

The Scourge of American Christianity: Ticket to Heaven-on-Your-Own-Terms Gospel

The future of America is an uncertain one. That old crafty serpent, the devil, has slithered his way into the core of our culture and is busy eroding the moral values that once made our nation great. America is no longer great because she is no longer good.

A nation that outlaws the mention of God in the public square, celebrates the killing of its own children and destroys the most basic unit of society, the family, cannot survive much longer. I'm afraid that unless there is major heartfelt repentance and the glory of God is restored to the church, she will have to go underground, and our children and grandchildren will be living in a very different America than our ancestors knew.

A recent Barna poll divides Americans into four religious categories, measuring their percentages of the American population:

Evangelical Christians (6 percent)

Non-evangelical born-again Christians (25 percent)

Notional or Mythical Christians (42 percent)

Adherents of non-Christian faiths (6 percent)

Religious skeptics (23 percent)

A most shocking belief system has been uncovered in the significant number of non-evangelical "born-again" Christians,

which represents one quarter of the American population, or approximately 81 million people. This group claims to have made “a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today, and believe that when they die they will go to heaven because they’ve confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.”

Sounds right, doesn’t it? They differ, however, from the 6-percent evangelicals in these areas:

1. They do not believe all Scripture is inspired of God.
2. They do not believe in the existence of Satan as a real being.
3. They do not believe that Jesus lived a sinless life and that salvation is only through Him, but that other religions also lead to God.
4. They do not believe it is their personal responsibility to share their faith.

These are people who claim to be born again! If Barna’s research is accurate this is quite shocking. Those in this category are a great liability in the church and in our nation. They are like a sore in the eye. They are a virus in our immune system. They are a bacterial infection in the bloodstream of Christianity. They are imaginary, delusional, cosmic “Christians” who live in a make-believe spiritual world.

We can understand the other religious categories of people whose belief systems are grossly skewed. We certainly don’t expect the skeptics, and those from other religions—even the substantial number of notional Christians, many of them from very liberal mainline denominational churches, to be any kind of asset to the true church of Jesus Christ. But the 25 percent who lay claim to a born-again experience but do not adhere to the basic and elementary tenets of the Christian faith are like a cancer in the church. A significant change in them would mean a significant change in our nation.

How do we explain the existence of this substantially large group, four times larger than the evangelical group, who believe they've obtained salvation and the hope of heaven, all without a spiritually and biblically sound belief system? Their denial of the most foundational Christian concepts of the faith such as the inspiration and authority of Scripture calls into question the very basis of their salvation.

Are they really born again? Are they really going to heaven? What is their basis for going to heaven? If you asked them, they would probably say one of two things:

1. I'm a good person. I don't hurt anyone. I support many charities and humanitarian projects. I help old ladies cross the street, and I've never killed anyone (I'm sure in eternity the angels and the greatest of saints will praise them for exercising such kindness and self-restraint). Fine and well and dandy they claim to do these things, but many atheists do the same.
1. I believe in God. But even the demons believe (James 2:19). These people's belief is a passive acknowledgement of God with no fruit or life change. To them, heaven is a reward for their intellectual assent of God's existence.

This 25 percent categorical group reassures themselves that they believe in God and are good people. They believe heaven is guaranteed and never even consider the possibility that they are closer to hell. What evidence is there in their nature that they even want to go to heaven? A general mental belief and acknowledgement of God without a love for Him is empty and useless.

Frankly, this group is further from heaven than an atheist, who at least are true to their godless belief system. Conversely, these people mentally acknowledge God, but don't love Jesus, His Son. They don't do what He says, which is

proof they don't love Him (John14:15, Luke 6:46). To this category of people, heaven is like some kind of token or plaything little children receive as a prize for good behavior in kindergarten.

Whom Is Heaven For?

Heaven is for those who are enjoying Jesus right now, not for those who treat Him as only an incidental part of their existence and who relegate Him to an insignificant role in their lives. If Christ is not even close to being the primary pursuit and chief joy of your life here on the earth, how can you be ready to go to a place where He is the only joy throughout all eternity?

This 25 percent professing "born-again" group imagine heaven to be some sort of resort of self-centered pleasure—a place where they watch the latest Netflix or Hallmark movies, play sports in the holy city where all the saints can admire their talents and eat the most mouth-watering, sumptuous food served by angels. It's a fantasy paradise which draws its beliefs from shallow earthly concepts that falsely tell us that heaven is a self-indulgent kind of place that caters to our own happiness. What a narcissistic concept that includes no love and burning longing for Jesus!

If in your earthly life you don't love Jesus, you don't love to pray, share your faith, read the Bible with the intent to obey it, and go to a church that teaches it, what makes you think you are ready for heaven? If you find pleasure in sin and carnal pursuits now and wander to places where evil passions reign, and you detest preaching and conversations of Jesus, and are only stimulated by what is selfish and secular—do you really expect to enjoy heaven, where Jesus is the beauty and fascination of our existence forever?

Here's what I believe is the biggest problem in our nation: The curse of our nation is the presentation of the "free gift"

dimension of the gospel without the Lordship factor and the surrender and submission component. It's the gospel on our own terms. This contemporary gospel is a huge factor in the moral erosion of our culture, especially as it relates to social issues. Among the number of non-evangelical professing "born-again" Christians, only slightly more than 50 percent identify as social conservatives, and even that number is suspect, based on recent elections. Additionally, on the abortion issue, 37 percent are not pro-life, and 27 percent advocate gay rights. Remember, these are the people who claim to be born again and who say they are good people and never hurt anyone. The absence of a true moral compass in their lives is glaring. The salt has lost its savor. The light they claim to have is great darkness.

Although there is a godly, committed remnant that is alive and well in our nation, imagine if just this 25 percent group presented and practiced a gospel that included a solid commitment to Christ and biblical values, how much more faith would be interjected into the American culture? Visualize how different of a nation America would be.

The Spirit of Repentance Is the Key to Turning the Church and the Nation

There is a destructive mindset in carnal professing Christians today that is at the root of this great deception and keeps them from going "all in" for Jesus.

They believe that there can be no real enjoyment in life if they stop sinning and pursuing happiness and carnal pleasures. They honestly believe that life would be a killjoy if they repented. These people do not seem to realize that the person who has truly repented has no desire to sin, and that the grace of God changes a person's desires and empowers him to live for Christ. It is an inward transformation. That's the miracle of salvation.

I dare to say that if the desire to sin is still in the heart of a professing Christian then he has not yet tasted of the real salvation. New life has not yet begun. Regeneration has not taken place.

Listen to the voice of one of the great revivalists of the past:

“Christianity does not make the believer unhappy by keeping him away from the sinful things he loved because the believer has changed his opinion on those things.” –Charles G. Finney

Finney defined repentance as a change of the ultimate preference or choice of the soul and of action. He taught that repentance is a change of will, feeling and of life in respect toward God. Finney believed that true repentance involves more of the person's will and conscience than his natural feelings. Feelings are involuntary and have no moral character except what they derive from the action and the will. He would admonish sinners to submit and commit their entire being to God at once, obey their conscience and the feelings would soon follow (for more on this theme refer to the following books: *The Real Gospel*, *The Real Salvation* and *The Real Jesus*).

The spirit of repentance is the missing ingredient in much of the American church and in our society that will save us and restore the glory of the Lord in our lives, our churches, and in our land.