

# Counterfeit Gospels

How does someone counterfeit something? What if someone were to show you a watermelon and tell you that it was a banana? Would you be fooled? Probably not. But what if you had never seen or heard of a watermelon or a banana? You would probably be fooled. If you are counterfeiting money what do you make the counterfeit look like? You'd make it look as close to the real thing as possible, right? Of course. You can't fool people with a counterfeit unless it is very close to the real thing, or they are not familiar with the real thing. It is very hard to fool someone who knows the real thing.

Counterfeit gospels are the same. You won't get very many people believing something that is false unless it is very, very close to the truth, or they are unfamiliar with the truth. Sometimes the false is so close to the true that it is very hard to see that it is false. In fact, sometimes it may be so close to the truth that we can't tell that it is false by casual exposure. But when we find ourselves changing our beliefs, or straying from a thus saith the Lord because of what we've heard or read, we need to question what we've heard or read. Anything that leads you away from the truth is false. Remember, it is much harder to be fooled if you know the true.

So how do we recognize a counterfeit gospel? Do we study the counterfeit to discover the error? Or do we study the real thing? We study what we know to be the real thing, (Bible & Spirit of Prophecy) don't we, and then the counterfeit will become evident?

I would like to spend some time looking at the real thing, so we will then be able to distinguish the false more clearly.

We are told in Ezekiel 33:11-20:

11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Does God want the wicked to die? No, He wants them to live. Who is the one that decides whether we live or not? Aren't we the ones that determine whether we live or die by the choices we make? What is it that determines whether we live or die? Isn't it the lack of or the presence of sin in the life? Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; . . ." So it is sin in the life that causes death. Some may ask, but how much sin? What if it is only a little sin? Surly God wouldn't condemn us if it is only a little sin? Let's continue reading Ezekiel.

12. Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.
13. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.
14. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;
15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.
16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.
17. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.
18. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.
19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.
20. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

How much sin will keep us out of heaven? We just read, "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression. If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it." How much transgression does it say will keep us out of heaven? It doesn't mention amounts, all it says is that if we commit iniquity, all our righteousnesses shall not be remembered. In other words, the size or amount doesn't matter, sin is sin. Even the smallest sin unconfessed or unforsaken will keep us out of heaven. But there is more. It also said that when someone sins that "all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered." Did you get that? When we sin all our past righteousness is forgotten. So, if we sin, then God sees nothing but sin in our lives. How can we expect God to allow us into heaven if we have no record at all of any righteous deeds credited to our names?

Let's see what God has told us through the Spirit of Prophecy on this topic.

**“The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct.** Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven.” Desire of Ages p.555

Will we be allowed into heaven without the cloak or robe of Christ’s righteousness covering us? No. It is only as we are covered with Christ’s righteousness that we can enter heaven.

“Who of us are copying the pattern? Through the grace of Christ are we mastering pride of heart? have we uprooted selfishness? have we opened wide the door of the heart to let in the precious love of Jesus? Or are we cherishing sins that will ruin us at last? **We cannot meet Christ in peace with one sin unrepented of, unconfessed, and unforsaken.** But John writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**"” RH.1891-03-17

How much unconfessed and unforsaken sin will Christ cover with his robe of righteousness? None. He only covers those who have **confessed and forsaken** all their sins.

What does God see when we sin? Nothing but sin. All our previous righteousness is gone. We may say, but where did it go? Isn’t it ours? Why is it taken from us?

Let’s look at what it says in Philippians 2:12,13 “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.**” Who is it that is doing the work? God. So, who does the righteousness belong to? God. It is not ours at all. God is working through us to produce His works. They are not ours, we are only vessels that He uses, with our permission, to produce the good works through. We have no right to them. You may say, but what about my righteousness? Isaiah tells us in chapter 64 verse 6 “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Our righteousness is filthy rags. In other words the good deeds that we do in our own strength are useless. It is only the righteousness that God works through us that is of any value, and we can’t claim them as ours, it is only as we submit ourselves to Christ and allow Him to work through us that He covers us with his robe of righteousness. It is then and only then that the righteous works that are produced in us are credited to our account. So, we may have performed many righteous acts through the power of God dwelling in us, but they will do us absolutely no good if we take our eyes off God, stop depending on Him, and sin. Paul says, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” 1 Corinthians 4.7. John says, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” John 3.27.

There is another thing that we need to understand. Who is responsible for our sin? We are. Remember what it says in Ezekiel 33:15 “But for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.” Also Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death” Sin of any kind only brings death. We deserve nothing but death. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23 Some may say, “When I ask forgiveness for my sin doesn’t Jesus forgive it and put it at the bottom of the sea?” True, He forgives it, but when is it done away with, put at the bottom of the sea?

What happened in the sanctuary service? The sinner brought a lamb, confessed his sins on it, the sin was then transferred to the tabernacle and kept there until the day of atonement. At that time the sins of the individuals who were right with God were taken and placed on the scapegoat (Satan). The rest went back onto the unrepentant sinner. Our sins are not put into the depths of the sea until after the final day of atonement. Satan is only responsible for his own sins and the sins of the righteous. The sinner is responsible for all his own sin.

Can you see the importance of making sure that all our sins are forgiven. Just one unconfessed or unforsaken sin means that all our previous sin is no longer covered but is held against us and all our righteousness is gone. But as soon as we confess our wrongdoing God forgives us and then Christ again covers us with His righteousness.

