

**CROSS PURPOSES**  
**The Gospel of the Kingdom**  
**By Dr. Steve Daily**

The story is told of three women who belonged to the same small congregation, in a country town, and were sitting together at a table while attending a church picnic. As they made rather trivial conversation, they were suddenly surprised and shocked to see a streaker run right through the midst of the tables, with a stocking hat covering his head. The first woman, said, “how outrageous, and shameful that anyone would dare to disrupt a church picnic in such an uncouth manner.” The second woman, equally offended, and looking rather self-righteous, said, “I can assure you that he was not my husband.” And the third woman, who was divorced and didn’t have the best reputation in the parish, declared, “I can testify almost unequivocally that he is not even a member of our congregation!”

It is a truism, that the church is made up of sinners. But, the real problem comes when professed believers use the gospel as an excuse for sin. “Since we are all sinners anyway, why not embrace a sinful lifestyle, that grace may abound?” This was a popular question in Paul’s day, that he specifically addressed in Romans 6:1-2, “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?” I want to briefly consider three very popular positions in American religion concerning grace and salvation before we explore what I believe Jesus and the New Testament writers taught regarding the gospel of the kingdom.

**1. The Legalistic Perspective:** There are many Christians who function out of a legalistic mentality towards the gospel who would never consider themselves to be legalists. In fact, there are very few Christians in our culture who openly believe that they are saved by their works. Very few professed believers would say, if I perform these duties then I deserve to be saved. Gross legalism, is pretty rare. It was even rare in Christ’s day. The Rabbis and Pharisees, even the Judaizers, did not generally believe that they would be saved on the basis of their good works. They understood the concept of grace, and they recognized that Noah, and the other Old Testament saints, “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” In other words they were saved by grace, not their own works. But, they also believed that they were under the law, and that if you didn’t try your best to keep the law, you wouldn’t be covered by God’s grace.

The majority of Americans today have what we call a relativistic view of salvation, that is actually legalistic at its core, even though they would not recognize it to be so. When ask the question, “if you were to die today, do you think you would go to heaven or hell?” The majority say, “probably heaven,” and when asked why, the answer is usually something like, “because I am a pretty good person, at least compared to most people.” This is a very common form of legalism. “I tend to measure up better than most people so I will probably be saved.” Now, Christians who are grounded in the teachings of the Bible, recognize that this is a lame argument. “Our righteousness is filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6), there is no merit in our works that can recommend us to God. Many Christians recognize that our works can never save us, but like the Pharisees, they still believe that we are to keep God’s law or 10 Commandments, as best we can, to show that we love God, so that He will cover us with His grace.

I was raised in such a tradition, and I know that many of you were as well. But, the New Testament clearly teaches that we are no longer under the law in any way shape or form, because the whole law condemns us, and Jesus nailed the whole law to His cross when He died for our sins (Colossians 2:14-15). “Having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the [dark] powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” How many of us know that the whole law is against us, and condemns us, including the 10 Commandments? If we can’t perfectly keep it, it condemns us, and Jesus made it clear that none of us can keep the 10 Commandments as fallen human beings.

Therefore, the New Testament answer, is to die to ourselves, and to live in Christ, under the power of the Holy Spirit. A failure to do so is legalism. As Paul puts it (Romans 8:9), “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, **he does not belong to Christ.**” Wow! That is a powerful statement, if we are not growing with Christ, through this walk in the Spirit, we do not belong to Him. Do you see why we keep putting so much emphasis on the importance of having encounters with God through the Holy Spirit, knowing Him personally and relationally, and learning to walk in His Spirit as a kingdom people. Because anything less than this is legalism, it is of the flesh, and it is not acceptable to God.

**2. The Antinomian perspective :** Antinomian literally means, against the law. George Barna has documented in his research that a high percentage of professed Christians deliberately engage in actions and behaviors that are immoral and that hurt others. These actions range from gossiping and lying, to stealing, cheating and committing adultery. This was the mentality that we alluded to in our opening illustration. I'll sleep around, even in the church, and still call myself a Christian. After all, don't God's love and grace cover a multitude of sins? The Bible does say that "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8), but never in the context of deliberate immorality. What Peter is saying, is that the more we focus on loving others, the less power our sinful nature will have over us. He is not saying that we can use loving others, as an excuse, for engaging in other behaviors that are hurtful to people.

I once had a Christian friend, that I got to know in an interdenominational prayer group, who could quote Scripture like few people that I've ever known, and who prayed for literally hundreds of people every day. He was a powerful intercessor. After I'd known him for a while he approached me with an investment opportunity that seemed too good to be true. Several months later I learned that numerous people in the church he belonged to had invested with him, some elderly saints who had invested all their savings, and that they were very worried that their monies had been lost. When I confronted him with this information, he assured me that he would get their money back, that he loved these people, and that he prayed for them all everyday. But, here we are, several years later and the \$3 million has never been recovered, life savings were lost and families were destroyed, all in the name of Christian love and trust.

