

Glorifying God or Irreverent? A Word to ‘Christian’ Athletes

I’ve written a book about it (*The Real Gospel*). I’ve written numerous articles on it. To me, it is the greatest spiritual American tragedy that I must put you in remembrance of again lest it drift from you and slip from your mind.

There is a gross revision of the gospel being spewed from preachers’ mouths today in our nation that is so far beneath the mind of Christ and the way of His kingdom.

We live in a day when popular church culture is being shaped by a cacophony of strange voices all vying for our loyalty—from America’s most popular television preachers and mega-church pastors toning down on the moral demands of the gospel to many professing “Christian” athletes and celebrities who unworthily and irreverently refer to God as the “supreme power” and “man upstairs,” and whose faith is more often than not detached from their lifestyles.

The height of their knowledge of God and that of many American Christians seems to be that He reigns in heaven for their own personal happiness and the fulfillment of their own dreams and careers.

God-glorifying or Irreverent? A Word to Christian Athletes

I realize that there are many Christ-glorifying athletes in our nation whose walk truly matches their talk, but there are still far too many who “in their deeds ... deny Him” (Titus 1:16), who praise God with their lips but whose heart is far from Him (Matt. 15:8). Here is a strong word for these irreverent athletes:

God and your deceased loved ones are not watching you play sport and cheering for you to score! They are not honored by your self-adulation and misplaced zeal for things you are ignorant of. Your loved ones are now in eternity and they are only interested in having eternity stamped in earthly men's hearts and seeing them convicted of their sins, gloriously saved, and truly living for the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ. If they could live again they would shout that to you.

Your view and perspective of the kingdom of God is carnal and skewed and most unworthy of Jesus' holy sacrifice. You are like a muddy pig stomping around in the king's palace. You need your darkened thinking renewed and elevated to a higher order. If you are really a Christian and want to use your God-given talents to glorify Christ, then use the platform He has given you to be a living witness of the real gospel. Then you will see what it means to suffer even a little for the Savior you claim to follow. That's also when you'll find out if you're living for your fan's applause or the Master's approval.

If you're really as tough as you seem to be on the football field or wherever you display your talents, and you sincerely seek to please God and honor those who've gone on into eternity, instead of pleasing and appeasing your fan base, why not preach the gospel? Instead of saying "God this" and "God that," why not be radical and say "Jesus this" and "Jesus that"? It's the name of Jesus that scares demons and induces persecution. You will not glorify God until you can at least identify in a simple clear way with His Son.

A Different Gospel

The problem with many of these professional athletes and also professing Christian celebrities is they have no solid mentors in their lives. They model their lives after famous hipster rappers or sissified celebrity pastors who appear cool and hip and preach a fashionable perversion of faith, but don't live

holy and can hardly make any demon tremble.

The modern gospel proclaimed today differs from the gospel that was preached just one half-century ago in that man, not Jesus Christ, is its center. Today's American gospel elevates the fulfillment of self and the promotion of one's passion for pleasure and fame. It is a gospel that has been stripped of its more challenging demands, its sufferings and sacrifice, to a comfortable, customized and carnal version that none of the early apostles and believers would have recognized.

What popular church culture needs to understand is that the doorway to the life Jesus offers us is death. Our gospel bids us to come and die to sin, the flesh and the world. Jesus did not just die to forgive your sins. He died to purchase you and own you (2 Cor. 5:15). The only gospel worthy of the reward of Christ's sacrifice is the one that is detached from the deification of man and attached to the death of him. This is the only kind of death that brings true life.

The greatest demonstration of the love of Christ was in His death on the cross. He continually manifests His love and mercy on our behalf in a thousand different other ways every single day. But if all He did was die on that cross and offer His body and blood for the sins of mankind, it would be enough.

May our lives be worthy of His most holy and precious sacrifice. {eoas}

Bert Farias *has written a tetralogy of books that speak to the falsehood of our modern gospel message, our Savior, and this great salvation: The Real Gospel, The Real Salvation, The Real Jesus, and The Real Spirit Of Revival.*