

Apostate Gospel - The Great Deception

by Stella Paterson

Since posting the recent article on Revival, the Lord has been strongly impressing upon me to write this. It is extremely urgent, and must be written as plainly as possible. It may even shake the foundation for the beliefs many have of the "Gospel of Jesus Christ," but it is critical that we get back to Biblical truth.

There are several articles and studies referenced at the bottom of the page. They, along with this one, should be read carefully and prayerfully, enquiring of the Lord to bring understanding to this vastly over-looked issue.

The reason this message must be heard

The Lord knew what He was doing when He took me, over a twelve-year period, through the whole Bible to show me the meaning of Calvary. I became consumed with the message of the Cross of Jesus Christ. The motivation behind my repeated calls for the "church" to recognize the insidiousness of apostasy comes from Ezekiel 33:7-9. The Lord quickened those verses to me and caused me to see the seriousness if I were to fail to pass on what He was teaching me. Here is what He said:

"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Many times, as the Lord reminds me of those words from Ezekiel, I can only weep. Upon realizing the awesome privilege of such a calling, I am struck even more with the responsibility to be faithful - first of all to Jesus and secondly to share the truth He reveals.

And now...

What is the apostate gospel?

There is no question that we are living in the age of apostasy. And we also know that if the Apostle Paul warned of a "falling away" it would be massive, affecting everything within the "church" and even the "world". It has happened, and there has been no area untouched. Apostasy is increasing at an alarming rate. Even though it is clearly visible to some, vast multitudes are blind to it. That being said, we can conclude that today's "gospel" message is greatly affected by the ever-

present apostasy. Why would it not be - everything else is! Today's gospel is widely accepted, and everyone believes that it IS the true gospel. That in itself should be enough to raise a huge red flag. Does the fact that "everyone is doing it" make it right? If there is ANYTHING popular in Christianity we ought to get into the Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the truth. Think about this: If the "church" is apostate, would not their "gospel" also be apostate?

While I was on my "journey" under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, learning the true meaning of Calvary, there was one aspect that stood out. It aroused in my spirit a lot of grief and I struggled to truly grasp its significance - especially in the face of the traditional beliefs with which I had previously been accustomed. But as the years passed, and I learned more from the Word, this nagging reality would not go away. Eventually it came to a point where every time I heard the "gospel" preached there arose a cry from the depths of my spirit, saying "NO, NO, NO! Jesus died for so much more, but the gospel has been reduced to this?!" The Bible shows us a completely different Gospel - Jesus' Gospel - but it has not been embraced and preached.

As we know, apostasy and deception go together. Through deception we have apostasy, and because of apostasy there is further deception. One builds upon the other until the truth is obscured by gross error. Deceived man has introduced the worst apostasy imaginable - centered in the one thing that should be pure. I believe that "one thing" is uppermost in the mind of our Savior Jesus Christ and His Father, Almighty God. He desires that all mankind should be saved. (1 Timothy 2:4) Jesus died that we might live, but in a head-long plunge into apostasy creatures of flesh have destroyed the purity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Definition of "gospel"

The word "gospel" comes from the Greek word "euaggelion" and means, simply, "a good message." The good message is that Jesus died so that we might live. Yet it has been reduced to mere forgiveness for deeds committed. That is not a good message. That is not Jesus' Gospel. That is not the Gospel to which Paul the Apostle devoted his life. With today's "gospel," unless the Spirit of God does a deep work in an individual, the concept of "sins forgiven" serves only to mask the unregenerate condition of flesh.

You may ask, "What about the sins of which the Bible speaks?" We know that sin (death) entered with the knowledge of good and evil, reducing man to a creature of mortal flesh. This is thoroughly explained in my book, *Calling Forth The Remnant*. We also know that sin was the transgression of the Law given to Israel and that Jesus "put away sin" ¹ when He nailed to His cross the "handwriting of ordinances" ² that was against Israel.

The phrase "*put away*" is translated from the Greek word which means "*cancellation*" and is used in Hebrews 7:18-19: "*For there is verily a **disannulling** of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.*" The secret is in drawing nigh unto God through the Better Hope, in the person of Jesus.

The Greek word for the above "disannulling" comes from another Greek word which means "*to set aside, that is, (by implication) to disesteem, neutralize or violate.*" The King James translators used these words in various verses: "cast off, despise, disannul, frustrate, bring to nought, reject." One such use can be found in Paul's letter to the Galatians. He said, "*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*" (Galatians 2:21) I can almost imagine Paul raising his voice, had he been speaking to the Galatians rather than writing his epistle. His passion for the "good message" (gospel) can be seen throughout all his epistles.

