

## Introduction

There are many Bible doctrines that we defend today, and well we should. We defend creation. We defend the inspiration and preservation of the Scriptures. We defend the authority of the Bible. We defend Godly music. We have done a fairly good job of defending these doctrines, but the one area that we have left undefended, to the extent that Biblical faith is undermined on every side, even in Fundamental churches, is the Gospel message itself.

The apostle Paul said, “. . . *I am set for the defence of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:17b). One thing took precedence in the heart of the apostle. The Gospel message had to be defended. And defend it he did. His defense of the Gospel would cost him his very life, but that did not deter him from his defense. He said,

Acts 20:23-24

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But *none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself*, so that I might *finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Later he wrote to Timothy and said,

II Timothy 4:1-7

1 I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2 *Preach the word*; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, *do the work of an evangelist*, make full proof of thy ministry.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, *I have finished my course*, I have kept the faith:

Paul empathically stated that he had “finished [his] course.” His course had been set: it was to defend and “testify the Gospel of the grace of God.” He had fought a good fight. He had enlisted others in the defense of the Gospel.

Philippians 1:6-7

6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and *in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*

Paul set the standard that all of us are to follow. He was willing to die in defense of the Gospel. If the Gospel needed defending in the day of the apostle Paul, how much more does it need to be defended in the day of apostasy in which we live? The Bible gives us several reasons why we must defend the Gospel, and these should be motivation to all of us to be partakers with Paul in the “defence and confirmation of the gospel.”

Why should we defend the Gospel? The purity of the Biblical message of Salvation needs to be defended because:

### **1. The Gospel Is the Power of God unto Salvation.**

Paul stated that the message itself had the very power of God to save the soul.

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of *the gospel of Christ*: for it is *the power of God unto salvation* to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

There are many who try to make Romans 1:16 say that Christ is the power of God to salvation, and thus minimize the Gospel message itself. The Apostle Paul however, stated clearly that *the Gospel of Christ alone* is the power of God to salvation. This power of the Gospel is available to anyone who will believe. Why is it important to distinguish between the Person of Christ and the Gospel of Christ? Christ is not the power of God: He is God. The power of God to save is

wrapped up in a message – the Gospel message. Therefore, any change in the message would remove the “power of God unto salvation” from the Gospel.

## 2. The Gospel Reveals God’s Righteousness.

Romans 1:17

For *therein is the righteousness of God revealed* from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Changes in the Gospel often take our focus away from “the righteousness of God” to the righteousness of man. The purity of the message must be defended to retain the focus on the righteousness of God.

## 3. The Gospel is the Only Message Which Can Save.

The Gospel is unique. No other message that could be given to man would produce salvation. When the Galatian churches were following a different Gospel, Paul reminded them that this other Gospel was not the *same*, but a perverted Gospel.

Galatians 1:7

Which is not *another*<sup>1</sup>; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

Likewise, Peter announced that there is no other message that can save. He said:

Acts 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Peter was committed to the uniqueness of the Gospel message. No other message could save a man.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the same word that is used by Jesus when He says: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16). This was “another” (allos) Comforter, which means that He was “*another (the same kind of)* Comforter”. He is not different from Christ. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are Comforters. Christ was the Comforter during His earthly ministry. The Holy Spirit was to be the Comforter afterward. He is the third Person of the Godhead, equal with the Father and the Son. This word is contrasted with the Greek word “heteros” which means different, as found in Galatians 1:6 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto *another (different)* gospel.”

#### 4. Any Change in the Gospel Would Bring a Curse.

There are curses pronounced in the Scriptures against anyone who would “add unto” (Revelation 22:18) or “shall take away from the words” (Revelation 22:19) that God has given. These kinds of curses are found throughout the Scriptures for anyone who would dare to alter any of God’s Word. But when the Apostle Paul talks about the purity of the Gospel, he does not pronounce a curse only upon the one who changes the Gospel, but upon the one who proclaims or repeats any different Gospel.

Galatians 1:8

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.*

#### 5. The Gospel Is Already as Simple as Possible.

Often the justification for changing the Gospel is that we must simplify the message for children. Others say that most adults are incapable of understanding Biblical terminologies and therefore need a simpler explanation of the Gospel. We are told that most newspaper articles are written at a fifth-grade level. So, it is asserted, we must accommodate the Gospel to the age and education of the average person.

Paul argued that changing God’s message is not simplifying it, but complicating it. It is no longer the message that God gave that can save, but a different, cursed gospel. And, Paul said, this would be *the most likely doctrine to be corrupted.*

II Corinthians 11:3-4

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or [if] ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with [him].

The preaching of the Gospel, as all other areas of Christianity, was to be “in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God . . . (II Corinthians 1:12). Since every aspect of the Gospel is as simple as God could

make it, then our attempts to simplify it more are an offence to God. We must defend the simplicity of the Gospel.

## 6. The Pure Preaching of the Gospel Pleases God.

Many churches frame their methods and message to please men. They use community surveys, and public relations analysis to determine what kind of music, messages, and church services are wanted by the people in the area of the church. In essence, they affirm, we must change Christianity, in every respect from the music to the message, to please the audience. This humanistic approach forgets that everything in Christianity is supposed to please God, not men.

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for *if I yet pleased men*, I should *not* be the servant of Christ.

