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## Do Not Lose Heart

Avoiding the Gimmick Gospel Heresy  
Jason K. Boothe



*Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:1-14 (ESV)*

Although we live in a world openly hostile to the precious things of God, Christians are commanded not to lose heart! Our privilege in this dark and spiritually dead world is to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ: nothing more, certainly nothing less. Allow me the liberty to share with you the good news of Jesus Christ.

Without knowledge of God's righteous requirements, the substitutionary death of Christ is nothing more than a tragic tail of an innocent man's terrible death. We share the truth of God's holiness as revealed in His Law, a standard which each and every person by virtue of birth and lifestyle, have broken beyond any chance of human repair. The law is the schoolmaster that drives us to the good news of Jesus (Gal 3:24).

We humbly declare that the penalty for sin is eternal death (Romans 6:23). We uncover the sinful shame of the hearer in order to present unto them He who came to forgive sin and resurrect dead souls unto newness of life: Christ the Lord (John 11:25). The command goes forth as it did those many centuries ago by the Apostles, "Repent and believe the Gospel" (Mark. 1:15).

When the good news of God's Son Jesus goes forth, the Spirit of God goes along side the preaching of this wonderful message to convict hearts, effectually calling the elect unto the Father through Jesus Christ (John 16:8).

The Gospel is quick and powerful in its work, saving to the uttermost those who are called unto eternal life to the glory of God alone (Romans 1:16). This is the Gospel message. God saves sinners apart for any human merit, by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. This good news is precious and wonderful!

So, why is it so popular today to see churches doing everything *but* preaching this clearly biblical Gospel message? We must understand that our holy privilege is, to the world, our folly and shame. Jesus said that Christians will be hated and mocked for the sake of the Gospel (Luke 21:17). Sadly, many in our day have "lost heart," tailoring the once living message to the depraved tastes of the dead sinner, leaving nothing in its place but psychology-laden, gimmick-filled, pep talks about one's "best life now."

The Gospel is forsaken, traded in for that which is nothing more than "disgraceful, underhanded ways..... cunning tampering with God's word"(2 Cor. 4:2). As M. Dean Stephens so eloquently stated years ago, "To hear many pastors and evangelists preach, you are not sure whether they are offering a crucified and risen Lord or a no-down-payment, twelve-easy-installments way to heaven."

Entire movements exist to train pastors in techniques that will allow them to market their churches as places in which dead sinners will feel comfortable! Seasonal programs and outreach events purposefully designed to seem "less threatening" are touted as the next big thing in neighborhood evangelism. As if these blatant "bait and switch" tactics aren't enough, the very message that is finally presented to those who come is one that resembles no biblical Gospel at all!

Sinners are convinced not of their willful disobedience to the revealed law of God, not of their utter hopelessness apart from the Sovereign Lord, but rather of their importance and self-worth! After all, in many of these churches, sinners are told that they alone have the "free will" power to determine their ultimate destiny! How many times have you heard the adage, "God did His part, now you do yours?" This man-centered nonsense is almost always followed by, "Friend, invite Jesus into your heart right now, allow Him to be Lord of your life." Nowhere in all the Bible can there be found anyone offering up the Gospel to dead sinners in this fashion. This type of anthropocentric presentation is tantamount to storing one's precious pearls in the swine pen! Sadly, however, the "pearls" in this analogy are of the phony variety!

This gimmick gospel is exactly what Paul preached against in the opening scripture passage. We do not have to rely on cunning human innovation and novelty to present the Spirit-empowered Gospel of Christ. We do not need "Football Sundays," "Gospel and Groceries," "Biker Rodeo Sundays," "Free oil-change w/ every Worship Service," "Bring your Pet to Church day," "Gospel Clown Day," foolishness! Let Christ's Church "renounce those disgraceful, underhanded ways! (2 Corinthians 4:2a). And as we stand together for the sake of the True Gospel, let us not lose heart!

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*"No lover of the gospel can conceal from himself the fact that the days are evil...yet our solemn conviction is that things are much worse in many churches than they seem to be, and are rapidly tending downward...What doctrine remains to be abandoned? What other truth is to be the object of contempt? A new religion has been originated which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute of moral honesty, palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of Scripture is derided, the Holy Ghost is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sins is turned into a fiction, and the Resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them!"*



## The Gimmick Gospel

W.F. Bell

"World's Largest Church" - "World's Fastest Growing Church" - "America's Fastest Growing Sunday School" - "Fastest Growing Church in the State."

