

Articles and Sermons :: The Gospel Satan Loves by Stella Paterson

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There is a gospel that is greatly loved by the enemy of man's soul. It is the one that seems to be most accepted, especially in the western world. Tragically, it is ineffective since it is completely unbiblical. And Satan loves it because it falls right in line with his plan to keep man from the knowledge of the truth and, ultimately, eternal life.

In a recent audio message by a well-known and well-respected minister, this well-loved gospel was presented in what he called "clear" terms. But it wasn't the Gospel preached by Jesus, Paul and the others. It was the gospel that has become a tradition among evangelicals who have accepted it without question. If only they had read through Jesus' own words on the new birth, they would have discovered the truth. Instead, the gospel they preach denies the real reason He died.

One day soon, all who have spread this anemic gospel, and told their converts that they are now "born again," will give answer to the Lord, the Righteous Judge. All the while, Satan will be laughing uproariously over the deception he has brought upon the body of Christ.

When I heard the minister elaborating on the gospel in the way that he did, I was shocked and grieved. Immediately the Lord spoke to me and told me I need to address the subject yet again, but this time bringing in the passages He so strongly brought to my mind. Come along with me as we reveal the difference between that false gospel and the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Repent

The aforementioned minister said that simply believing in Jesus is not enough; one must first repent. He believes that "repentance" is confessing every sin we have ever committed, and asking Jesus to "forgive" us in order to be "saved," and then to stop "sinning." To begin to understand how this false gospel is confusing, let's look at what it means to "repent." Then a little later we will examine "believing."

The word "repent" does not have a complicated meaning. It literally means to "think differently" or "reconsider". Some say that repent means "to turn," and this also fits well in understanding its simplicity, as we see in Jesus' words: "The time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15 EMTV).

If a soul comes to believe in Jesus, he has "turned" or "reconsidered" in his coming to Jesus. Repenting is not necessarily an independent act; in coming to Jesus he is, in actuality, "turning" from sinful self. Read these words of Paul's: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:21 KJV). The word "faith" here means "reliance upon Christ for salvation." We must note here that "faith" is also translated "belief" from the same Greek word. A paraphrase of Acts 20:21, using the Greek definitions, would read, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, that they turn toward God and come to rely upon our Lord Jesus Christ for salvation."

Strong's Greek Dictionary tells us that the word "repentance" means "by implication reversal (of decision)". Who might "another" be? Who made a decision that must be turned from or "reversed"? Who, at one time, made a decision that affects us today?

Adam

First Corinthians 15:45 tells us, "Thus also it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living soul;' the last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

Adam (Hebrew word for "man") became a living soul when the Creator breathed into his nostrils the breath (spirit) of life. He would have continued on, being free to partake of the Tree of Life, had he not eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, causing him to be put away from God's presence because he became "as God," knowing good and evil. (Genesis 3:22). Thus he was reduced to a mere creature of mortal flesh-the death of which God had warned. And so we see

How death came upon all mankind through the first man. (Romans 5:17). Essentially, Adam turned away from God in disobedience, condemning mankind to death from that day on. So repentance is a "reversal" of Adam's decision by any who will turn toward God and put their trust in Jesus Christ, the life-giving Spirit, who comes to dwell in the new believer. That one is now born anew; he is no longer in bondage to death. He is no longer in the image of Adam, as mortal flesh, but is beginning the journey of having Christ formed in him as a new creature. (2 Corinthians 5:17). He need only surrender to the Holy Spirit's work in his life.

Jesus made it crystal clear when He told Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:6-7 EMTV). Ever since Adam's transgression, all mankind is born of the flesh, and is flesh, without the Life of God. And, as Jesus also said in the same chapter, to receive the Life of Christ it can come solely through. . .

Believing

Later on in the third chapter, we find John's record of Jesus' words:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-17 RV)

It would seem that there is a lot of confusion regarding the word "believe." Possibly because many folks assume it simply means mental assent. If that were the case, the minister would have been correct in saying that "believing is not enough," because even Satan believes in Jesus. That is the reason he is so opposed to everything Jesus accomplished and all that He does by His Spirit. Satan loves it when people believe they are 'saved' because of such belief. In reality, they are still in unbelief. In the well-loved John 3:16, the word "believe" means "to entrust one's spiritual well being to Christ." It is not a belief that Jesus merely exists, or even that He died on the Cross. How many are there that say they "believe that Jesus died on a cross"? When asked if they believe in Jesus they may reply that they do. But does this mean they have come to put their trust in Him for eternal life? Have they been born of the Spirit, having Christ who is eternal Life dwell in them?