I was reading recently that there are more investment cons in Christian churches than in the general population, outside the church. In fact, con artists often parade themselves as Christians to perpetrate their schemes. How many Christians have been deliberately taken by "Christian businesses"? How many people have used Christianity to deliberately exploit people in relationships? Grace does not cover these kinds of actions. In fact, grace produces the opposite reality. Paul says, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). As New Covenant Christians we are not antinomians, we are not against the law, we are not opposed to the principles of the kingdom, but we do recognize that the law is against us – that it condemns us in our

flesh. Therefore we put ourselves under His grace, by dying to self, and letting Him plant His principles in us through the power of His Spirit.

**3. The Formulaic perspective:** The third popular distortion of the gospel of the kingdom, or the gospel of grace, that we see in our culture today, is what I like to call the “formulaic Perspective.” As much as I loved Bill Bright, and recognize and honor the tremendous contributions he made to evangelism and the kingdom of God, I am concerned about the formulas that have become popularized in evangelical Christianity relating to salvation. One of these is the Four Spiritual Laws, introduced by Bright. We used a modified form of these when the Great Awakening Tour came to our city last year. Admit you are a sinner in need of God’s grace, confess your sin, accept His death on the cross in your behalf, and receive His free gift of salvation. These steps are all well and good, but they can also act as a substitute for relationship, which leads me to another popular formula.

The once saved always saved formula traces salvation to a particular date. “I got saved on October 3, in 1978, at a Billy Graham Crusade, when he made an altar call in Yankee Stadium.” Such thinking leads to questions like are you saved? Or have you been saved? The focus is on intellectually accepting what Christ has done for us, and receiving it by faith, but not necessarily entering into the experience or relationship of salvation. Jesus describes salvation as abiding in a relational connection that is a continual process of growth, if we are not connected to Him, as the vine, there is no life in us. And the book of Acts refers to those who **were being saved** (Acts 2:47) in the community of faith. So, as much as I was blessed by being part of the Great Awakening Tour, and as happy as I was that we hosted those meetings, it made me a bit uncomfortable when they announced that we had saved 21,618 people after 15 days on the streets. Salvation is more of a friendship than a formula, it is a living relationship not a framed snapshot.

A third popular formula that concerns me, is the teaching that unless you become a “Christian” you cannot be saved. This goes along with “born again” dates and the spiritual laws. The most common text used to support this view is Acts 4:12, “there is only one name given under heaven whereby we can be saved.” Accept Jesus, and become a Christian or you are lost! Another text, that is often quoted in this regard is John 14:6, where Jesus says, I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to God except through me.” I recently heard Bill Maher, hosting a TV special on religion, totally trash Jesus and Christians based on this text. The problem is that too

many Christians interpret these texts in an exclusive manner. Jesus and Luke are speaking in universal terms. He made salvation possible for the entire human race by His death on the cross, but not in any narrow sense that is exclusively Christian. Paul makes it clear in Romans 2, that even the heathen, who have never heard of Jesus, can still receive His Spirit outside the traditions of Judaism or Christianity. So, we do well, to avoid formulas when we talk about salvation.

This leads me to the heart of my message. **What is the gospel of the kingdom, according to Jesus?** Most of us know that gospel means “good news.” So what is the good news of the kingdom, as Christ described it? Is it simply believing in what He did for us, regardless of how it effects our lives, in the hope of being saved? There are certainly texts that are interpreted in such a manner. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36). “Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). By themselves, these texts seem to indicate that a simple call or belief can guarantee us eternity. But, there are two problems with such thinking. First, the word salvation in Scripture has as much to do with this world as the next. And secondly, no text in Scripture stands by itself, in isolation from a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled understanding of the Bible as a whole.

Let’s go back to Romans 10:13, “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” All we have to do is back up a few verses to see what this verse means. In Romans 10:9-10, Paul says, “If you confess with your mouth ...” and “believe in your heart, you shall be saved.” It is not head belief but heart belief that saves us. The devils have head belief (James 2:19), but heart belief is relational and passionate, it comes out of our deepest commitment, feeling and emotion. Heart belief is loving God with our whole being, not intellectually accepting something He did two thousand years ago. Context is also the key with John 3:36, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life.” Earlier in the chapter Jesus prefaces these words by saying, “What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit” (John 3:6). It is only what is born of the Spirit that can bear the fruit of the kingdom, and the Spirit only lives in us where there is a Vine – branch connection. If I am not in relationship with Him, His Spirit does not dwell in me, I do not belong to Him, and I cannot truly believe in Him.

The purpose of meditating on the cross, and continually lifting up His shed blood, is not just to overwhelm us with how much He loves us, but to

constantly remind us that He gave His all for us and asks us to give our all to Him. As Peter put it, “He died for our sins so that we might die to our sins, by His stripes we are healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Salvation is about transformation and healing in the here and now, not just about eternal life. It is about walking in His Spirit and in His will in the present tense, which brings heaven to earth. This is what Jesus means when He says, “Thy kingdom come.” Through God’s grace, we receive God’s Spirit, which leads us into God’s will, and which in turn results in the manifestation of His kingdom. Sin cannot have dominion where these dynamics are in place (Romans 6:14).

