

What Are The Two Great Enemies Of The Gospel?



What is the Gospel? It's a word we find repeated in Scripture at least 100 times (*Matthew 4:13; 9:35; 11:15; 24:14; Mark 1:1, 15; 6:15; Luke 4:18; 9:6; Acts 20:21; Romans 1:9, 16; 3:8; 15:20; Galatians 1:6-11; Ephesians 1:13* – just to name a few). It is THE message of the whole Bible and the Christian Faith, and there is no distinctive message beyond the message of the Gospel. Remove it, and all you've got is another item on the salad bar of religious options.

So naturally, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, there's both ignorance about it and opposition to it. Always has been, from the beginning. Always will be, until Christ returns. [Barnhouse, "Where there's light, there's bugs; and where the Light of the Gospel shines forth, the enemies of Christ strive with all their might to extinguish that light."] The devil doesn't mind – he will use both ignorance of and opposition to the Gospel to his advantage. That's why we must both KNOW the Gospel AND be able to identify the two greatest enemies the Gospel faces.

1. Let's look at KNOWING the Gospel.

** The Gospel is the **GOOD NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT**¹

of the **SALVATION** from **SIN** accomplished (in time & space and real history, not myth) by GOD

through the work of **JESUS**² (the gospel centers on the work of JESUS for sinners)

in the context of the **"GRAND NARRATIVE"** of Scripture³ (There's a backstory to the Gospel, in Scripture, not "out of blue")

that creates a new **COMMUNITY** (Redemption is always of a PEOPLE from slavery to freedom, death to life, prison to...)

of **GRACE**-infused, **FAITH**-focused people⁴ (both come from the OUTSIDE – IN; both are distinctively Xn, cf CS Lewis)

who live out the **PURPOSE** for which they were saved.⁵ ** (the Gospel includes but is more than "eternal fire insurance")

¹ Regarding the **ANNOUNCEMENT**: The Greek word for Gospel literally means "Good News" and often refers to the announcement of a King who has gone off to battle and returned victorious. *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that **Christ** died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . . (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)*

² Regarding the **WORK OF CHRIST**: *Since we have now been **justified by his blood**, how much more shall we **be saved** from God's wrath **through him!** For if, while we were God's enemies, we were **reconciled to him through the death of his Son**, how much more, having been reconciled, **shall we be saved through his life!** (Romans 3:9-10)*

³ Regarding the **"GRAND NARRATIVE"** of Scripture: The Bible's redemptive drama reveals four acts -- Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. The Bible Story answers the "Big Picture" questions such as "Who is God?" "Who am I?" "What's wrong with the world?" "What's the solution?" & "What's the future?" *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them **what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself**. (Luke 24:27). / Therefore, as **through one man's offense** judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even **so through one Man's righteous act** the **free gift** came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as **by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous**. (Romans 5:18-19)*

⁴ Regarding the **REDEEMED COMMUNITY**: *Once you had no identity as a people; **now you are God's people**. Once you received no mercy; **now you have received God's mercy**. (1 Peter 2:10) / 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 2:8-9)*

⁵ Regarding the **PURPOSE OF SALVATION**: *"Everyone who is called by My name, **Whom I have created for My glory, I have formed him, yes, I have made him**" (Isaiah 43:7) / In him we were also chosen,^[e] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, **in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory**. (Ephesians 1:11-12)*

DYNAMICS FOUND IN THIS DEFINITION:

- It's sometimes compared to a **THREE-LEGGED STOOL**. (of ANNOUNCEMENT, STORY, and COMMUNITY)
- It's **ANNOUNCEMENT**, not **ADVICE**. (Not "How to tips and suggestions" of what YOU must do; life-lessons)
- It's about **GOD's** work, not ours. (It's what God has done in CHRIST + NOTHING to justify us before God)
- It's God's **DRAMA**, not ours. (It has a bigger focus, a bigger picture, then ME. It's a wide angle & not zoom)
- It's about **GRACE** and **FAITH**. (We are the receivers of God's Grace & Christ is the focus of our Faith.)
- It's both **INDIVIDUAL** and **CORPORATE**. (You're responsible to respond, but it makes you part of something bigger)
- It's an outworking of God's **PURPOSE**. (The Gospel serves a GRANDER purpose than just saving us / ego)

2. Let's look at the TWO ENEMIES of the Gospel.

Galatians 1:6-10; 2:15-16; 3:10-13; 26-29; 6:7-10 ... The two biggest enemies of the Gospel are: (An early Church Father Tertullian from Carthage in the Roman Province of Africa said that "As Christ was crucified between two thieves, so there are two thieves that would steal the Gospel from us.")

