

The Condition of the Church Today

A Warning About the Enemy Within

Examples of False Teaching - Part 2

May 1, 2011

I. Review:

- A. It has been two Sundays since our last teaching on the Condition of the Church Today. In our last teaching, we started our examination of specific examples of what I call the foundational false teachings influencing the church today. The first example we looked at had to do with false teaching in relation to obeying God completely – based on the fact that God is the Ruler over all, and loving God supremely – based on God’s command to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. I put these two together because that is what Jesus did when He said: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (**John 14:15**). And the nature of our relationship with God – where He is the Master and we are the slaves, or He is the Father and we are the children – makes obedience the single most important proof of our love for God.
- B. I made obedience and love for God the first example because any false teaching in relation to these two truths does the greatest harm possible to the individual Christian and the Church as a whole. In other words, when we turn being born again, being reconciled to God, and living a normal Christian life into something that makes it the common practice among Christians to knowingly and willfully obey God **less** than completely and love Him **less** than supremely, we have done ourselves and the Church the greatest harm possible.
 1. Now without question, no one has done, is doing, or will perfectly obey God and perfectly love God, with the exception of Jesus Christ. Yet human frailty never gives us a license to knowingly and willfully rebel against God in any way – be it in one area or many. And human frailty is not an acceptable defense for engaging in the practice of any known sin or allowing the practice of any sin to go on unchallenged.
 2. But God is merciful, and His grace is immense. Therefore, God has made a way for us should we sin. He says that if we can confess our sin, He will forgive us our sin (**I John 1:9**). In addition God says that if we sin, Jesus Christ, the righteous sacrificial Lamb of God, stands before God as our Advocate (**I John 2:1**). These two truths are marvelous in nature and promise.
 3. However, as marvelous and merciful as God’s forgiveness and Christ’s advocacy are, they never make any amount of rebellion against God,

or the ongoing participation in any sin, acceptable or defensible. And if we think we can knowingly and unrepentantly participate in any sin, and use these two gifts to cover for our sinfulness so as to remain in good standing with God while we continue in sin, we are the product of false teaching and foolish believing.

4. The true gospel says that God has given us His word so that we may not sin – that is, so that we have the possibility of not sinning (**I John 2:1**). The true gospel goes on to say that the assurance or proof of knowing God is in obeying Him (**I John 2:3**). It goes even further and says that those who claim to know God while knowingly and willingly disobeying Him are liars (**I John 2:3**). God, speaking through Paul, gives additional weight to these truths when he says: “If we **have** become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, [6] knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Christ, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; [7] for he who has died is freed from sin.[12] Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, [13] and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (**Romans 6:5-7,12-13**). And Jesus brings us back to where we began with these familiar words: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (**John 14:15**).
- C. You see, it is the false gospel that teaches us that some disobedience or a few sins or just one area of sin is okay or tolerable or not so big a deal between us and God, because God’s love, mercy, and grace will make up the difference. And it is the false gospel that makes it seem we don’t really need to love God supremely; that we can love ourselves in a way that pleases us and still love God in a way that pleases Him. In stark contrast, the true gospel calls us to obey God completely and love Him supremely, in spite of our human frailties. And when we fail, we can confess our sin and quickly return to doing what we need to do, and what we ought to do, and what love for God compels us to do to make our obedience to God our day-by-day affirmation that we love Him more than anyone or anything else.
- D. And so I urge all of us to guard against any thinking or teaching within the church that makes it seem normal and therefore acceptable to love God less than supremely, and go our own, disobedient way in any area of life. Set your anchor in a whole-hearted commitment to obeying God

completely and loving God supremely, as much as it is humanly possible, because an anchor set here will hold you fast to God, to the Christ-like life, to satisfying joy, and to unimaginable intimacy with the Father.