The gospel of the kingdom is all of this being released in our lives because of what Jesus did on the cross and through His resurrection. This is why Paul says that the “gospel is the **power** of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). There is no power in saying Jesus saved me when I was born again, but I am still bound by addiction and enslaved in sin. There is no power in saying, by His stripes we are healed, but I’m not going to pray for your healing now, because I don’t believe He is still doing that stuff today. I liked what pastor Garry said a couple weeks ago about God asking us to give up something when He encounters us. We don’t like that because our flesh loves the world. But, as we die to self, and learn to let go of the world through the power of His Spirit, He releases the power of His kingdom into our lives.

Now some of you may be saying I’ve been through Cleansing Streams, I’ve been delivered and released from bondage, and I am still not moving in the power of the Spirit. But, for many of us, letting the good get in the way of the best prevents us from growing more in the power of God’s grace. Jesus recognized this problem in His followers, which is why He spoke so many hard sayings to them, and to us. One of the most amazing of these, that the great majority of professed Christians ignore, are His words in Luke 14:26. “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” In our self-worshipping culture, these strong words have caused many Christian leaders to make a distinction between being a saved follower of Jesus and being a disciple of Christ, a distinction that Jesus never makes.

What Jesus is saying in this verse, and others like it, is that He must be the first priority in our lives, and that our love for Him must dwarf every other love, including our love for family and self. Kingdom life fellowship is

committed to kingdom life discipleship. The last church where I pastored had a group of influential people who became threatened by this kind of talk, did not want us to pursue the fullness of the Spirit, which ultimately led to division. But, Jesus doesn't call us to half-way Christianity. There is no such thing as half-hearted discipleship. What an insult it is to Jesus, to look at His cross, and respond by being a luke-warm believer. Jesus says that this kind of response makes Him want to vomit (Revelation 3:20). Too many Christians today are comfortable in the prison house of sin.

Do you realize that prison's have become so comfortable in our state today that we spend an average of nearly \$100,000 a year to house an inmate, when you include their free medical and dental care, free psychiatric and psychological counseling, and free legal services. The cost is nearly \$200,000 a year more for the many prisoners we house on death row. Some of you may have seen the humorous suggestion that has been circulating on the internet in this regard.

### **Food For Thought:**

Let's put the seniors in jail,  
and the criminals in a nursing home.

This way the seniors would have access to showers, hobbies, and walks,  
they'd receive unlimited free prescriptions, dental and medical treatment ,  
wheel chairs etc. and they'd receive money instead of paying it out.

They would have constant video monitoring,  
so they could be helped instantly, if they fell,  
or needed assistance.

Bedding would be washed twice a week,  
and all clothing would be ironed and returned to them.  
A guard would check on them every 20 minutes,  
and bring their meals and snacks to their cell.

They would have family visits  
in a suite built for that purpose.  
They would have access to a library, weight room,  
spiritual counselling, pool, and education.  
Simple clothing, shoes, slippers, P.J.'s  
and legal aid would be free, on request.

Private, secure rooms for all,  
with an exercise outdoor yard, with gardens.  
Each senior could have a P.C., a T.V. radio,  
and daily phone calls.  
There would be a board of directors, to hear complaints,  
and the guards would have a code of conduct,  
that would be strictly adhered to.

### CRIMINALS IN NURSING HOMES

The "criminals" would get cold food,  
be left all alone, and unsupervised.  
Lights off at 8pm, and showers once a week.  
Live in a tiny room, and pay \$5000.00 per month  
and have no hope of ever getting out.

Justice for all !

The devil is also about making prison comfortable. He wants to make the prison house of sin as comfortable as he possibly can, especially for professed followers of Christ. But, Jesus has called us to a higher place. The place of His grace. It is a place where sin cannot have dominion over us, and where we walk with Him in the power of His Holy Spirit. The symbol of this empowered place is the bread and blood that He called us to eat and drink. It represents the power of His cross and resurrection. When taken in faith, it is much more than a ritual or a symbol. I believe God is calling us to eat this miracle meal every day, in our homes with our families, and in this house with our spiritual family.

There is nothing more powerful than the miracle meal He introduced, shortly before He gave His life for us. As we move forward in faith, I believe we are going to see more and more people encounter the living God, as they eat and drink from His hand. I believe we are going to see miracles of healing and supernatural provision accompany this meal. And most of all, as we take these elements with ever increasing hunger for Him, ever increasing humility before Him, and ever increasing faith in Him, He will call us to let go of whatever is blocking our growth in His grace. As we say "Yes," to His request, we will fly to new heights of freedom, and explode into new levels of power that we never thought possible. The gospel of the kingdom is



about experiencing “mission impossible,” or should I say “Mission Himpossible” through His cross purposes.