

## INTRODUCTION

An oxymoron is a set of words that cancel each other out and the English language is full of them. Here are ten of my favorites: (1) Live recording; (2) Original Copy; (3) Freezer burn; (4) Jumbo Shrimp; (5) Minor miracle; those are fairly evident, but there are others that you have to think about: (6) Congressional Action; (7) Microsoft Works; (8) Federal Budget; (9) Airline food; and my all-time favorite oxymoron: (10) Humble Texan.

Bad News Gospel is an oxymoron. We use the word "gospel" without knowing what it really means. It literally means "good news." Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Galatia because he was appalled that some false teachers had been spreading another gospel, a bad news gospel. They were teaching that the grace of God wasn't enough to save a person. They insisted in order for a person to be saved they had to believe AND do some religious acts. That's called legalism. So I could invent another oxymoron by using the term "legalistic grace."

This message is to help you avoid the bad news gospel, and to embrace the gospel of grace.

Galatians 1:3-9. "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

Notice how many times Paul uses the word "gospel." He is so sure of his last statement, he repeats it! Those are some of the strongest words Paul ever wrote. He said if even an angel appeared with another gospel, then let him be eternally condemned; the word he used was *anathema*. It literally means, "let him go to hell."

So let's just imagine for a moment as we are gathered on a Sunday morning, suddenly—boom! A mighty angel appears right here on this platform. I'm not talking about someone disguised as an angel; I'm talking about a sure-enough-dyed-in-the-feathers angel, like Gabriel, for instance. The first thing we'd all do is tremble with fear. Throughout the Bible the first thing an angel usually said was, "Don't fear." So Gabriel says, "People of Green Acres, don't be afraid. I've come from heaven with a message from God. You are the first to learn this: There is a new revelation from God; a new message; a new gospel, and I'm bringing it to you today!" How would we react? I would say, "Hold it right there, Gabriel, but based upon Galatians 1:9, you can take your new gospel and go straight to Hades. Do not pass go, do not collect \$200."

Legalism was a problem in Paul's day and it's a problem today. But legalism isn't the only bad news gospel that's being preached. Today there are plenty of people who are preaching their own version of the bad news gospel. Let me give you three examples of:

## I. MESSED-UP "GOSPEL" MESSAGES

We have plenty of false teachers today who are offering another gospel, and people are being misled. They may be sincere and have good intentions, but you can be sincere and be sincerely wrong. Let me mention three popular messed-up gospel messages.

### A. The Trump Gospel: "Believe and Succeed!"

This bad news gospel also goes by the name "Prosperity Gospel" or "Health and Wealth Gospel." But I'm calling it the "Trump" Gospel because we're all familiar with "The Donald's" obsession with success and public exposure. He once wrote another book entitled, *No Such Thing as Over-Exposure*.

This prosperity gospel is being preached on television and radio by a host of false prophets who tell you to send in your money to them, and God will bless you with more money, then they laugh all the way to the bank. When I was young there was a radio preacher named "Reverend Ike" who used to say, "The LACK of money is the root of all evil!" He taught that anything you could imagine, if you had enough faith, you WILL receive it, even if it's ten million dollars.

This gospel is still being offered, and it's never been more popular, because Americans are obsessed with possessions. Steve Farrar has offered a modern prayer that many materialistic Americans could pray: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my Cuisinart to keep. I pray my stocks are on the rise, And that my analyst is wise. That all the wine I sip is white, And that my hot tub's watertight. That racquetball won't get too tough, That all my sushi's fresh enough. I pray my cellular phone still works, That my career won't lose its perks. My microwave won't radiate, And my condo won't depreciate. I pray my health club doesn't close, And that my money market grows. If I go broke before I wake, I pray my Lexus they won't take!" (*Survival in the American Jungle*)

In this prosperity gospel, God is seen as a divine vending machine. You put in faith and out pops blessings: money, homes, cars, and health. God exists to make you healthy and wealthy. Well there's a good Greek word for that—hogwash!

### B. The Groupon Gospel: "The Deal of the Day"

I'm calling this the groupon gospel, because groupon is a combination of the words "group" and "coupon." It's an online coupon website with 35 million subscribers. They are famous for their "deal of the day." Tyler isn't one of their locations, but Dallas is. For instance, on Friday you could have ordered \$12 worth of Asian Cuisine at Yumi to Go and it would have been 50% off.

