

Introduction:

The Biblical Foundation for Exposing and Refuting Enemies Within the Church

I would rather stand alone in the light of truth than in the crowd filled with error.

—Adrian Rogers¹—

Digital resources for leading this session are available at
<https://www.discoverbedrocktruth.org/00in-resources-ewtcbs/>

The times in which we live are rife with false teachings and belief systems filled with error. Some of these have even taken hold in the church and have given rise to false gospels. It is the job of the church to uphold God's Word and to combat false teachings and false gospels with authentic biblical teachings and with the true gospel. This involves not only presenting the truth, but also contrasting Satan's counterfeits and forgeries to the truth and demonstrating where and why they are wrong. This is the pattern we see in Scripture.

Consider these Bible passages: Galatians 1:1-12; 3:1-14; Colossians 2; and Jude 3-4. In each case the inspired writer of Scripture calls out error, encourages his readers to stop falling for false teachings or to avoid falling for them in the first place, and, at least implicitly, exhorts his readers to oppose the false teachings and to contend for the truth. Additional Bible passages in which writers call out false teachings and/or teachers and encourage their readers to remain faithful to the truth include 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 2:14-19; 3:1-4:5; 2 Peter 2; and 1 John 4:1-6. Note that in 2 Timothy 2:17, the apostle Paul even mentioned two false teachers *by name*. While we cannot consider everything that happened that prompted Paul, Peter, Jude, and John to write all they wrote in the passages we have cited here, we can explore briefly what prompted Paul to write what he did in Galatians and Colossians. We'll also consider what Jude said in verses 3-4, in the context of his entire, though short, epistle.

Galatians: Adding Human Works to the Gospel Creates a False Gospel

Paul was both burdened for and frustrated with the Christians in Galatia. The area

was a region in central Asia Minor, located in the highlands of Anatolia, now known as central Turkey. Paul and Barnabas passed through this area on the first missionary journey [see Acts 13-14], establishing several churches there. [Cities in Galatia included but weren't limited to [1] Antioch in Pisidia (to which Paul initially traveled from Perga), [2] Lystra, and [3] Derbe (see Acts 13:14-14:24).] Timothy was from the area of Derbe and Lystra in Galatia.

Galatia has a long history. In the third century BC, the area was invaded by Gallic Celts, and that is what gave the area its name: *Galatia* means “land of the Gauls.” Rome conquered Galatia in 189 BC and made it a province in 25 BC. The name *Galatia* first appears in the New Testament in Acts 16:6 as a region where Paul had preached the gospel.²

After Paul left the area, false teachers called Judaizers came and began promoting the idea that faith in Christ was necessary for salvation *along with* following Jewish laws and customs. The Judaizers were saying that to be a true Christian, one must first become a Jew by submitting to the ceremonial Old Testament law. Yet, as the writer of Hebrews said of Christ,

10¹¹ [E]very [ordinary human priest] priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man [Jesus Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified (Heb. 10:11-14).

This means that the ceremonial law, including the requirement and practice of circumcision, was superseded by Christ. In fact, the church was in its infancy when, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it settled the question of whether or not circumcision was necessary for salvation. See Acts 15:1-35 to learn how the church came to understand that circumcision isn’t required, that only repentance and faith are necessary. Significantly, *even before* the matter of circumcision was settled in the early church, the church arrived at a clear understanding that Jewish dietary laws no longer applied; and even more importantly, that God was offering salvation by faith in Christ to Gentiles as well as Jews (see Acts 10:1–11:18).

None of this kept the Judaizers in Galatia from misleading and deceiving people about the gospel of Christ. Kendell Easley writes that these “troublemakers” arrived and proclaimed (as we’ve already indicated), “a different version of the gospel (1:6-9; 5:7-12).” Also, they “criticized Paul as a self-appointed apostle who did not truly reflect the message of Jesus.”³

Earlier, Dr. Easley had written this about Galatians:

Galatians was written to accomplish three purposes. First, Paul defended his authority as an apostle of Jesus [refuting the false teachers who accused him of misrepresenting Him]. Second, he argued the doctrinal case for salvation by faith alone [refuting the false teachings of those misleading the Galatian Christians about how to be saved]. Third, he showed that everyday Christian living is based on freedom from the law in the power of the Holy Spirit [demonstrating that just as salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, so also does the power to live the Christian life come from relying on the Holy Spirit, who enables believers to live holy lives].⁴

Paul emphasized strongly that Christ’s death was and is fully sufficient to save; therefore, to add human effort to it is essentially to claim Christ’s death is *insufficient*, and to negate the power of the gospel. This is why Paul wrote at the beginning of his letter (Gal. 1:3-7),