- **MORALISM / LEGALISM**, or religious **PERFORMANCE** to make yourself acceptable/more acceptable to God; or to **JUSTIFY** your claim to be a Christian. It's **SELF** -- centered, **PERFORMANCE**-based (EVEN DRIVEN) living. Living according to this dynamic, you in essence become your own **SAVIOR**.

How does this show itself? [Good day/bad day as to how God looks @ you // pride / despair (depression) // Judgmental and moral one-upmanship (*Luke 18:9-14* Pharisee & Tax Collector / moral and spiritual resume / always looking down on those who are not as spiritually "with it" as we are!) // Using God to get things or manipulating God to do your will (Prophets of Baal) / Vending machine (prayer heard for their many words). Fails to answer correctly the question, "What makes me acceptable / more acceptable than another professing Xn, to God?" // good works-bad works balance scale mentality] Also, it REVERSES Gospel dynamics, & seeks to make them dysfunctional. Psychologically and socially, MORALEGALISTS cannot deal well with criticism nor do they take well being told they're wrong b/c BEING right w/God

means for them DOING right. AND, they're often driven by fear of not being "good enough".

- **HEDONISM / RELATIVISM**, or irreligious self-**GRATIFYING** behavior (I'm going to do whatever I think will make me happy and feel good); a **REJECTION** of God's **STANDARDS** (I'm going to determine/decide for myself what's right and wrong FOR ME), often combined with a re-definition of **SIN** as not **APPROVING** of my behavior (I will NOT tolerate your saying my behavior is wrong / you must AFFIRM my lifestyle or you're full of HATE!). Living according to this dynamic, you in essence become your own **LORD**. (in control of what is good FOR ME, my own AUTHORITY to determine if my behavior is right or , & as long as I can live w/myself, what I do is "nun-ya"! (Cf **Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 1:26-32**)

How does this show itself? Anytime anyone seeks to justify behavior that's patently WRONG and attack those are concerned, that behavior is showing itself. We see this is "situational ethics" and

What do both enemies have in common? They're both self-centered. They're both about ME. Both are JUDGMENTAL. Both discount the work of God either as GRACIOUS SAVIOR or GRACIOUS LAWGIVER. BOTH are attempts to get around the Biblical/reformational idea of GRACE ALONE DIA FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE. Both keep us away from our Heavenly Father [the Prodigal Son story, told so well by Keller in The Prodigal God.]

HOW do you detect these tendencies in yourself? Pretty easy to detect in pop culture [*Le Mes* draws a contrast between the cruel, self-righteous law-dispensing police investigator, Javert, who doggedly pursues Jean Valjean (who personifies what GRACE does to a person) // *Smallville*, Lex Luthor is the Hedonist-relativist doing whatever pleases him through whatever method that works, vs Clark Kent's Dad (Johathan Kent) is the keeper of the law, laying down the rules, keeping people safe. // 1978's hit movie *Grease*, (aka "Sex") the very MORAL Sandy Olson (Olivia Newton-John) vs the very LUST-DRIVEN greaser Danny Zuko (John Revolta), with Sandy Converting over to Danny's side.] Most shows have RULE-ORIENTED moralist and RULE-BREAKING Relativists. You can pick 'em out! Sometimes the same person can be both legalistic AND Hedonistic ["I will use someone for my pleasure, but you may NOT date my Brother / sister!"] What most shows & plays and songs & books DON'T depict is Gospel-Driven CHRISTIANS! (*Chariots of Fire* and *Tender Mercies* being a couple of notable exceptions).

For us, a couple of self-diagnostic questions would be in order.

- 1) What am I drawn to / repelled by? What characters do you identify with?
- 2) Where do I see those GOSPEL DYNAMICS most turned around / 180'd in my life? Where is my stool unstable (announcement, story, or community?) Focus on DOING rather than BEHOLDING? What I'M doing as opposed to what GOD has/is doing for me? All about ME and MY story & NOT God, HIS story & they COMMUNITY of people we are part of? Where does what I believe and do showcase MY glory rather than God's?

JUSTIFICATION

Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ

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He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.
Titus 3:5

1. Thy works, not mine, O Christ, speak glad - ness to this heart; they
 2. Thy pains, not mine, O Christ, up - on the shame - ful tree, have
 3. Thy cross, not mine, O Christ, has borne the aw - ful load of
 4. Thy righ - teous - ness, O Christ, a - lone can cov - er me: no

REFRAIN
 tell me all is done; they bid my fear de - part.
 paid the law's full price and pur - chased peace for me. To whom, save
 sins that none in heav'n or earth could bear but God.
 righ - teous - ness a - vails save that which is of thee.

thee, who canst a - lone for sin a - tone, Lord, shall I flee?

Horatius Bonar, 1857

DARWALL 6.6.6.6.8.8.
John Darwall, 1770