What a tragedy it is that so many believe as just described. But even more tragic is the fact that throngs of well-meaning people believe they are sharing the gospel and winning souls to Christ by telling them they must ask forgiveness for every sin they have committed. Let's look at what sin is and what the New Testament has to say about it. After which we will look at forgiveness.

Sin

There are two Greek words translated as "sin" in the majority of occurrences in the New Testament. One is a verb, while the other is an abstract word which would indicate the sinful condition in which every person is born. Unfortunately, the King James translators, and all those since, have in many verses pluralized that second "sin" resulting in vast misunderstanding by those reading the bible. One of the verses where it was translated correctly is this: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29b).

How did the Lamb of God take away the sin of the world? He did it once; not yearly, as was done under the Law of Moses.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26).

If Jesus cancelled sin, why is there so much preoccupation with "sins" by those who present the false gospel today? It doesn't matter that many of the well-known evangelists have said that asking forgiveness of our sins is essential for salvation, it is still not according to the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. He gave His life to cancel sin and its penalty so that man could be free (pardoned) from the bondage of sin and self. Jesus made remission for all mankind; it is a free gift. So now man must receive remission by putting his trust in Jesus Christ, as Peter said: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43 RV). There again is the pluralized word for "sin," when the message in the verse is telling us that Jesus died to free man from his sinful flesh. And now he is born again by putting his trust in Jesus Christ for his spiritual well being.

Jesus made it clear what sin is, when He said:

And when he (Holy Spirit) is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (John 16:8-11).

Are we sinners because of anything we have done? No! We are sinners because we are born in the image of Adam, a creature of flesh and destined to eternal death unless we are born again through Christ, the life-giving Spirit. The new birth is a work of the Holy Spirit when one comes to put his trust in Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus is described as the life-giving Spirit. Up to that point a person's deeds are works of the flesh. But when Jesus comes to dwell in that one, the fruit of His Spirit becomes evident.

Paul the apostle said, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." (Romans 5:13 KJV). Mankind has been sinful since Adam, simply because he is born as flesh. Because of the exceeding sinfulness amongst the children of Israel, God instructed Moses to give the Law for them to abide by and to show their acknowledgment that God was indeed their GOD. It was the Law that exposed the sinfulness, but Jesus fulfilled the Law and put away sin when He became the final sacrifice for the sin of all mankind.

When speaking of how those who were under the Law of Moses could not be heirs of salvation, Paul said, "For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise has been nullified, because the law produces wrath; for where there is no law neither is there transgression." (Romans 4:14-15 EMTV). Paul also said, "'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law." (1 Corinthians 15: 55-56 EMTV). Therefore, as Paul said, "sin is not imputed when there is no law." Imputed means "laid to one's account."

Again, if Jesus cancelled sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so that now sins are no longer laid to one's account, why is there so much emphasis put on sins when attempting to lead a person to Christ? This passage tells us more of why man's sins are not the issue:

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. (Hebrews 10:1-3 KJV).

Thayer's Greek Dictionary shows this definition for "conscience": "The soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending one, condemning the other." That sounds a lot like what the knowledge of good and evil enabled in man, does it not? The sacrifice Jesus made to put away sin included the erasure of moral consciousness of sin so that the newly born-again believer would not constantly be consumed with trying not to sin in order to please God. The true new birth, which is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, results in the new believer being consumed with their new-found relationship with Jesus Christ, the Lover of his soul. It is about relationship--not deeds.

Forgiveness

As is the case with the word "sin", "forgive" has also been used to translate various Greek words which have different meanings, yet so many seem to believe they mean, simply, "forgive" according to one's own understanding of the English language. This leads to gross error. The translators have taken great liberty in using these words, when they could have more accurately used the actual definitions.

It is important to point out that when Jesus was still on earth, He "forgave" sins, as recorded in the accounts of His life by Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus had not yet been crucified to provide freedom from sinful flesh. Because the people were as yet under the Law of Moses, "forgiveness" was in effect until Jesus' death, at which time He cancelled sin.

The Greek word (ἀφίημι) that was translated "forgive" in the above-mentioned accounts is defined as, among other things, "to send away, to bid going away or depart, or of a husband divorcing his wife," according to Thayer's Greek Dictionary. The same Greek word was translated in the following verses, with emphases in bold print. Try using "forgave" in place of the bold words to see if it makes sense.