Romans 1:16 has been misunderstood by many. Paul said, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*" If we keep in mind the definition of "gospel" we hear Paul saying that he is not ashamed of the "*good message*" because the reality is that it is God's power which brings salvation to all who believe. He did not say that God's power saves those who ask forgiveness - he used the words "*every one that believeth.*" The "good message" has no power within itself. It is the Holy Spirit who quickens the message and brings about the new birth in one who comes to entrust his spiritual wellbeing to Christ. In other words, the good message of Christ is that God, in His power, makes a new creature in Christ Jesus. After all, no one comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him. (John 6:44)

How many versions of the "gospel" do we hear today? The most prominent version is that one which says we must ask forgiveness for our sins in order to be born again. Whether we turn on the television, go "to church", attend an evangelistic crusade, listen to a "street preacher" or even read a book, the "gospel" message is the same. It is a tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation and accepted without question. If we stop and carefully consider that "gospel", we will see that it is utter foolishness. It is the product of self-centered man and barely touches the surface of the much deeper problem - our condition of FLESH. If forgiveness of sins was sufficient to bring about the new birth, Jesus would not have had to die. Would God have put His Son through the suffering of the Cross just so that He could forgive sins? A simple prayer, asking for forgiveness, could have been answered by God without Jesus having to die. And Jesus would not have had to suffer such scourging as to make Him unrecognizable. Why, even the sacrificial animals merely had their throat slit to shed blood - and THAT satisfied the requirement so that God's forgiveness could be granted.

The reason Jesus died

Our condition of flesh had its origin in the Garden of Eden, with the entrance of the knowledge of good and evil. "Knowledgeable man" reached the place where he was "only evil" as we read in Genesis 6 with the account of Noah, and God's disappointment at having created man. You know how the story goes - God destroyed all flesh in a flood, with the exception of His remnant Noah's family and all critters large and small. If we read again that chapter we will see that flesh was the reason for the sinfulness of man and it was flesh that God said had to be done away.

Man continued in his condition of flesh for thousands of years until Jesus took upon Himself the form of man (flesh) and hung it on a cross. In following the word "flesh" through the Bible, I found that God spoke some extremely strong words on the subject of flesh. We can see this in Ezekiel's prophecy ³ and in the Book of Revelation. ⁴ Both passages speak of how God will make a mockery of flesh by offering a sacrifice of flesh to the scavengers - both birds and animals. What a tragic end for those who reject Jesus and the Life He offers so we can be saved from self and flesh. When we understand these things we will see the futility of "sins forgiven" when it comes to our eternal soul. We then can see how the masses have been duped into believing an anemic "good message." Can you see the vastness of the apostasy and how many souls have been deceived?

I'm sure some are asking, "What about those who are truly alive, born again, Spirit-filled believers who at one time asked God to forgive their sins?" The secret can be found in John 6:44: "*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.*" It does not matter what words were spoken, it is ultimately God who draws a soul to Jesus.

It is in God's hands - not man's. When it comes to the new birth, forgiveness accomplishes nothing. **Sins are only the manifestation of what we are. And it is what we are that sent Jesus to the Cross.** Yes, on the Cross He settled the transgression of the Law (sin) issue for the Jews, but He also made a way for the rest of us to come to God.

What words did Jesus use when speaking to Nicodemus? He told him "*that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*" (John 3:6) Then in verses 14 and 15, He said, "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*" And that is the pure gospel message - right from the lips of the One who died to give Life through belief (faith) in Him. Of course, the word "*believe*" means to "*entrust our*

spiritual wellbeing to Christ." In *The Gospel According to Jesus and False Gospel Exposed* we elaborated on the issue of faith and belief.

Repentance

Okay, so now there is the question of repentance. What does it mean, and why has it been so misinterpreted in "evangelization?"

First, the definition:

The word "repentance" means "reversal of [another's] decision." Could we assume the "another" is Adam, and repentance is a turning from self, flesh and death - all of which came because of the first man's transgression? I believe so. The Greek word for "repent" is the basis for the word "repentance." And "repent" means simply "*to think differently or afterwards, that is, **reconsider** (morally to feel compunction)*". It would be safe to say that the key word is "reconsider" - especially when we look at God's continual pleading for Israel to return to Him.

One instance where God was calling Israel back to relationship can be found in Jeremiah 3:14a: "**Turn**, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you." It has always been about relationship! And it will always be about relationship - the reason He created man in the first place.

Now, how is it misinterpreted?

We hear so much about the need for "repentance and forgiveness" of sins. People are told they must repent of their sins and ask God to forgive them. We even hear some preachers say that our "sins have separated us from God." This comes from Isaiah's word to Israel: "*Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities*[Hebrew: perversities] *have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear: for your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.*" (Isaiah 59:1-3) That was under the Law and before the Cross.

ONE sin separates us from God

Ever since the Cross there is one sin that will keep us from God, and that is the sin of unbelief. Jesus spoke of the "sin" of unbelief, in John 16:7-9: "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove* [Greek: admonish] *the world of*

sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me..."