This becomes the fundamental difference in the motives for preaching the Gospel. If my motive is correct my entire emphasis will be on pleasing God. If my motive is to please men, Paul says, I am *not* the servant of Christ. I must not be concerned with how many “decisions” I have at the end of my life, but rather how pleased is God with the methods and message that I have used. We still need to ask with Samuel “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?” Samuel leaves no doubt about the answer to this question when he concludes: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice . . .” (I Samuel 15:22).

## 7. The Gospel Was Not Given by Man, but by God Himself.

There were many famous preachers of the Gospel in the Apostle Paul’s day. Some people identified themselves with each of these famous men. Some identified with Paul, others with Apollos, others with Peter, and others with Christ.<sup>2</sup> As Judaizers, and later Gnostics began to change the Gospel message, they tried to identify their message with one of the Apostles or some other respected preacher. Even though Paul was an apostle, he was not going to defend the Gospel as having originated with himself, but as having originated with God alone. It did not come from Peter, James, John, Apollos, Matthew, or any other man: it came from Jesus Christ Himself.

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<sup>2</sup> “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (I Corinthians 1:12).

Galatians 1:11-12

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me *is not after man.*

12 For *I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it*, but by the *revelation of Jesus Christ.*

One of the justifications people use for preaching another gospel is that some famous preacher, whether living or not, has preached this gospel. They argue that there were many professions of salvation under the ministry of this man; therefore we cannot dispute the fact that God used this variation of the gospel? But we can, and must dispute it. Any change in the Gospel makes it man's gospel and not "the Gospel of God" (II Corinthians 11:7). Our defense of the Gospel must be emphatic about *all* changes, by anyone, not just those of known cults and heretics.

#### **8. The Gospel Is the Only Message that Offers Security.**

People often go to a pastor with doubts about their salvation. They question the degree of their own commitment, their dedication, their sincerity, or their sorrow. Their own doubts give rise to renewals of their profession of faith, and at times their finally having assurance of salvation. Sadly, in many cases this assurance does not last, and they will seek it again and again.

The Gospel of the Bible offers a real assurance of salvation. Paul wrote:

I Thessalonians 1:5

For our *gospel came* not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and *in much assurance*; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

With the preaching of the Gospel comes "much assurance." This Gospel is not just words, but the power of God. It is the Holy Spirit giving assurance. The question then must be, will God use my words or His Word to give assurance? Is it real God-given assurance if it does not last to the end of our lives?

## Hebrews 6:11

And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence<sup>3</sup> to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

We need to be earnest in our defense of the Gospel. For others to have the “full assurance of hope unto the end,” we must defend the Gospel as God has given it to us in His Word. Paul wrote that the two immutable things, God’s promise and His oath, are the things that give the believer the “full assurance of hope unto the end.”

## Hebrews 6:16-20

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and *an oath* for confirmation is to them *an end of all strife*.

17 Wherein *God*, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, *confirmed it by an oath*:

18 *That* by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we might have a strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19 Which *hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast*, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Salvation without “full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:22) is not salvation according to the Word of God. Over and over again the Bible describes salvation as “eternal life.” The very word “eternal” means that it never ends. “Eternal life” certainly denotes security, and these words are often found in passages that directly speak about the security of salvation.

## John 3:15-16

15 That whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but have *eternal life*.

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish*, but have *everlasting life*.

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<sup>3</sup> BDB/Thayers # 4710 spoude from 4692; TDNT - 7:559,1069; n f AV - diligence 5, haste 2, business 1, care 1, forwardness 1, **earnest care** 1, carefulness 1; 12 1) haste, with haste 2) **earnestness**, diligence 2a) **earnestness** in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything 2b) to give all diligence, interest one's self most **earnestly**.

John 4:36

And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto *life eternal*: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

John 5:39-40

39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have *eternal life*: and they are they which testify of me.

40 And ye will not come to me, *that ye might have life*.

John 6:54

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life*; and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:68-69

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? *thou hast the words of eternal life*.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

John 10:27-30

27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them*, and they follow me:

28 *And I give unto them eternal life*; and *they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand*.

29 My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and *no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand*.

30 I and my Father are one.

John 17:2-3

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should *give eternal life* to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And *this is life eternal*, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Acts 13:48

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to *eternal life* believed.

Romans 5:21

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace reign* through righteousness *unto eternal life* by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but *the gift of God is eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Titus 1:2-3

2 In *hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised* before the world began;

3 But hath in due times *manifested his word through preaching*, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

Titus 3:7

That being *justified by his grace*, we should be made heirs according to *the hope of eternal life*.

I John 2:25

And this is the promise that *he hath promised us, even eternal life*.

I John 5:11-13

11 And this is the record, that *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son*.

12 *He that hath the Son hath life*; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; *that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

I John 5:20

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God, and eternal life*.

Jude 1:21

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for *the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*.

If the message we are preaching does not produce an assurance that the hearer has eternal life, then it is not the Gospel message. Is it any wonder that we see people “go forward” week after week at the church “altar call” to be saved again and again? Doesn’t it bother us that our children time and again hear a different gospel from every evangelist that comes to our churches? The fruit of a corrupt tree cannot be eternal. We must go back to the Tree of Life and take of *its* fruit. We must learn again what the Gospel is, before we can defend it. The lives of men, women, and children in our generation depend upon us to rightly teach the doctrine of salvation.