

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

by C. D. Hildebrand, 24-7-365 Version 2026

Day 21

HEALTHY SHEEP

All true shepherds work diligently so that their sheep will be healthy. So, it's not that they don't care. The problem is that most shepherds today are using law and formula instead of grace and faith to guide the flock. The “results” look similar, but the sheep living under law are oppressed, miserable, self-righteous, and self-focused sheep who constantly have to be led and coached by the pastor; whereas, the sheep who are being fed the gospel of God's grace are free, joyful, and Jesus-focused sheep who know their righteousness is a gift and who are led by the Spirit.

Upon reawakening to God's amazing grace, we were faced with the fact that our belief system and what we taught was nearly all law-based. That is to say, we taught what *we and the sheep* needed to do to be holy, live righteously, know God, get closer to God, and we put a heavy emphasis on spiritual warfare, which, of course, in our thinking, was all about *our* efforts. As one pastor we know who was also reawakening to grace put it, “Everything I've been teaching is all wrong,” and this was certainly true for us.

Not all ministers can handle this realization so gracefully. It seems only natural that some ministers today would have a strong reaction to the possibility that they might be teaching an anti-gospel¹ message. There can be significant ego wrapped around the hundreds of files of sermons we have labored so diligently to produce. Add that to years of laboring arduously to bring about revival, and a sort of resistance can arise. When one's entire life has been spent studying and sharing a certain message, one becomes completely confident of it, as if repeating the same thing eventually makes it true.

Imagine how the Pharisees and Scribes felt. They had the Scriptures memorized, followed them meticulously, and taught them continually. Jesus came along, challenging them and seemingly adding to them saying, “You have heard that it was said..., but I say unto you...” Then, after His death, His disciples declared that the Covenant they treasured so dearly and wanted to preserve was obsolete!

Thankfully, many respond to this call for a return to the pure gospel of

¹ Dare I say, “anti-Christ”?

grace, as did the Pharisee Saul when confronted with the truth about Jesus Christ. He had his religious pedigree in perfect order. It brought him status among his associates. He was respected and admired and even honored. According to the righteousness that was in the law, he declared that he was blameless (Phil. 3:6). Imagine that! Yet, when Paul was confronted with the grace of God, he laid everything aside to gain Christ and be found in Him, *not having a righteousness based on keeping the law*, but one based on simply believing in Jesus. He gave up everything for the truth of the gospel.

Also, consider Peter's humble response when he was rebuked by Paul for withdrawing from eating with the Gentiles when the Jewish brothers arrived. In doing this Paul wrote that Peter was "not straightforward about the truth of the gospel" (Gal. 2:14). Compared to Peter who was there with Jesus from the beginning, Paul would seem to have no authority correcting Peter, but Paul knew that Peter's actions were preaching "another" gospel—shouting to all present that the Gentiles were not quite clean enough because they were not circumcised and didn't follow dietary laws. Yet in Peter's epistle, he referred to Paul as "our beloved brother, Paul." Certainly, he had no animosity toward the one who had publicly rebuked him.

My question is, can we do the same? Will we let go of our accomplishments and religious status among our peers, possibly facing rejection and persecution by friends and family, and return to grace-through-faith-righteousness? Can we, like Apollos, receive correction from the voices that are rising? Or will we simply give a nod to grace, preach a couple of sermons about it, perhaps even with the intent to suppress it, and then go back to putting new wine into old wine skins?

God's sheep deserve better than that. They deserve to hear the glad tidings of good things; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Don't we have sufficient teaching material about the beauty and wonder of God in the pages of Scripture to last a lifetime? **Why are so many of us teaching what to do instead of what to believe** (Rom. 10:5-13)? Shouldn't we magnify what Jesus accomplished *for us* through his death and resurrection?

1 Corinthians 1:30-32 NASB

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,³¹ so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

We need to feed the sheep continually with what *He* did and who we are *in Him*. We need to boast in *His* accomplishments, not continually emphasize the need for ours. The focus needs to be on Jesus and not on us!

Why are we telling sheep to die, when they already died with Christ (Col. 3:3)? All that amounts to is false humility (Col. 2:23). Shouldn't we be teaching them what it means to live (Jn. 3:16, Gal. 2:20)? Why do we keep telling believers that they are "only sinners saved by grace" when the Bible teaches us that we *were* sinners, but now we are righteous (Rom. 5:19, 1 Tim. 1:9)? We were unholy, but now we are saints (Col.1:21-22). These truths should be shouted from the mountain tops as Christ's greatest accomplishments! Instead of telling people that they need to stop sinning, why not show them that they died to and are free from sin (Rom. 6)? This is the *good* news. We need to stop beating the sheep with law after law after law and instead strengthen them with grace upon grace and more grace (Jn. 1:16).

A dear pastor friend asked us once what beating and feeding sheep looked like. I said, "Beating sheep is trying to get something out of them. Feeding sheep is giving them the good news of God's grace." Beaten sheep are weary and unhappy. Healthy sheep grow and reproduce. Let God's sheep be fed!