E. Pray

II. Examples of False Teaching Within the Church – **Our Understanding of Salvation and God’s Grace**

A. It is my opinion that the second most influential false teaching in the church today has to do with our understanding of salvation, or what we often call being born again, and our understanding of God’s grace as it relates to salvation. Though false teaching concerning salvation and God’s grace has tried to make its way into the church from the beginning, the problem as we know it today began with those who misused Martin Luther’s teaching on salvation and God’s grace. However, this false teaching gained significant momentum with the introduction of the once-saved-always-saved teaching that was introduced into the Evangelical wing of the church a couple of hundred years ago.

1. Today, the false teaching related to salvation and grace circulating in the Evangelical branch of the church – and we are a part of that group – is not only rampant, it looks and sounds so much like Bible truth that many cannot tell it from the true gospel. And on top of that, this false teaching has so many friends within the church that those who point to the truth of God’s word are quickly branded as theological misfits proclaiming a works based salvation.
2. However, in spite of all the scripture references and theologians and authors and pastors and Sunday School teachers and church members supporting it, it is still a false teaching. And in spite of the fact that this false teaching is so pervasive and so accepted as truth by so many, and in spite of its influence on us, that is, those of us here at Redford Church, it is still a false teaching.

B. Now you may be wondering, what is this false gospel in relation to salvation and God’s grace that is being referred to here?

1. The false gospel is false because it **reduces salvation** to a single act on God’s part, a single requirement on the sinner’s part, and a single transaction between the sinner and God. Now admittedly, the false gospel isn’t quite this simplistic, for as with so many beliefs and teachings, it has its variations. But I think you will see what I am talking if I keep the explanation this simple.

2. The **single act** on God's part is the sacrificial death of His son to pay the penalty for our sin on our behalf. Two supporting scriptures are: **Romans 5:8** . . . But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. **I John 2:2** . . . He Himself is the propitiation (satisfies God's wrath) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.
 - a. Now I want to be very clear here, the consequence of sin is eternal death, and the only way we can pay that debt is to spend eternity in hell, separated from God. No amount of righteousness or period of sinlessness on our part can pay that debt. The only way it can be paid is for the sinner to die, or for a righteous substitute to die in the sinner's place.
 - b. So when the New Testament speaks against legalism or trying to be righteous enough to earn your salvation or offset sin's penalty, it is speaking against the foolish idea that we can pay our sin penalty without spending eternity in hell.
 - c. Now all that I just have just said is true. The problem with the false teaching is that it focuses so much on Christ's payment for the penalty of sin, that that is all those who are born again expect to be saved from. And after being born again, when Christians who are influenced by this false teaching sin, their primary focus is seeking God's forgiveness or going on as if God is going to overlook their sin because that is the natural outcome of believing God sacrificed His son to only pay for our sin.
3. The **single requirement** on the sinner's part is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ – believing that He paid the penalty for our sin and that apart from trusting in or depending on His redemptive work on the cross, we cannot be saved. **Romans 6:23** . . . For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Acts 16:31** . . . Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.
4. The **single transaction** is the act of being born again as a result of believing in Jesus – from asking Jesus to save you to receiving Christ into your heart. **John 3:7** . . . Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' **Romans 10:9** . . . If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
5. Now here is the problem brought into the church by this false gospel concerning salvation and God's grace.
 - a. **First**, it leads to a selection of scriptures that support its reduced view of salvation, and neglects other scriptures that, when added

to the ones the false teaching uses, significantly enlarges our understanding of salvation and grace.