If you're not into Groupon, do you remember the game show, "Let's Make a Deal?" Monty Hall would say, "Do you want keep your prize, or trade it for what's behind door #1?"

The message of this gospel is that we ought to be able to make a deal with God.

It's usually recognized by a prayer like this: "God if you'll just get me out of this mess, I'll give my life to you." Or "God, if you'll just heal me, I'll serve you forever." Or it may be a bargain like this, "God if you'll let me get this job...win the lottery...date this guy...marry that girl...then this is what I'll do for you." Sometimes people buy into this "let's make a deal" mindset and they bail out on God when they think He hasn't kept his end of the deal. But you can't bargain with your Creator.

There's a Latin phrase we often hear, "Quid Pro Quo." If you don't know what it means, ask a lawyer, because it has a legal meaning as well. "Quid Pro Quo" literally translates, "Something for something." It is used to describe a fair and equitable trade. It can also mean something like, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." That might work well with people, but you can't bargain with God. Why can't I make a deal with God? We don't have anything to deal with—God already owns it all. We don't have the mental or moral standard to deal with the Creator. The Bible says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9) So, don't try to bargain with the Creator!

### **C. Gospel Lite FM: "At your convenience"**

Many products are called "lite" because they don't have as many calories as the real thing. There is a dangerous "lite" gospel being preached today that is all about feeling good about yourself, and doesn't make any demands on you. It's very appealing to Americans. If there was a radio spot for Gospel Lite FM, you'd hear a smooth, silky voice saying, "Hello Green Acres, you're listening to Gospel Lite FM; your feel-good, do-good, be good source to enlighten your day. Gospel Lite is all about you and your feelings. Feeling tired? Go ahead and nod off. Feeling grumpy? That's okay, Grumpy Gus. Feeling all alone? It's probably because you're grumpy. Here at Gospel Lite: We don't expect you to tithe, but we'll let you know who does. Would you like your own spot in the parking lot as well as the pew? No problem. Are you and atheist and no one to thank that it's Friday? Don't worry; with gospel lite we will never offend you with the truth. There's a better you in there, listen to your dreams and give yourself a big old hug. Because at Gospel lite we say, 'God loves you; and you do too!'"

Some congregations in the U.S. are hearing a form of Gospel lite where sin and repentance are seldom ever mentioned, because it might offend the listeners. At gospel lite churches, the Bible isn't really preached, there's just a brief devotional, short and sweet. And you are never inconvenienced to stay after noon. Services start at 11 o'clock sharp and end at 12 o'clock dull.

Gospel lite might reference the Bible a couple of times, but there's no verse-by-verse study of the Bible, because (ahem) frankly, there are parts of the Bible that aren't very nice.

Americans are all about convenience. Did you know there is even a television network called the Minisode Network? Seriously, it's a channel where entire episodes of your favorite shows have been edited down to four to six minutes. I'll bet some of you would like to tune in to mini-sermons. Vance Havner used to say the problem with many churches is that the "preacher is

preaching sermonettes for Christianettes who smoke cigarettes." Americans complain if they are inconvenienced in any way.

There is a Wyoming State Park called Bridges Wilderness Area. It's a wilderness area for hikers and campers. Here are some of the actual comment cards hikers have turned in: (1) "Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands. (2) Please avoid building trails that go uphill. (3) Too many bugs and leeches and spiders and spider webs. Please spray the wilderness to rid the areas of these pests. (4) A small deer came into my camp and stole my jar of pickles. Is there a way I can get reimbursed? (5) Too many rocks in the mountains."

These are from people who came to a wilderness where all you can do is hike and camp, and they complained because it wasn't convenient enough.

Let me give you another oxymoron: convenient commitment. If you are going to be a real Christian, the Bible says you are going to have to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Jesus.

The danger of these messed-up messages of the Bad News Gospel is they can creep into your thinking. You may not swallow them hook, line, and sinker, but once you start nibbling on these beliefs, you miss out on the true gospel. And it is

## II. THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE

We're living in a time when the message of the true gospel has never been more needed. You've probably heard the words, "These are the times that try men's souls," but do you know the source and the time? American Patriot Thomas Paine wrote those words in The American Crisis pamphlets in 1776.