1³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

How the Social Justice “Gospel” Adds Human Works to God’s Plan of Salvation

The advocates of the social justice movement — and this includes numerous promoters of social justice teachings within evangelical circles — emphasize that those who have been oppressors must repent of their “privilege” and their “whiteness.” Church leaders who have been taken in by the social justice narrative say the oppressors must work to restore on earth what their sin, greed, and oppression have taken away. Some will use Micah 6:8 to make this case. Calling this verse “The Great Requirement” because the verse says God requires of man certain specific things such as doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, some evangelical leaders have essentially added works to the simple gospel of salvation through repentance of sins and faith in Christ. Although the North American Mission Board (NAMB) no longer is making it available online, its Send Network Values booklet effectively does this. Visit <https://discoveredbedrocktruth.org/send-values-booklet/> to view pages 33 and 34 of that publication.

Certainly Micah 6:8 reflects God’s desire for His people — and all people, for that matter; but it is not conveying that these works are *required* for salvation. While social justice advocates in the church deny that good works are needed for salvation, they confuse people by calling Micah 6:8 “The Great Requirement.”

These leaders emphasize presenting the gospel “holistically” — not just in relation to one’s eternal destiny. At the resources page for this introduction (<https://www.discoveredbedrocktruth.org/00in-resources-ewtcbs/>), you can hear an audio clip of Dhati Lewis, the former head of the North American Mission Board’s SEND Network, say, “The gospel is not good news without spiritual redemption and restoration, but the gospel is also not good news without emotional, economic, and social restoration as well.”

What is wrong with what Dhati Lewis says? He is adding to the gospel things that the Bible does not indicate are part of it.

Yes, the elements upheld in Micah 6:8 are important to God. Still, this verse does not call for government intervention to correct wrongs the social justice narrative says oppressors have inflicted on those less fortunate. Yet this is what many social justice crusaders, even those within evangelical circles, would have us believe. (Government intervention and redistribution of wealth are strong recommendations of the social justice movement, as we will see in the weeks ahead.)

Micah 6:8 names expectations God has of His people; it does not call for government to come in and redistribute wealth and resources. And again, it is not a list of requirements for salvation. How do we know this? Ephesians 2:8-9 explicitly says that “by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Verse 10 informs us about good works in relation to salvation: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Good works result *from* salvation; they are not to be performed to *earn* salvation. A right relationship with God, in fact, cannot be earned.

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Colossians: Touting a Special Kind of Knowledge Is an Affront to Christ

In Colosse, a city located about 100 miles east of Ephesus that Paul had not had the opportunity to visit, a mixture of false teachings came together to deceive and mislead many, including those in the church. Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian Church to counter the false teachings. You can learn more from **Item 0.1**, which is available on the resource page for this introduction. That item is both “An Introduction to Colossians” and “A Letter from Paul to Believers Today,” Here is part of what it tells us.

The heresy was a mixture of teachings from several sources. There was **first** a Jewish element in it, an element that contended that one must observe certain rituals, rules and regulations, and holy days to get to God. It said, too, that one must obey the Jewish dietary laws and be circumcised. [You’ll recall that an emphasis on the Jewish ceremonial law also was misleading many in Galatia.] **Secondly**, the heresy had pagan teachings in it. Gnosticism [a word derived from a Greek word meaning “knowledge,” was] a religion that stressed that one must come to God through knowledge, [and it] was just beginning to spread as a religion. The knowledge it advocated was an occult knowledge, not merely an intellectual kind, and it was closely related to magic and astrology. Especially characteristic of Gnosticism was the teaching that all matter is inherently evil and only the spiritual is good. Based on this false presupposition was the equally false conclusion that Jesus Christ could not have come in a physical, human body. Now, that idea has some very frightening implications! **Thirdly**, there was a Christian element to the heresy that made it sound and look good. The heresy claimed that it didn’t deny Christ, but [it actually did because] it failed to acknowledge His supremacy and His being God. It wore the cloak of Christianity, and this made it all the more dangerous [because it made it look and sound authentic].

Paul pointed his readers back to Christ. When one has Him, that person’s salvation is complete (see 1 John 5:11-12) and he needs no “special knowledge.” Accordingly, Paul wrote to the Colossians about Christ’s supremacy. He said,

²¹ For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in [nearby] Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

⁴ Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words. ⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to

Christ. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Let me assure you, if you have Christ, you don't need the knowledge the social justice crusaders are peddling. Yes, they offer a "knowledge" they claim will enlighten, but it actually will confuse you and will distract you from focusing on Christ and what He has called you to do. Let's learn just a bit more about it so you can recognize it when you see it and hear of it.

