

Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: A 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God

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Day 1

ARE WE PREACHING “ANOTHER” GOSPEL?

*I marvel that you are turning away so soon
from Him who called you*

*in the **grace of Christ**,*

*to a **different gospel**,*

⁷ which is not another;

but there are some who trouble you

*and want to **pervert the gospel** of Christ.*

⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven,

*preach **any other gospel** to you*

than what we have preached to you,

*let him be **accursed**.*

⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again,

*if anyone preaches **any other gospel** to you*

than what you have received,

*let him be **accursed**.*

Galatians 1:6-9

Personally, I find no delight in the idea of being *accursed*. I'm guessing you agree.

Until 1987, Galatians 1:6-9 meant something completely different to my husband and me than it does today. When we read these verses, we exclusively attributed them to the cults. Of course, cults would be *accursed*, we reasoned, because they were preaching a different Jesus than the one presented in Scripture. We studied the side-by-side comparisons and knew the major theological differences. In our thinking, anyone who messed with God's gospel *should* be *accursed*.

We never considered for one minute that **we** would fall into the category of preaching “another” gospel.

The question I am posing in this book to my fellow ministers and to the church as a whole is very important to consider. **Are we, the church, preaching “another” gospel?** For since teaching “another” gospel comes with being *accursed* and leads God's people astray, it makes perfect sense

to extensively consider the question.

I will be honest about my perspective—that much of what is being taught in “mainstream” Christian churches today is “another” gospel. Coming to this conclusion about 25 years ago was a *very painful* process because we discovered that we were among those preaching “another.” Since then we have re-examined just about everything we thought we knew, and I’d like to share with you what we believe the Lord taught us.

There could not have been more sincere hearts than ours those fourteen years before we woke up to find that our belief system was “another.” We were born again believers, and our love for God and our commitment to serving Him was unwavering. We entered ministry at a young age and not only taught with passion and conviction what we believed, but endeavored to be “real” and loving with those to whom we ministered. However, it is possible to be sincere and possess good motives, even to be loving and authentic, and still be mistaken.

Even before this realization that we had jumped the tracks theologically, nine years earlier in 1978, the Holy Spirit tried to get through to me while I was studying the book of Galatians. While reading it one day there was a sense that there was something I was missing about what Paul was trying to communicate. I remember saying to my husband, “It doesn’t seem right that when I pray and read my Bible each day, I feel justified before God, and when I don’t, I don’t.” Why did reading Galatians provoke in me these thoughts? Surely there was nothing wrong with reading my Bible and praying for an hour each day—was there?

I remember calling the wife of our former associate pastor who preached very fervently about the importance of a consistent prayer life and time spent in the Bible (along with an ever-increasing list of other “disciplines”). I asked her if she was actually able to do all the things he taught.

What she said truly surprised me. “Well, no, not really, but I’m working on it.”

While I appreciated her sweet and honest response, it seemed odd to me—that not even the pastor’s wife, someone I held in such high regard, could keep up with all the expectations we were taught. Perhaps it should have given me some comfort knowing I wasn’t the only one struggling, yet the idea still persisted that certain behaviors were *expected* of believers which somehow contributed to our “rightness” before God.

At that same time in my life, another quandary confronted me. Why was it that after only four years of serving the Lord as an adult, now already in ministry, I felt *miserable* as a believer—so wretched, in fact, that just the idea of witnessing to my father saddened me, thinking of how awful and unhappy being a Christian would eventually make his life? How could I tell someone who seemed to be enjoying each day of his existence golfing, fishing, and drinking with his buddies that coming to Jesus would be so

wonderful, when I knew he'd eventually feel as horrible as I did? Obviously, something was wrong with feeling that way, and yet it didn't seem right to *lie* to him. These thoughts caused me considerable confusion. Did I really think my father would be better off spending eternity in hell instead of becoming a believer in Jesus Christ? How absurd and illogical! Red flags were waving everywhere deep in my soul, but I couldn't figure it out.

It wasn't that my love for the Lord had grown cold. I still loved Jesus as deeply as ever. In fact, He miraculously healed our newborn daughter of a life-threatening condition just months before. I loved Him profoundly and was so thankful, but was discovering that even though I loved Jesus and greatly enjoyed being in Christian ministry, I didn't particularly like being a *Christian*. The whole situation had me completely baffled.

