

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## THE GOSPEL TEST

*But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

*Galatians 1:7*

It seems pretty clear, by reading the epistles of Paul, Peter, and John that the perversion of the gospel began quite early on in the days of the New Testament Church. Much of their writing is done in order to correct errors (some subtle and some not so subtle) which had crept in through the teaching of false prophets, subverters, pre-eminence lovers, and troublers of one sort or another. It is no wonder therefore that two thousand years later, the gospel (not the true one, see Gal.1:7) has, for the most part, been so thoroughly perverted so as to be nearly unrecognizable.

I often wonder if the apostle Paul returned, and viewed the fragmentation and diversity of those that call themselves Christians and gospel churches around the world, if he would not conclude that the preaching of the gospel which he declared has by and large ceased. Never before has there been so many different camps, each claiming to be the champions of the faith, and putting forth their own "brand" of doctrine as that which is true to the New Testament.

I am certain that there is still a remnant left on the face of the earth of those whom the LORD knows as HIS own and I believe that HE does preserve a witness to the truth which is completely outside of the mainstream of the religious orders calling themselves the followers of CHRIST. I am not equally certain that I know where they can be found. It is rather presumptuous for any sect or order to label themselves as being those true champions to the exclusion of all others, but I do think that it is possible to identify some clear characteristics and identifying marks of the unperturbed gospel that Paul declared. *"Let God be true, but every man a liar."* (Rom 3:4)

We can go about to claim that we are preaching that truth but only time can ultimately bear witness as to whether or not we are indeed faithful to that which we claim is truth. We can boast all we want of our pedigrees, confessions of faith, or other claims to orthodoxy, but if we do not proclaim that which Paul preached, then he said we are to be accursed. *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."* (Gal 1:8-9)

These are extreme words and should cause us to approach what we claim is "the gospel" with great caution. *"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."* (James 3:1) Aligning ourselves with this sect or that does not insure that we are indeed proclaimers of an unperturbed gospel. There have been many who have in their own time been faithful teachers whose followers in subsequent generations have departed from the truth. If that is not true then we should be able to find the original churches which were established by Paul, John, and Peter. Most did not endure in purity one decade let alone a generation.

Perversion of the truth is often hardly recognizable and seldom begins with gross departures from truth but most often presents itself as an "addition" to it. Deception is "deceitful" or else none would ever be "deceived". Satan has transformed himself into an "angel of light", so it is no

wonder that the “perverters” of the gospel are for the most part preaching many things that are true. Yet in order to be the gospel which Paul declared there can be no alterations either by omission or addition. The Judaizers (of whom Paul primarily speaks to the Galatians) did not outright deny the truth that Paul preached but primarily sought to add to it, thereby perverting it.

So how can we “test” the preaching of the “gospel”?

It must begin and end with the glory of GOD. It has often been said, by those who despise the preaching of GOD's unconditional election of a people unto salvation, that such preaching is a waste of time. The basis of their argument is built upon the false notion that the preaching of the gospel is for the purpose of saving men. While it is clearly true that the LORD “saves” men by the foolishness of preaching, it is also clearly true that the purpose of preaching is to glorify the NAME of JESUS CHRIST in the earth. HE said, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”* (John 12:32) Paul said to Timothy, (in the KJV) *“According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.”* (1Tim 1:11) yet the literal translation of this verse is *“according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I was entrusted.”* It is for HIS glory that we preach and it is HIS glory that must be proclaimed wherever and whenever the true gospel is preached. HE said, *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last.”* (Rev 22:13)

It must be the proclamation of CHRIST alone. The LORD JESUS told HIS disciples, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me.”* (John 14:6) Peter declared, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) Paul said, *“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.”* (Col 3:11) In order to preach the gospel one must preach, CHRIST, the whole CHRIST, and nothing but CHRIST. The greatest perversions of the gospel come in departing from this and making doctrinal affirmations, baptisms, church affiliations, etc necessary unto the salvation of the people of GOD. JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save HIS people from their sins and HE has done exactly that. The preaching of the gospel is the preaching of CHRIST with nothing added. Faith is not an addition which makes salvation complete but is the manifestation of the completed work of CHRIST in saving HIS own.

It must be the preaching of JESUS CHRIST crucified. Paul said, *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Gal 6:14) This was his only message, *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”* (1Cor. 2:2) The central theme of gospel preaching must be the declaration of a complete redemption wrought by the work of CHRIST. *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”* (Heb 9:12) There is no cooperative effort on the part of man to make that which CHRIST performed effectual. The redemption of HIS elect is made completely effectual by the work of CHRIST alone, who gave HIMSELF for us. *“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.”* (2Cor 5:21) HE came into the world as the REDEEMER and HE left it as the same.

It must be the preaching of JESUS CHRIST triumphant. *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* (Col 2:13-15) *“That in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.”* (Col 1:18-19) We are not waiting for the day when CHRIST shall reign, but do bow down before HIM as the risen and reigning KING who sits in royal state upon the throne of HIS mediatorial kingdom which shall have no end. *“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”* (1Tim. 1:17) Even so come LORD JESUS!

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