

Baptist Pastor Calls 'Love Wins' a Counterfeit Gospel

Will only a few select people make it to heaven? Will billions of people spend eternity in hell?

Many people are angry with God for allowing evil and suffering to exist in this world, and yet they are also angry with the idea of God as judge. You can't have it both ways, says Trevin Wax, associate pastor of First Baptist Church in Shelbyville, Tenn., and author of the new book *Counterfeit Gospels: Rediscovering the Good News in a World of False Hope*.

"If you expect God to do something about the evil in this world, then you want God to judge," Wax explains.

The God who is truly scary, he adds, is not the wrathful God of the Bible, but the god of the "judgmentless gospel," who closes his eyes to the evil of this world, shrugs his shoulders, and ignores it in the name of love.

"What kind of 'love' is this?" Wax asks. "A god who is never angered at sin and who lets evil go by unpunished is not worthy of worship."

Hell has recently become a controversial topic with the release of *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*. Written by Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., the bestselling book reexamines Christianity's traditional understanding of the afterlife.

While Wax says that some evangelicals are responding to the book in unhelpful and pastorally damaging ways to, he still takes issue with Bell's message.

"In the end, the judgmentless gospel is no gospel at all. It

leaves us with a diminished God and no need for grace,” Wax notes. “Once we take away judgment, we lose the gravity of our sin. Once we lose sight of our sinfulness, we short-circuit our experience of the powerful gratitude that comes from receiving grace.”

Counterfeit gospels can be very appealing, Wax explains, because when we omit eternal judgment from the gospel, we can present a more palatable version of Christianity to society.

“Unfortunately, when we downplay or deny judgment, we lose one of the reasons to share our faith in the first place. Our desire to remove the obstacle actually removes the urgency,” Wax says.

He concludes, “I pray that Rob Bell will once again preach the glories of the God who truly loves, the God who loves us despite our sin, the God who takes on flesh and dies for us in order that we might find eternal satisfaction in Him.”