



Reformation Christian Ministries

The True Gospel Amidst False Ones

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I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:6-7

The Gospel to a true believer is always a comfort, for in its message is the only hope of salvation. Yet that comfort comes through the grid of a constant and grieving awareness of one's own sin (Romans 7:14, 18) which forces us to see the total lack of hope within ourselves (Romans 7:24)—Christ's work and obedience being our sole hope (Romans 7:25). Therein lies the comfort, but it arrives only through the discomfort of truly seeing ourselves as a "wretched men". The Gospel always confronts us with our sin so that our salvation is found in Christ alone.

There is, however, "another gospel"—it is more comfortable. It is a "gospel" which is merely believed, that involves more assumption than confrontation. Yes, sin must be confessed, but it is a more intellectual confession, *after all, nobody's perfect and I am a sinner just like everyone else is*. Such a "gospel" is largely one-sided, all "comfort" and no real and highly personal confrontation. Sin is narrowed into a set of do's and don'ts that can be kept and if one does pretty good, things are okay. It depends upon a Jesus who took all of our sin (i.e. discomfort) away. People don't like to be confronted, and if they are, they like to feel that they are on the right side. To be on the right side means you can define it, you may even memorize it. And when you do "sin", you can go through procedural maneuvers and apologies (*after all, no one is perfect*) and all is okay. You may be regular in church, or in a conservative, Bible-believing church, and people there do the right things. They read the Bible and pray regularly, their children are often in Christian schools (maybe even homeschooled), and most of their friends are Christian. They are in the right crowd and do the right things. Everything is so-o-o-o comfortable.

In our reformed churches, there is sometimes a tendency to equate salvation with the privileges of the

covenant so that if we belong to the covenant, go through the right of passage (public confession of faith), and we keep ourselves officially clean thereafter, we are okay. Some who have been through this approach and find it a bit sterile will then seek to recover the "joy" by moving into more contemplative evangelical kinds of *mysticism*. The same problem exists in all groups where the Gospel begins to relax and become comfortable because people learn to say, do and "feel" the right things to pass muster and in order to "belong" or "fit in" and feel good.

Yet any true minister of Christ is often struck at how much like the Jews of Jesus' time, are many Christians of today. Some are more Pharisaical and others more Sadducean. Many have the right ancestry (John 8:39). They say and do the right things in order to be comfortable but any serious scratching beneath the surface is either resisted or avoided. Sadly, this problem gets passed onto many a mission field where converts learn what to say and do and this may have repeated itself for several generations. Visitors from abroad often bring all kinds of "new" things, but all seem aimed at a comfortable gospel full of peace, joy, good feelings and little or no pain.

In the scores of letters that I receive each month from Africa, India, Pakistan and many other places, **the word "gospel" is thrown around like it is some well understood term on which there is total unanimity and complete agreement when nothing could be farther from the truth.** The false gospel addressed in Galatians was not some weird cult. It entered into a church established by the Apostle Paul just three or four years before. You can't get better teaching than that.

Reformation Christian Ministries takes its name from the Reformation and has a strong commitment to the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation which initially stood juxtapositioned with the various false gospels of Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxism, Anabaptism and political expediency in the name of Christ. RCM is committed to the true Gospel and increasingly aware of the rarity of its existence abroad. Too much of this "comfortable gospel" exists and RCM remains committed to breaking through these often long-standing and subtle barriers which exist around the world as part of its mission to fulfill the Great Commission. **Preaching the Gospel involves confronting those who have never heard it, but also those who have been under false gospels.**

 **Geoffrey Donnan**

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