Some may say, “But that sounds like we are to be perfect. Surely God can’t expect that of us, we are only human.” What does God expect? Lets look at 1 John 3:1-10:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, **we shall be like him;** for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him **purifieth himself, even as he is pure.**

What did that say? “And every man that hath this hope in him (of being like Him) purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” How pure is Christ? Let’s read on.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that **he was manifested to take away our sins**; and in him is no sin. **Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.** Little children, let no man deceive you: **he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil**; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil:

Here John is concerned that someone may try to deceive you. Deceive you in what way? That one can be saved even though he may have unconfessed, and unforsaken sin in his life.

Those are powerful words. **Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him.** There is the clue to these texts -- For his seed remaineth in him. What is His seed? It is the Holy Spirit. In other words, when an individual is born of God (born again) he is filled with the Holy Spirit, and as long as he is filled with the Holy Spirit he cannot sin. Why? Because when an individual is filled with the Holy Spirit he is controlled by him and the Holy Spirit will never cause anyone to sin. The only way we can sin is by driving the Spirit out of our lives by choosing to do our own will instead of God’s will. Yes, it is really that simple. We are told that, “Everything depends on the right action of the will.” Let’s read the whole statement:

“Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. **What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will.** The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. **You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him.** You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus **your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ**; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.” Steps to Christ p.47

How do we keep from sinning? By allowing ourselves to be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ. When we do this our affections will be centered upon Him, our thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

That’s all that God asks. He doesn’t expect us to do the righteous acts in our own strength. He asks us to allow Him to control us and then He will do them through us.

We are told in the Southern Watchman 03-01-1909 p.6

“The Lord requires no less of man now than he required of Adam,--perfect obedience to his law, unblemished righteousness. The requirement under the covenant of grace is just as broad as that made in paradise,--harmony with his law, which is holy, and just, and good. The gospel does not weaken the claims of the law; it exalts the law and makes it honorable. Under the New Testament no less is required than was required under the Old Testament. Let no one take up with the delusion, so pleasant to the human heart, that God will accept of sincerity, no matter what may be the faith or how imperfect the life. God requires of his children perfect obedience.”

We also read in Steps to Christ p.62

“The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been,--just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents, --**perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness.** If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.”

But God doesn’t leave us powerless to do what he asks either. Let’s look at another statement that is just as powerful.

“**The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul.** Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried

ones. **With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us.** When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper.”  
Desire of Ages p.490

**“As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.”** Christ’s Object Lessons p.333

Did you get that! When we co-operate with God, **we become omnipotent!** Do you realize what that means? It means that we become all powerful, invincible, unstoppable, we can be victorious all the time. But this is only possible as we co-operate with God. And that is where we run into trouble. We want to do our own will and not God’s will, and we then wonder why we are always falling into sin.

There are some who will say, “I don’t know anyone who is living like this, do you? I don’t believe that God expects everyone to live that way. Only a select few will attain to that.” What do we tell someone who comes to us and says, “If this is Christianity, I don’t want any part of it. I’m leaving this church. The people are full of hypocrisy and coldness and I don’t want any part of this church? Don’t we tell them that they are looking in the wrong place? We are not to look at people as our example, but that we are to look to Jesus. We tell them that people will always let them down, don’t we? Why is it that when it comes to our own behavior we forget who our example is and we look at other people and what they are doing. It is true, they will almost always let us down. Our example is Jesus. Has He ever let us down? No. Did he ever fall short of perfection of character? No. Hasn’t he made available to us the same power that He used to keep from falling? Yes. Paul tells us that, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Philippians 4:13. The reason we fail to live as Christ did, is because we forget where the power comes from and we try to do it in our own strength. Jesus knew that He couldn’t do it in his humanity either. He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” John 5:19 In verse 30 he says, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” He then tells us in John 15:5 “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” What is our problem, if we are doing nothing? Our problem is that we are not allowing Jesus, through His Spirit to control our lives. We have no excuse. All the power that is necessary has been made available, we just have to ask for it. Remember, God isn’t interested in forced obedience and He leaves it up to us, in love, hoping we’ll exercise our freedom to choose His ways, and live!

“God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. He places every human agent under obligation to do his best. Moral perfection is required of all. Never should we lower the standard of righteousness in order to accommodate inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong-doing. We need to understand that imperfection of character is sin. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and every one who receives Christ as a personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes.” Christ’s Object Lessons p.330

Some may say “But this sounds like legalism.” What or who is a legalist? A legalist is an individual who tries to keep the law in his own strength, which is an impossibility. A true Christian understands that he is powerless to keep the law in his own strength, so surrenders all to God and then gives God permission to empower him to keep the law. Remember we have freedom of choice. There is a part for us. Many of us surrender all to God but then fail to ask for the power to live a holy life as well as give Him permissions to work in us the fruit of holiness. God doesn’t give us the power to keep the law unless we ask Him. “Ask and ye shall receive.” If you don’t ask, you won’t receive.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” Ephesians 3:14-21

If you haven’t yet, now is the best time to ask God to take control of your life so He can perfect you. Remember, no one will enter heaven except as he has consistent victory over sin. And no one can do that without being filled with the fullness of God, controlled by His Spirit.

God bless,  
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