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.. (Mark 1:18)

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Revelation 2:4)

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:11)

When Paul the Apostle preached about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he did not use the above Greek word for forgive. He used this next one, which in numerous verses should have been translated "remission" or "pardon" or "freedom" rather than "forgiveness." This is where the bible translators added to the confusion that is in the minds of those who take passages with "forgiveness" in them and assume that a person must ask to be forgiven.

The Greek word *aphesis* has as the primary definition, "release from bondage or imprisonment" according to Thayer. He gives as a secondary definition, "forgiveness or pardon, of sins (letting them go as if they had never been committed), remission of the penalty." (Emphasis added). The pardon, or forgiveness if you will, has been granted; it does not need to be asked for. When Jesus cried on the Cross, "It is finished," He had put sinful flesh to death for all mankind. He had made "remission" and provided "freedom" for all who would come to put their trust in Him for their salvation. This, dear friend, is what it means to "believe in Jesus Christ." The sin issue has been settled. For a person to be told he must ask our precious Lord Jesus Christ to "forgive" his sins is tantamount to asking Him to go to the Cross and suffer again, as though His sacrifice was not good enough.

Having said that, if a person has come to put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and has entrusted their spiritual well being to Him, and then they turn away from Him, the following message is for him/her. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27).

And now read these chilling words that follow the above verses:

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:28-31).

Those are very strong words that were written to warn true believers of the end awaiting them if they turn away from faith in Jesus Christ. These next two passages also send a strong message to anyone who would reject Him in that way. It would be like telling the world that it is not worth it to follow Jesus, even after the price He paid to redeem them from sinful self.

"For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay. But the just shall live by faith, and if he withdraws, My soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:37-38 EMTV). The word "faith" in this passage means "reliance upon Christ for salvation."

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Hebrews 6:4-6 RV).

Is there evil in the world? Yes! Man is naturally evil because he is flesh. Is there even evil in the "church"? Yes! Paul told Timothy, "But evil men and impostors shall advance worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:13 EMTV).

A time for forgiveness

There is a place for forgiveness, and it is in the life of a believer in Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus demands it. If we look at what is referred to as "The Lord's Prayer" we can see how important it is, especially "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12). Jesus continues on with this: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15).

This verse is often included in salvation messages, but is intended for born-again followers of Jesus. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). Read the whole chapter; it is only 10 verses long. It will become obvious that the message was to believers and relative to walking in the light and having true fellowship with others and the Lord Jesus.

Some final thoughts

There is so much more that could be said, but the Holy Spirit will shed light on the passages included on this page and those found in the bible. Seek Him for truth as He leads you to see the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A person could ask forgiveness for his sins a million times, but it will never change the fact that he is mortal flesh and must be born anew by the Spirit of God. To tell a person he is a sinner and must be forgiven accomplishes nothing, except causing him to focus on sin and how he must try to change. That is condemnation, pure and simple. We cannot convince a soul that he needs a Saviour by using such tactics. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." (John 6:44, 47). God knows when a person is ready to come to Jesus, and He will arrange it all. He will not do it according to religious man's standards, or through anything man has arranged so that he can "win souls." For any who have come to a true relationship with Jesus, having been born again at some man-arranged meeting, it is solely a work of the Holy Spirit; not because of man's ways.

It was said many years ago, that only a small fraction of the people who "went forward" at a Billy Graham crusade actually continued on in a walk with Jesus. If any did go on with the Lord, it was because they had been drawn by the Holy Spirit to come to faith in Christ. When a person comes to Christ according to God's will (John 6:44) it is a wonderful experience of 'seeing' Jesus and being drawn so powerfully to this One who died to give Life. All they know is that they want this One who manifests such Love. They cannot resist His call to come to Him.

There are many, many Muslims coming to Jesus in miraculous ways. It is a work that can be done only by the Spirit of God. Many of those have had encounters with the living Christ, and He has shown Himself to them so dramatically that they could not help but give themselves wholly to Him. When they saw Him, they didn't start confessing every sin they ever committed; they bowed down before this Holy One, recognizing how unholy they were in His presence. It is what they are that is exposed; not what they have done.

May God grant repentance for all those who believe they have been "soul winners" and have offered a way to salvation that is completely against the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is one of the greatest tragedies in the church today. The Gospel, or "Good News," as it actually means, is that Jesus Christ settled the sin issue once for all, and now man must come to Him and receive Life.

"Why then the law? It was added on account of transgressions, until the Seed should come to whom it had been promised; and it was commanded through angels by the hand of a mediator." (Galatians 3:19 EMTV)

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