These are frequently heard and seen slogans in these modern days. But, isn't it a little silly to brag or boast about numbers (either large or small ones)? Where in all of God's Word does it tell us to gimmick people into attending church services or Sunday School, like many "fundamental" churches are doing today? The answers to these questions are obvious to all Bible readers. The modern "gimmick gospel" is a fakery, faulty in its desired results, and foolish in the light of Scripture.

### The Fakery Of The Gimmick Gospel

That so-called "gospel" which centers around man primarily, and either excludes entirely or partially the glory of God in the saving of men's wretched souls, must of necessity be nothing but a fakery. In other words, the "gimmick gospel" is not a gospel at all. It is an imitation, a counterfeit, and not the glorious gospel (good news) of God's Word. 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 (Gal. 1:6-7). Note that there is only one gospel and that is the gospel of Christ! What a perversion of the one true gospel is this modern "gimmick gospel"! Give-aways, gadgets, and games are weekly emphasized to keep the crowds coming. It's "Balloon Sunday" one week, "Ice cream Sunday" another week, and "Bo-Zo-the-Clown Sunday" the next week. On and on the "gimmick gospel" goes, going so far as to have "karate preachers" performing their stunts, and "cut-off-your-tie" days. Some churches have such a carnival-like atmosphere about them, that now their members no longer talk about going to "church," but to the "circus."

Where such a fleshly show is carried on, the Lord Jesus Christ is not being honored and it is easily proved. Where are all those Sunday morning throngs on Sunday night? Where are they on Wednesday night? Has there ever been one new church building built yet, that was built to house the Sunday night and Wednesday night crowds of the big churches? Check around for yourself and see!

### The Gimmick Gospel Is Faulty

Where are the genuine results and the truly changed lives brought about by the "gimmick gospel"? The answer is simple: there are none. There cannot be anyone truly changed by the tactics and techniques of men that is, changed from sinners into loyal subjects of King Jesus. Only God can change and truly convert poor sinners! How little this is believed in our day!

After getting thousands to attend Sunday School, what is taught them after getting them there? This is the crucial question. We are not against churches busing children and adults to Sunday School and church services, if they give them the pure gospel after getting them to come, and didn't have to gimmick them to get them there. But, here lies the whole problem. Seemingly, there are false motives to get people to the church services (so everyone can tell how many were there), and there is a false gospel preached after the people come. How tragic that multitudes of blind people are being led by blind leaders! And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

We urge you to weigh carefully these solemn words: "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13). Do we believe this? Men can get "decisions," and men can persuade folks to "come forward," but does that mean that God the Holy Spirit has done a real work in their hearts? Some think so, but not this writer. We "fear and tremble" when we think of being called of God to preach and teach His Word! We consider the greatest of all callings and vocations to be preaching. We take it seriously and care nothing at all if our name is never recorded in the religious journals of our day. We never want to preach a faulty gospel, but always proclaim that true gospel that honors Christ and exalts the sovereignty of God in salvation.

If the "gimmick gospel" is the answer to all of America's ills and problems today, why is there more deadness and unconcern for God and His glory than ever before? The medicine is not working; and it is not working because it is faulty!

### The Gimmick Gospel Is Foolish

We cannot ever believe that Christ even once engaged in anything foolish. Neither can we imagine the apostles of our Lord doing things that are being done today in the name of Christianity. We have read and heard all the arguments for such "gimmicks," but they have all fallen far short of that "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (I Tim. 1:11). We cannot bring ourselves to see in the Scriptures that Almighty God is engaged in a crash program to "hurry up and get people saved before it's too late." God is on His throne. What need has He to worry and fret? What need has God to rush and hurry up? "For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). What a humbling word is this! We are vain and yet we would be wise! We are depraved and yet we want to help out "little Jesus." Who is this Jesus "a beggar"? What a caricature (distorted or inferior view) is being made in this day of the holy Son of God! Alas, our moderns think not of Jesus Christ as the Sovereign saviour, but as a weak, effeminate, hippie-looking, disappointed founder of another religion.

We declare to you that modern preachers and modern churches are proving themselves to be fools indeed, when instead of doing things Biblically, they take on the world's ways and habits of doing things. The world sells their merchandise and sells their sports; but the true gospel is not for sale, never has been nor ever will be. The gospel of grace is not a bargain or something we merely try to get people to accept, but rather a glorious message of good news, the good news of Christ and what He has already done for poor, perishing sinners.