Afraid to ask these questions of our pastors for fear of being labeled "rebellious", and not wanting to be guilty of "touching God's anointed", I very privately mused over these concerns. Being a pillar in the church and someone the pastors could count upon was so important to David and me. What if they thought I was compromising? Others had been marginalized for going against what the leadership believed. Plus, what if my thoughts were just passing ones? What if post-partum depression was to blame? Perhaps I was simply experiencing burnout. It wouldn't be worth the risk if these were the case. So out of fear of being misunderstood, the horror of experiencing rejection, the possibility that I might put my husband's full-time job as the college and youth pastor in jeopardy, and the chance that I was wrong, my questions remained unanswered.

It would be nine more years of living with this underlying dissatisfaction before I could begin to see what happened to that glorious "relationship" I knew the "hour I first believed."

During those long and dry years that followed, prayer, Bible study, and diligent service continued to be part of my spiritual life. All the while it seemed to me that God was getting farther away and that His love for me was only doctrinally understood. I had pretty much adapted to thinking that the "life" I was experiencing was all there was to being a Christian, and determined in my heart that the mature thing to do was to simply "walk by faith and not by sight". So, the questions and lack of joy in the Lord continued to be disregarded all those years while I focused on ministry to family and the church. I sincerely do not know how I could have endured that time if it were not for the joy of being a mom to the dearest children on earth. At least I knew *they* loved me, and spending time with them brought me great joy.

During that time, I completed the educational requirements and passed the examination for ordination with our denomination. Surely the process of studying the Bible more in-depth and becoming an ordained minister would bring some contentment and a sense of purpose back into my Christian experience. Yet, on the night of my ordination ceremony, when

the “mantle” was placed on my shoulders, I felt as numb spiritually as ever. This moment, which I fully hoped would be as powerful an experience for me as it had seemed to be for others, fell devastatingly flat. The anointing I heard about and anticipated descending upon me was painfully absent. The only thing imparted to me on that night was more disappointment.

None of this made sense to me; none at all. My love *for* God was so real to me. I was convinced of my calling to ministry. Each and every thought and deed was for Him and to Him, but His love for *me* felt obscured. From the outside, people saw a sincere and loving woman who lived what she taught; a good wife and mother who worked closely with her husband in ministry, a friend who was there in time of need, and a respected member of her community. I was consistent in spiritual disciplines and was careful to put others ahead of myself. As far as I knew, I wasn’t sinning or even wanting to sin. So, why was there this sense that something was *terribly wrong*, that something was *devastatingly missing*?

God was not to blame, of course. That thought never entered my mind. If there was a problem, it would be with me, not Him. My heart’s cry was, “God, as far as I know I’m doing everything You want me to do, so why do You feel so far away and why does it seem You don’t love me anymore? Is there something *more* You want from me? Have You put me on the shelf for a season? Have I committed some sin I have not confessed? Please help me to see what’s wrong. Whatever You want from me, Lord, I am willing. I believe You will show me.”

At that moment it was impossible for me to see the truth—that I’d been taught, embraced, and was beginning to teach “another” gospel. It was the reason I felt estranged from Christ and why I didn’t have a sense of His love for me. I had fallen from grace in the true sense of the word.

Galatians 5:4

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Consider this for a minute: what if you, like we, were taught and believed and were now preaching “another” gospel and didn’t know it? Wouldn’t that be important to discover? Wouldn’t you want someone to lovingly pull you aside and share with you the truth that would set you free?

That is why I’m writing this—to speak the truth in love to God’s dearly beloved church. Even though sometimes “the truth hurts”, I believe God’s desire is to bring comfort and freedom. As ministers of the gospel, my husband and I pour our hearts and souls into everything we do, and I am assuming you are doing the same. I am not challenging for one minute your motivation, your dedication, or your labor of love. What I hope to accomplish is to help you discover whether *or not* you are believing and preaching “another” gospel by sharing with you what we learned—about

how we took a wrong turn in our belief system and how learning the truth about the true gospel set us free. It not only set us free, but is liberating those whom we now teach.

Ephesians 4:11-16

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ **till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should **no longer be children**, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of **doctrine**, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, **speaking the truth in love**, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*