The Special Knowledge Offered by the Social Justice Movement Is as Dangerous as First-Century Gnosticism

Therefore, the second of the three elements of the heresy that had invaded Colosse was Gnosticism. Beware! As we have just indicated, the social justice "gospel" also promotes a special kind of knowledge that alarmingly, because of the way this special knowledge is treated and valued, is reminiscent of the knowledge that was touted in the Colossian Church.

Those who are "in the know" regarding social justice are referred to as "woke." If you're woke and a member of one or more "oppressor" groups, there's a measure of hope for you to repent of your oppression. Or, if you're a victim, being woke gives you the hope of being able to speak with greater authority about your victimhood. Now, you also should realize that repenting of oppression won't mean being forgiven of it; nor will realizing one is a victim help anyone rise above his or her victimhood. Being woke actually creates a deeper pit, one that inevitably will entrap a person further and will make matters worse. We'll explore more about the special knowledge of *wokeness* in our Debriefing for Session 7.

Christians — and everyone else, for that matter — need to be aware that repenting of engaging in oppression won't mean being forgiven of it; nor will realizing one is a victim help anyone rise above his or her victimhood. Being woke actually creates a deeper pit, one that inevitably will entrap a person further and will make matters worse.

The point here is that wokeism not only *isn't the gospel*; it's *incompatible with the gospel*! The social justice narrative, of which wokeism is a part, promotes ongoing guilt for those deemed oppressors and perpetual, unending victimhood for those deemed oppressed.

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Yes, there are some differences between wokeism and the knowledge that the Colossian heresy promoted — but note the similarities! In particular, the denial of reality in the Gnosticism of first-century Colosse has a parallels in

- the denial of any evidence of real individual success if one is a member of one or more of the so-called "oppressed" groups, and
- the denial of the reality that a significant number of people who are members of the so-called "oppressor" groups actually aren't racists and/or don't have many or even any of the special advantages or privileges the social justice narrative assigns to them.

Everything is "systemic." That's a code word for *permanent*, and it's a repudiation of God's power to transform.

On a related note, we also should be aware that wokeism denies a significant number of additional obvious realities as well, including

- the reality that only women can bear children,
- the reality that one's sex and gender are determined biologically and are fixed, and
- the reality that marriage, which cannot be separated from procreation, is and can only be the lifelong union of one man and one woman.

None of this matters to the social justice crowd, because the “enlightened” do not care about reality. Certainly, the woke advocates for transgenderism do not care; they even are willing to ruin the lives of countless young people by encouraging them to allow so-called “doctors” to maim their otherwise healthy bodies. Rather than cooperating with reality and encouraging others to do the same, they deny it, in large measure because of their “special knowledge.”

Be forewarned! Increasingly, evangelicals are allowing⁵ the “special knowledge” of wokeism to pull them in this direction in relation to a large number of issues. We see yet another example in the Revoice movement,⁶ which seeks to inform the church of the value of the contributions that “sexual minorities” can make to the body of Christ.

Antinomianism, False Teachers, and Jude's Warning Against Them

In Jude 1-4, the inspired writer of the Scripture, a spiritual leader who probably was Jesus' half brother, indicated he wanted to write a letter in which he would have expounded on and explored the riches and depths of “our common salvation.” Instead, he was compelled “to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

What was going on? In Jude's words, “certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When we explore the dangers of antinomianism in session 4 of our series of studies, we will cite Jude 3-4 once again. Here's a preview: These verses remind “us of Paul's words in Romans 6:11-19. Because we have been saved by grace, we are free — but we are not free to sin.”

Because we have been saved by grace, we have been set free — but we are not free to sin.

Jude is a short book. It didn't have to be lengthy to expose and refute false teachers and teachings in the church. Paul's goals were similar to Jude's when he addressed the heresies in his letters to the Galatian Christians and believers in Colosse.

The Bottom Line

Here's the bottom line: There is strong biblical support for exposing the enemies who have infiltrated the church and are infecting it with false teachings. Both they and their anti-gospel, anti-biblical, anti-Christian teachings need to be exposed, and believers need to be taught to recognize and reject all the lies contrary to the Word of God.

Along these lines, Jude encourages us in verses 17-23 of his short letter. Relying on God for strength and wisdom, may we hear and heed the charge he gives us:

¹⁷ But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. ¹⁸ They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” ¹⁹ These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

²⁰ But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ save others by snatching them from the fire; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (NIV).

These are the front lines of spiritual warfare today.

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Notes:

¹<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1395398>

²<https://www.gotquestions.org/churches-in-Galatia.html>

³Kendell H. Easley, *Holman QuickSource™ Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2002), 294.

⁴Easley, 292.

⁵<https://www.christianpost.com/news/sbc-president-jd-greear-says-he-will-refer-to-transgender-individuals-by-their-preferred-pronouns.html>

⁶<https://afa.net/the-stand/culture/2022/09/responding-to-the-leaven-of-revoice/>