Are you a sinner? Have you been laid low by God's convicting power? Are you guilty and undeserving? If so, there's good news for you: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; and the great apostle Paul said, "of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). If the chief of sinners was saved, then there's hope for you! all who feel themselves sinners and in need of the Saviour.

Let us rid this country of the "gimmick gospel," for it is fakery, faulty and foolish. And in the words of Charles Spurgeon: "We can do without modern learning, but we cannot do without the ancient gospel. We can do without oratory and eloquence, but we cannot do without Christ crucified. Lord, revive Thy work by giving us the old-fashioned gospel back again in our pulpits."

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**FIVE FACTS EVERY CHRISTIAN  
SHOULD KNOW  
Revealed in Romans 8:29,30**

**FACT #1,** For whom He did foreknow # Before the foundation of the world, God determined who shall be the objects of his love (1 Peter 1:2; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 21:27).

**FACT #2,** He also did predestinate # Before the foundation of the world, God determined how the objects of His love shall be made to know their position (1 Thess. 5:9; Eph. 1:5,11; Phil. 2:13).

**FACT #3,** Them He also called # Before the foundation of the world, God determined when in their lives He would quicken them to spiritual life (Gal. 1:15,16; Eph. 1:10,13,18).

**FACT #4,** Them He also justified # Before the foundation of the world, God determined by what means the objects of his love would be reconciled to Himself (Rom 3:24; Eph. 1:6; Eph. 2:13).

**FACT #5,** Them He also glorified # Before the foundation of the world, God determined where the objects of His love should spend eternity (Rev. 21:24; Eph. 2:4-7; Col. 3:4). Consider that these five facts were established in time, before the foundation of the world and they cannot be completely fulfilled until after this present world passes away, yet, they are recorded in the Sacred Scriptures in the past tense, as though they had already been fulfilled. Such is the certainty of God's purpose for you. We also notice, that, whereas, these facts have to do with your personal and eternal salvation, none of them depend upon you for their fulfillment, but were determined long before you ever existed and are according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph. 1:5,6).

One thing that is very evident, is, that you are not a Christian today because of some twist of fate, or because the odds happened to be in your favor, or that you are just plain lucky. You are a Christian today because of some very deliberate planning on God's part, that began before He created this world and shall continue long after this world is dissolved. How may you know that these things pertain to you after all? Peter admonishes us to, !give diligence to make your calling and election sure."First of all, you will know that you have been quickened or made spiritually alive by God, if you have a spiritual appetite. Do you truly hunger after the things of God? Do you seek to know and understand the Word of God? Is the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life? Do you have love, joy and peace within your own soul, longsuffering, gentleness and goodness towards others and faith, meekness and temperance before God?

Have you confessed that Jesus is Lord and do you believe that God raised Him from the dead? Do you recognize that only the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, can cleanse you from all sin?

If you can answer yes to these questions, this is evidence that God has wrought a miracle of grace in your heart and you have been born again. These things are certain because they depend not on you, but on God the Father, who purposed your redemption, God the Son who accomplished your redemption and God the Holy Spirit who applies your redemption.

What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who shall be against us? (Romans 8:31) So, rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven (Luke 10:20).# C.R.M.

**Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?  
by C. H. Spurgeon**



An evil resides in the professed camp of the Lord so gross in its imprudence that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it. During the past few years it has developed at an abnormal rate evil for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a more clever thing than hinting to the Church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them. From speaking out as the Puritans did, the Church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the Church. If it is a Christian work why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." That is clear enough. So it would have been if He has added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel" No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to Him. Then again, "He gave some apostles, some prophets, some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry." Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no martyr roll. Again, providing amusement is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all His apostles. What was the attitude of the Church to the world? "Ye are the salt," not sugar candy# something the world will spite out, not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead." He was in awful earnestness!

Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into His mission, He would have been more popular when they went back, because of the searching nature of His teaching. I do not hear Him say, "Run after these people, Peter, and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick, Peter, we must get the people somehow!" Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them. In vain will the Epistles be searched to find any trace of the gospel amusement. Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching fooling is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon. After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the Church had a prayer meeting, but they did not pray, "Lord grant Thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are." If they ceased not for preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments.

Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They "turned the world upside down." That is the difference! Lord, clear the Church of all the rot and rubbish the devil has imposed on her and bring us back to apostolic methods. Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to affect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God because the Church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy-laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment has been God's link in the chain of their conversion, stand up! There are none to answer. The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today's ministry is believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt, that it sets men on fire.

**Altering the Call: A Modern Perversion of the Biblical Gospel**  
**Jason K. Boothe**



"Sinner, Let God be your Sovereign Lord today!"

"God did His part, will you do yours?"

"Just take one step toward God down toward this altar, and He will do the rest!"

"Sinner, will you allow Jesus into your heart?"

"Jesus died for every soul on earth. Don't go to hell against His will!"

These "classic closers" are just a few of the verbal hooks the typical Evangelical preacher can utilize in his or "her" attempt to convince sinners to come forward during the altar call or invitation. The typical approach leading up to this crescendo moment is to tell the assembled crowd that God has done all that He can do in order to save mankind. The rest, normally said in a sober voice, "is up to you, sinner friend."

A normal fixture in most every Evangelical church is the prayer bench. This piece of furniture is generally viewed as the most important in the church, the place where sinners publicly come to God. While often touted by many as "the Ole' Time Way," the prayer bench and its methodology are quite recent developments, dating back no later than the 19th century (Charles Finney is typically credited as the father of this approach).

What did the church do before Finney's prayer bench? How did the church ever make it for over 1,800 years without "calling people down toward the altar?" How did preachers "get" sinners to repent of their sins without the high-pressure sales tactics now used by the majority of modern Evangelical preachers? A church without an altar call..... scary!

Being raised in a church that utilized the invitation system, this particular man-made tradition was a sacred cow near and dear to my heart. So I searched the scripture for proof texts, hoping that Christ or His disciples gave altar calls: they did not. I dug through the writings of Paul, praying that perhaps he used the prayer bench and public altar calls: He never did. In fact, I did not find one text of Scripture commanding, authorizing, or even implying that public altar calls should follow the preaching of God's Word. I did, however, discover the Scriptures' genuine method for public testimony of conversion: Baptism in Water. So, without any scriptural imperative, I no longer give "altar calls" following my preaching.

What can a sinner get at the front of a church that is not available to him right there in his seat? If the Sovereign Lord of the universe has sent His Holy Spirit to remove John Smith's heart of stone and to replace it with a heart of flesh, is God's hand some how shortened because Mr. Smith didn't first come down to the front?

If God "chose John Smith in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1), will John somehow miss out because the preacher did not have the pianist sing yet another verse of "Just As I Am?"

What about those who do come forward? Some, admittedly, are moved by genuine Holy Spirit conviction to repent and believe. Others, however, are emotionally stirred by exciting preachers using sales tactics like those mentioned earlier. People flood the crusade stages by the tens of thousands all around the world. Ministers are all too swift to pronounce that those who come forward are "new children in Christ." Yet the retention rate is sobering. You don't need Barna stats to figure out what I am saying. If your church utilizes the altar call method, think back to your last "really good" one. Perhaps ten to twenty people came forward and were heralded by the pastor or preacher as "being saved!" How many of those people are still counted in your numbers today? You see, the altar call gives both the church and those who come forward false assurance that walking down an isle and/or kneeling at a prayer bench is tantamount to being saved when it can not provide such assurance.

The altar call is one of the crown jewels of free-willism as well. It physically represents what most Christian believe today, namely, that God has already done His part and is now waiting for sinners to do their part. The altar call allows "free moral agents" the opportunity to publicly choose Jesus Christ, thereby doing his part to inherit eternal life. The altar call allows men and women the chance to "put our little hand in God's big hand."

Not every single preacher who uses the invitation system is guilty of every error mentioned above. However, I am not worried about a seminary-trained pastor who fully understands salvation by grace alone through faith alone. I am concerned about the average church-goers placing their soul's trust in a method (altar call) rather than in Christ alone.

Preacher, why use innovations in our efforts to preach the Gospel that are not found in the whole of the Bible? Preaching the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. We need not add man-made strategies to God's means of gathering in His elect. Preach the Gospel and those who are appointed to eternal life WILL believe. And by all means, new converts should make their conversion public, not during the fourteenth verse of "Just As I Am," but in the waters of baptism.

I want to sound the Gospel call without "altering" it. I pray that you do as well.



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