- b. **Second**, it implies that the most crucial decision for any human is the decision or act of being born again. Thus, by implication, how we live after being born again is not only separate, but insignificant by comparison to the importance of being born again. And as we can see, this reduced view of salvation opens the door to speaking positively about and feeling secure in living a mediocre, self-serving, sin practicing Christian life.
 - c. **Third**, after being born again, it treats God's grace as a covering for sin, as if we can willingly participate in known sin, and even continue the practice of known sin, and God's grace will cover over what we are doing and make it all okay.
 - d. **Fourth**, for some in the church today, this reduced view of salvation feeds a mindset which concerns itself with how little one needs to do to be saved rather than how much one can do to live the Christ-like life as an extension of salvation and as a show of love for God.
 - e. **Fifth**, as with all false teaching, it feeds a human exalting view of creation and salvation where God is here for us rather than we are here for Him. The result of this is that few Christians take seriously the connection between obedience to God and loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is all too common for willfully disobedient Christians to proclaim their love for God as if the two can co-exist.
- C. On the other side of the false gospel in relation to salvation and grace, there is the true gospel. The true gospel does not reduce what God says, rather it provides a comprehensive picture of salvation and grace. It does not take a minimum view but a maximum view. It never asks how much do I have to do, but how much can I do? Listen carefully as we look at the larger scriptural teaching of salvation and grace.
1. The Bible clearly states that the penalty for sin is death, that is, eternal separation from God and eternity in hell after we die physically. But it also says the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Romans 6:23**). God also affirms that we are sinners, and makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to pay the penalty for our sin, when He says: "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

[4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, [5] He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (**Titus 3:3-5**). Then, because salvation is not a single transaction between God and the sinner which frees us from working out our salvation until our dying day, God says through Jesus on two occasions: “The one who endures to the end will be saved” (**Matthew 10:22, 24:13**). And the Apostle Paul – who explained justification by faith and imputed righteousness – affirms these words of Jesus in his personal testimony when he says: “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 3:10-14**).

2. Now, to give you one more opportunity to see that it is God who is saying these things and not me, consider these words from God through Paul: “And we were dead in our trespasses and sins . . . having lived in the lusts of our flesh . . . and were by nature children of wrath. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ, For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (**Ephesians 2:1-9**). Now to discourage us from taking these words from Ephesians and thinking salvation is solely a matter of being justified by faith on the basis of a one time transaction that leaves us free to live as we please, God also says: “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (**Matthew 3:8**). Then He follows these words with a warning: “For every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (**Matthew 3:10**). And again God says: “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works (*that is, deeds of love in keeping with the will of God*)? Can that faith save him?” (**James 2:14**). And to warn us about the consequences of forgetting that being born again delivers us from the power of darkness and transfer us into the kingdom God’s dear son (**Colossians 1:13**), God

says: “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, **if** we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end” (**Hebrews 3:12-14**).

3. Consider as well these additional scriptures that speak to the comprehensive view – that is, the biblical view – of salvation after we have been born again. Christ died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf (**II Corinthians 5:15**). For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (**Romans 14:9**).

- D. Regarding His marvelous grace, God says we are justified (saved from the penalty of sin) as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 3:24**). And again God says: “For by grace you have been saved through faith” (**Ephesians 2:8**). To remind us that His grace is focused as much on how we live today as on taking us to heaven when we die, God says: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds” (**Titus 2:11-14**). And for those who treat God’s grace as if it were a free pass to knowingly and willfully continue to sin, He says: “Shall we sin because we are not under law (*fear of punishment*) but under grace (*the promise of forgiveness*)? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (**Romans 6:15-16**). And again God says: “How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (**Romans 6:1-4**). Finally, God gives two clear warnings about the abuse and misrepresentation of His grace. Both warnings are to the church at large. We read in **Jude 1:3-4**: “Beloved,

while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.” And in **Hebrews 12:15-17**, we read: “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.”

III. Conclusion

- A. Beware of the false gospel in relation to salvation and God’s grace. It reduces it to a single act of being born again, and based on this single transaction, it teaches that this minimal part equals the whole of salvation and therefore, it will produce the desired eternal consequences.
- B. Cling to the word of God, not in part but in whole. Never think of how little you have to do or how much you can get away with. Rather, think about how much more you can do for the love of God, and the honor of His name, and the advancement of His kingdom.