What was true then is true now. These are the times that try men's souls. If it's not just the stock market crashing, it's a six-ton satellite falling out of orbit! These are strange times we're living in. This is an age of paradox. Someone wrote, "The Paradox of our time is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; Bigger houses and smaller families; More conveniences, but less time; More entertainment, but less enjoyment. We know more about the creation and less about the Creator. We've cleaned up the air but polluted the soul; These are the times of free love but expensive mistakes; We have higher incomes, but lower morals. These are the times of tall men and short character; Steep profits and shallow relationships. We are a society of beauty parlors and ugly behavior. These are the times when we need to run to God, but we're too busy running on the treadmills at the gym."

That's the bad news, but the good news is the grace of God can still change lives. Do you know WHY Paul was so upset about the false gospel? Because his life goal was to preach the gospel of grace. The Bible says, "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." (Acts 20:24)

When I was in college I heard the great Texas evangelist, Angel Martinez, preach a message on salvation. To the best I remember he said something like, "God thought it; the prophets taught it; the devil fought it; sinners sought it; Jesus bought it; the Holy Spirit wrought it; and I caught it." I want to borrow his train of thought and share four phrases with you that characterize the God's gospel of grace.

### **A. God thought it**

Salvation comes by grace through faith. The plan of salvation isn't a scheme someone developed. It was God's plan from the beginning. The Bible says Jesus is the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world.

By the standards of the world, grace doesn't make sense. The world says, "You do the crime; you do the time." Grace says, "Guilty, but forgiven." If you don't like the idea of grace, then take it up with the Creator, it was His idea.

### **B. Satan fought it**

The devil has been fuming since the Garden of Eden, because he knows he is a defeated foe. Satan has done everything within his limited power to sidetrack God's plan for a gospel of grace. Moses was a deliverer, and Satan influenced Pharaoh to have all the boy babies killed in hopes that he could thwart God's plan. But although Moses was born a basket case, God's plan prevailed. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Satan suggested to Herod the Great to kill all the boy babies born in Bethlehem. Again he was fighting God's plan, but grace prevailed. Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness to try to sidetrack Him from his mission of grace. Satan is still fighting against the message of grace. The Bible says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel." (2 Corinthians 4:4) If you are here without Christ, don't be surprised if it seems as if you have a blindfold on to the truth. The Bible says Satan put it there. Tear it off and let the grace of God fill you with light and truth.

### **C. Jesus brought it**

All of the events and circumstances described in the Old Testament were looking forward to the time when God would send a Redeemer. Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law."

The first solo I ever sang was at an R.A. Camp when I was about twelve. It was the wonderful hymn, "At Calvary." I sang the first verse which was a little strange for a 12-year-old boy to sing because it says, "Years I spent in vanity and pride; Caring not my Lord was crucified..." I hadn't spent many years doing anything, and I didn't have a clue at the time what vanity and pride were. But I really love words of the final stanza. It says, "Oh the love that drew salvation's plan; Oh, the grace the brought it down to man; Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span; At Calvary. Mercy there was great and grace was free; Pardon there was multiplied to me. There my burdened soul found liberty. At Calvary." (Words by William Newell)

God thought it; Satan fought it; Jesus brought it; and praise God

## D. Faith caught it!

I'm not talking about the act of catching a ball someone throws your way, because that involves action on your part. I'm using this phrase in the sense like catching a cold or the flu. Is there anything you have to do to catch a cold? Not really. It is something to which you're exposed, and it catches you!

Grace is God offering us the free gift of eternal life, even though we are guilty sinners and deserve death and hell. Faith is my response to God's offer of grace. Ephesians 2:8 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

When some people hear there is nothing we can do to be saved, they want to argue and say, "Isn't faith without works dead?" Certainly good works follow faith, but faith itself isn't something you do, it's simply something you receive.

Suppose someone sent me a check for \$1,000,000. I didn't earn it, it's a gift. The money is mine if I want it, but I still must endorse the check. In no way can signing my name be considered earning the million dollars—the endorsement is a non-work. I can never boast about becoming a millionaire through sheer effort or my own business savvy. No, the million dollars was simply a gift, and signing my name was the only way to receive it. Similarly, exercising faith is the only way to receive the generous gift of God, and faith cannot be considered a work worthy of the gift.

