other apostles in the first century! If it is a different message, it is a corrupted gospel!

Prosperity gospel... This is another corrupted gospel that has become quite popular in churches that are usually not associated with any standard denomination. Community type churches, that have developed into “mega-churches” often have pastors or ministers that push the prosperity gospel. This is a message that proclaims that if you will accept their version of the gospel, God will provide everything that they desire. While God has promised to provide what is needed by His people (Matthew 6:31-33), He never promised that He was going to make everyone rich. Nor has He promised to make sure that nothing bad will happen to those who are obedient to Him. The message that promises such things will certainly draw a lot of people to them (just look at the numbers in the pews!) But it does nothing for the salvation of souls. It is a corrupted gospel!

Social gospel... This is a message that is centered on social activities, rather than the true gospel message. The idea of a social gospel started by men thinking that providing things for people could draw them in to hear the gospel, so they appealed to those in need with the promise of provisions (food, clothing, shelter, etc.). So, churches started food pantries, clothing drives and homeless shelters, under the guise that these must be good works, and they could draw people in to hear the gospel. Many responded, but not to the gospel message; to the generous handouts. This concept eventually morphed into a gospel centered on appealing to the physical side of people. Churches grew into mostly free social clubs. They provide entertainment. They provide sporting events. They provide food. They provide social interaction. What they don't provide is a teaching of the pure gospel message. So, while people feel very good about being a part of those churches, they are not hearing the message of true good news, the message that will save their souls!

There are certainly other examples that could be used to illustrate the corruption of the true gospel message. People have turned the gospel into a money making enterprise, which relies upon drawing people into the building. They are willing to do anything and everything they can do to accomplish that goal, though it usually means leaving the true gospel message outside the building! Paul said, if the message is changed from the one preached from the time the gospel went forth from Jerusalem, then the one preaching it should be accursed. We need to make sure we are not among that number, but rather among the number that preaches the pure gospel message. The number of those who respond will be much smaller, but they will be among the saved, not the lost (See Matthew 7:13-14)!

Careful and Complete Obedience

by: David Maxson

“But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.”

Exodus 23:22

I would love for God to be an enemy to my enemies and an adversary to my adversaries. With God by my side I am indestructible. With God fighting for me I cannot lose.

But how do I get God by my side and fighting for me? We must become obedient. But not just any kind of obedience will do. God tells us our obedience must be...

- CAREFUL. “Carefully obey His voice.”

- COMPLETE. “Do everything He says.”

What does CAREFUL obedience mean? It means we diligently search for the will of God. This is not Pharisaism. It is not prideful. It is not hypocritical. It is not traditionalism. It is a sincere and earnest desire to do exactly and precisely what God wants.

What does COMPLETE obedience mean? It means we consistently seek to do God’s will in every area of life. This is the opposite of compartmentalization where we segment out the parts we commit to God and the parts we keep for ourselves.

Father, give us such a heart as this that we will carefully do all you have commanded.

From David Maxson’s Facebook Page

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

No Matter What I Do

Ladies

Corner

by: Laura Lynn

Too often, the same feeling returns: No matter what I do, it'll never be good enough. And I know I'm not the only one. Even my 5-year-old has cried that she'll "never" get things right. Sometimes I just don't have the right answer, and my best guess doesn't work out. Sometimes I work hard and do everything I can, and life throws in a monkey wrench so that things STILL don't work out, it STILL isn't "good enough." And as much as I remind myself (and my daughter) to look at all the things that DID go right instead of the one or two things that went wrong, it doesn't change the feeling that, no matter what I do, things will still go wrong - and it will somehow be my fault.

But is that how God sees me? Is my Savior as ready to give up on me as I am? NO! Far from it! "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In God's eyes, no matter what I do, it will never be bad enough to make Him stop loving me. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). No matter what I do, He will always want to save my soul.

Consider some of Jesus' most faithful followers. Peter denied even knowing Jesus three times (Luke 22:54-62). Paul literally and intentionally persecuted Jesus by having as many Christians as possible executed. Paul calls himself "formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man" (1 Timothy 1:13) and goes on to say that we can look to him as a pattern. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (1 Timothy 1:15-16). If Christ forgave Paul for blasphemy and persecution, how can I think I'm somehow a lost cause because I left laundry piled on the couch again, or lost my temper at my children's endless questions?

So is it true that, no matter what I do, I will never be good enough? No!

And yes. There is more to learn from Paul's example. He did not use his confidence in Jesus as an excuse to do nothing, but as a reason to work harder. "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that

for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Peter offers similar advice in 2 Peter 1:5-11. He gives a whole list of qualities that we can add to our faith, “giving all diligence” (verse 5). I will never be so good that I cannot grow, and I should always be diligent to grow as much as I can.

Jesus told his apostles, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). That is one of His easiest and hardest teachings. It is so very easy to understand, but so very hard to do! Keeping His commandments requires a daily commitment to not only learn His commandments, but to work - hard - following them. Of course I will make mistakes, but I can learn from them so that, each day, I make fewer mistakes than the day before.

So the next time you feel like you will never be good enough, remember this: no matter what you do, God will always love you. But also remember that what you do still matters!

Quitting

by: Chadwick Brewer

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” - 2 Timothy 4:7-8

As much as I hate to admit it, when I was young I was a quitter, or at least I tried to be though my parents rarely let me succeed. They learned fairly early on that I did not like the uncertainty of the future. It was unclear to me that the use of my time and expenditure of my energy on a particular activity would be worth it. They did and made me continue despite my protestations.

Jesus tells us that many Christians quit. They quit growing, they quit working, they quit caring, and they quit acting like Christians for a variety of reasons. Some get consumed with the cares of this world and forget to press on. Some quit because the way become too tough in their opinion. Some get overtaken by sin and their spirituality gets choked out.

Jesus and the New Testament writers unequivocally agree on this point; it will always be worth it; don't quit. Sin is not worth it. This world and it's cares are fleeting. The hardships of this world are not worth comparing to the glory that is to come. Don't quit. Don't give up. Not ever.

Daily Bible Reading

February 2017

February 1	2 Thessalonians 3	February 15	Galatians 1
February 2	1 Timothy 1:1-3:7	February 16	Galatians 2:1-3:9
February 3	1 Timothy 3:8-5:16	February 17	Galatians 3:10-4:7
February 6	1 Timothy 5:17-6:21	February 20	Galatians 4:8-31
February 7	2 Timothy 1	February 21	Galatians 5
February 8	2 Timothy 2	February 22	Galatians 6
February 9	2 Timothy 3	February 23	Ephesians 1:1-2:10
February 10	2 Timothy 4	February 24	Ephesians 2:11-3:21
February 13	Titus 1-3	February 27	Ephesians 4
February 14	Philemon	February 28	Ephesians 5:1-21

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