Here is a powerful word of caution that sheds light on "unbelief": "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from* [Greek: deserting] *the living God.*" (Hebrews 3:12) We must ask the question, "What could be more evil than unbelief?" And the remainder of the verse speaks of *departing from the living God*. This takes us back to Jesus' oft spoken words, "*Believe...and live.*" The sin of unbelief causes a person to *desert* God - he is without Life from the *living God*. And if "belief" is "entrusting one's spiritual wellbeing to Christ," it goes without saying that "unbelief" is "NOT entrusting one's spiritual wellbeing to Christ." What could be more self-centered than that? We need to be saved from self - not just our deeds. We need to receive Life if we want to live eternally.

If God is not obsessed with "sins" why should we be? If God gave His Son to "put away sin" why do we insist on keeping "sin" as our focus when sharing the "gospel"? If sin is the manifestation of flesh - both good and evil - why can we not see that God has dealt with mortal flesh through the sacrifice of His Son? Hebrews 9:26b tells us "... *now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*"

Is the "church" obsessed with sin because millions of "Christians" in the apostate church have not been born anew? They have been led to believe they are "born again" because they prayed a simple prayer after the preacher, asking forgiveness for their sins. The focus has been on sin - not self. No one seems to want to talk about the evil of flesh because too many are entrenched in flesh - one way or another. They are not willing to die to self in order that they might live. Jesus has been rejected by the very ones who claim to be His. The church is apostate because it is full of flesh.

Telling the truth

This next passage makes quite clear the true gospel. Please read it carefully and allow the Holy Spirit to quicken the truths to your spirit.

"And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now

*then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, **be ye reconciled to God.** For **he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;** that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:15-21)*

Jesus was made to "be sin" ('in the likeness of sinful flesh'), died and rose again so that we might be made *the righteousness of God in him*. The Greek word for the "sin" Jesus was *made to be* is defined as "*sin (properly abstract)*". The "sin" is not concrete, as in a deed committed, but is abstract, or, "*theoretical, not practical or applied*" as Webster's dictionary tells us. We need to think of "sin" as "being (what we are) - not doing." And at the same time, "righteousness" is also about "being (what we are in Him) - not doing." When we are born anew we become new creatures IN Christ Jesus and, therefore, the "*righteousness of God in Him.*"

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul is addressing the Corinthians regarding their dealings with one another, and how some were taking others to court in full view of unbelievers. In verse 9 he begins with, "*Know ye not that the **unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?** Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate...shall inherit the kingdom of God.*" He used the word "unrighteous" which means it is the unrighteousness that is the issue - not the individual deeds, as evil as they are. They are simply the fruit of the unregenerate (not born-anew). Whatever the name of a sin, it is unrighteousness due to unbelief that will keep man out of the kingdom of God. We could say that the fruit of unregenerate flesh is "unrighteousness," but the fruit of the Spirit in one who is regenerated from above is "righteousness" in God's eyes.

When God looks at man, He is looking for His Son. If the Life of Jesus is in us, we are acceptable in God's sight. At the same time, when God looks at those who are still dead, not having Jesus within, He DOES NOT KNOW THEM. When Jesus comes back, He will receive all those in whom His Spirit dwells. The "earnest of the Spirit" in us will rise to be joined to the fully-manifested Jesus who is coming to claim His Bride. Our bodies will be changed from mortal to immortal in the twinkling of an eye. Just before the living are caught up, all who have died in Christ will be raised, having received their new immortal bodies. Everyone else will be left behind to perish - the ultimate end for all flesh. And after the Judgment Day when judgment is meted out according to the deeds of the unrighteous, their eternal punishment begins.

Are we truly born anew? Have we come to trust in Jesus, receiving His Life into our spirit? Or are we yet flesh - never having surrendered self to the crucifying power of Jesus? Are we dead in sinful flesh or are we alive unto God? Are we espoused to tradition and committing adultery against the Lord? Or are we espoused to Christ, with His Spirit keeping us faithful to Him? Is Jesus our Righteousness? Or are we self-righteous, living what we believe is the "Christian

life" - all because our "sins have been forgiven"? How many will be in that number who will hear Jesus' words, "*I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"? (Matthew 7:23b)

One final, sobering thought. Has the apostate gospel produced masses of religious robots who are not only self-righteous but also judge others according to their definition of "sin"? Have they not come to the knowledge of the truth that death came upon all; and to have Life they must simply repent [reconsider] and believe [rely upon Christ for salvation and entrust their spiritual wellbeing to Him]? It is literally a matter of death and Life!

May God deliver us all from the bondage of tradition!

1. Hebrews 9:26
2. Colossians 2:14
3. Ezekiel 39:17-22
4. Revelation 19:17-18