Grace is God's free gift to us, but it's not cheap. Jesus paid a high price for our forgiveness. If you want a good definition of grace, just read 2 Corinthians 8:9: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." You've heard of a "rags to riches story." Grace is a riches to rags to riches story. Jesus set aside the riches of heaven to take on the rags of our humanity. And once we receive His grace, we exchange the filthy rags of our own self-righteousness for His spotless robe of righteousness. Grace really is amazing. Have you caught it yet?

## CONCLUSION

The bad news gospel is the message that Jesus plus something else equals salvation: Jesus plus baptism; or Jesus plus Bible reading; or Jesus plus good works. The good news gospel of grace says Jesus plus *nothing* equals salvation.

One of my favorite movies is "Saving Private Ryan." In 1998 Stephen Spielberg directed this epic portrayal of the Normandy Invasion. The plot was based on a true story of four brothers from Pennsylvania who all were killed in the Civil War. Saving Private Ryan told the story of a family of four brothers in which three of the four brothers were killed in combat. Military leaders decided to launch a rescue mission to save the fourth brother, Private James Ryan, so his family would not suffer the loss of all four brothers.

John Miller, played by Tom Hanks, leads a six-man squad behind enemy lines to find Private Ryan. None of them are very happy with their assignment. As they're discussing it John Miller says, "He better be worth it. He'd better go home and cure a disease, or invent a longer-lasting light bulb."

Finally after locating Ryan, played by Matt Damon, the squad is attacked by German soldiers. John Miller is mortally wounded and as he is dying he grabs Private Ryan's shirt and he last words are, "Earn this! Earn this."

Then the movie shifts back to the present time and an elderly James Ryan is visiting the grave of John Miller in the Normandy Cemetery. With tears in his eyes, he says to the grave marker, "Every day I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. And I've tried to live my life the best I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that at least in your eyes, I've earned what all of you have done for me."

Wow! What a great movie! This film made all of us appreciate the dedication and sacrifices of our WW2 vets. But this movie is a parable about how some people relate to salvation. Because verse three of our text says we were the objects of a heavenly rescue mission. Jesus came behind the enemy lines of Satan to rescue us from this present evil age. And like Private Ryan, some people think they have to spend the rest of their lives "earning it." That's legalism.

John Miller's words haunted Private Ryan for the rest of his life, and in that final scene you could tell James Ryan wasn't certain he really had done enough to earn that sacrifice. That's legalism.

Unlike the movie, the last words Jesus said on the cross weren't "EARN THIS." His last words were a shout of triumph, "It is finished!" Sadly some Christians spend every day of their lives like Private Ryan, feeling like they have to live in a way to earn the sacrifice of Jesus. Matthew McKellar sent me a great definition of grace from one of his Southwestern Professors. Dr. Jack McGorman used to say: "Legalism is nailing a sign to the cross that says, 'necessary but not enough.'"

When Jesus said, "It is finished," He was saying there was nothing else we could ever do to be saved. My friend Adrian Rogers used to quote a little poem that says, "I cannot work my soul so save; That work my Lord has done; But I WILL work like any slave; for the love of God's dear Son!"

Stay away from the bad news gospel and let the God's gospel of grace set you free. Grace sets you free to humbly bow at the cross and confess that you can NEVER be good enough or worthy enough for that sacrifice and you'll be set free from legalism. You'll be set free to discover what real holiness is—letting Jesus live His life in and through you.

## OUTLINE

### I. MESSED-UP "GOSPEL" MESSAGES

- A. The Trump Gospel: "Believe and Succeed!"
- B. The Groupon Gospel: "The Deal of the Day"
- C. Gospel Lite FM: "At your convenience"

### II. THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE

#### Paul's Life Goal:

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." *Acts 20:24*

- A. God thought it
- B. Satan fought it
- C. Jesus brought it
- D. Faith caught it!

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." *2 Corinthians 8:9*



— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —



David O. Dykes  
Pastor, Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas

---

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David***

***Dykes in Texas.***” This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes