

Why Exodus, Chambers Are on a Collision Course With Jesus

The Exodus leadership of Clark Whitten, Alan Chambers and Randy Thomas are teaching believers to violate our Lord's own instructions about how we are to pray. Jesus teaches us that when we pray to God, we should say words to this effect: "Forgive us our debts as [i.e., to the extent that] we ourselves also have forgiven our debtors."

Yet Rev. Whitten writes, and Chambers and Thomas concur, "There is no biblical basis for believers to confess sins to God for forgiveness. To each other for healing, yes; but not to God for forgiveness. How much time will that free up!" (*Pure Grace*, p. 20). Mr. Thomas, the No. 3 person at Exodus, adds that believers who continue to pray to God "Forgive us our sins" engage in "a self-righteous ritual" and "deny the righteousness of Christ that is already present."

Who are you going to believe? The Exodus leadership or Jesus?

This statement is just one of what I term "The Seven Pillars of Rev. Whitten's Wisdom." Whitten is the chair of the Exodus board and Chambers' and Thomas' pastor, whom they follow down the doctrinal line. Indeed, Chambers, the president of Exodus, has stated: "To say that I recommend [Whitten's book *Pure Grace*] is the understatement of the century." With Whitten's book, Chambers says, "God has unveiled something that has been veiled for hundreds and hundreds of years."

Whitten doesn't identify in his book "seven pillars." The enumeration is mine. Yet what I identify as the seven pillars are all quoted strong positions taken from Whitten's book. They should alarm all Christians. What are the other six?

(1) "Listen, Jesus did not die to modify your behavior!"

(2) "My bad works don't move God any more than my good works move Him. He simply isn't moved by 'works' of any kind. If you are motivated to do a great work for God, good luck!"

(3) "We are free to [do anything, good or bad] ... all without condemnation from God. ... Our liberty isn't negated by our sin."

(4) The "anti-gospel" says: "God is pleased when you act right. When you don't, He will clean your clock! [As a believer, it is foolish to think that you can do anything to] tick the Big Guy off."

(5) The "anti-gospel" says: "Fear God and keep His commandments."

(6) The "anti-gospel" says: "The Holy Spirit was given to you to empower you to act better and better and convict you of your sin when you stray."

Every one of these principles contradicts the truth of the gospel (see previous critique, "Cheap Grace Masquerading as Pure Grace: The Unfortunate Gospel of Rev. Clark Whitten"). They epitomize what the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (martyred near the end of Hitler's reign) defined as "cheap grace" in his classic book *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937): "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession."

That is exactly what Whitten, Chambers and Thomas teach: forgiveness without having to repent of grossly immoral behavior, an end to church discipline since all sin is equal and all believers sin regularly, and a view of confessing our sins to God for forgiveness after conversion as a waste of time. Bonhoeffer adds: "Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

I'm not suggesting that the Exodus leadership *wants* believers to experience grace without discipleship, dying to one's self and letting Christ live in them. I am saying, though, that they *assure* self-professed believers (falsely) that the nature of grace is such that believers *can* have one without the other. Again, Bonhoeffer says cheap grace is the notion that "you can stay as you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness." The Exodus leadership says that one *shouldn't*, but they also assure Christians that one *can*.

Chambers now calls "evangelical" a "dirty word" that he no longer applies to Exodus or to himself (See "Guests in an Ever Changing Culture—Letter from Alan Chambers March 2013"). He complains that evangelicalism is too "black and white," and he assures us that God is not "black and white," which presumably means that God's aim is to shade the light into gray. The story of Christ is now the story of gray breaking into the darkness.

Evangelicalism, Chambers complains, gives too much attention to "right and wrong" and requires one to "take a stand" on moral issues. Chambers cries: "Gone are the days of evangelizing through scare tactics, moral legislation and church discipline."

So instead, the Exodus leadership prefers to assure self-professed Christians who engage in unrepentant homosexual practice that they are going to heaven, irrespective of whether they bring their life into line with a confession of Christ's lordship. The Exodus leadership refuses to take a stand against "gay marriage" even as it takes public policy stances on issues that homosexual activists support. And the Exodus leadership categorically rejects church discipline despite the fact that it is commanded by Jesus and Paul.

Earlier this month, Chambers even went so far as to insert secretly the email address of Jeremy Hooper, an abrasive homosexual activist, into the middle of a private group email

thread containing a number of pro-family leaders (including *moi*). This led to a number of misrepresentations online by homosexual activist sites and even . This deceitful alignment with a person who maligns those who believe in a male-female foundation for marriage is not exactly a model for Christian conduct, certainly not for someone leading what is supposed to be a Christian ministry.

At the end of April, Thomas gushed over John Paulk's repudiation of his previous books about coming out of a homosexual life and his flirtations with his homosexual past:

I told him that while I related to him more after his gay bar visit in 2000, I could relate to him even more now that he is genuinely questioning past actions and motivations. While I don't agree with all of his conclusions he shared on the phone, I can say I agree with about 95% of what he shared including renouncing the term "ex-gay." I love that he is pursuing the true meaning of God's grace. ... Listening to John and his apparent newfound depth of honesty made me happy for him. ... He is ... now more authentic than I have ever known him to be. ... John, ... I love that you are wrestling with various issues with humility and honesty. In His grip of grace, you are safe.

In an Exodus post a couple of weeks ago, Leslie Chambers affirmed her husband's severance of the transformed life from genuine saving faith, saying that while obedience to God is preferred, it is not "required." Neither Leslie nor Alan appears to realize that a necessary byproduct of true faith is a life lived for God.

Who ever thought we would reach the day when it would be necessary for faithful followers of Jesus to exodus out of Exodus?

Robert A. J. Gagnon is associate professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Visit him online at .