



Reinforcing Your Faith

Zoom Bible Study
led by Mary Lowman

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Reinforcing Your Faith – Session 3 A Different Kind of Christianity

Introduction

This six-week study comes from a book which I think is important for us in today's culture: *Another Gospel?* by Alisa Childers. The subtitle to her book is "A lifelong Christian seeks truth in response to progressive Christianity."

Last week we looked at the core essential beliefs of historical Christianity as found in Scripture. It is important to note that progressive Christianity is not a denomination, it is not an organization, it is not limited to one group of people.

We also looked at the first creed of the Christian faith that we find in Scripture from 1 Corinthians 15:3 – 8. Basically, the Apostle Paul said that this is the faith that was given to him then and it contained these important beliefs of the early church and those who were eyewitnesses to Jesus and his teaching:

- 1. They believed Jesus died for their sins.**
- 2. They believed that Jesus was buried and raised from the dead.**
- 3. They believed that Jesus' atoning death, burial, and resurrection were inseparable from the Scriptures.**
- 4. They believed that their core belief in the Resurrection could be verified by evidence.**

Now this week we will see more clearly what progressive Christians believe. Why is it important for us to be aware of and know what it's all about?

From the beginning of the early church there were self-professed Christians who were determined to change Christianity from within. Progressive Christianity is just another way that the true historical Gospel of Jesus Christ has been attacked from the inside out.

Writing to the churches in Galatia, Paul says:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! (Galatians 1:6 – 8)

So, the reason we are taking time to look at this new progressive "Christianity" is because it is another name and another subtle way the enemy of your soul is trying to turn you and me to "a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all."

The Beginnings

In the early 2000's an emergent church movement became attractive as it addressed some of the problems in many Christian churches of legalism and hypocrisy. That movement began to embrace ancient mysticism and focused on spirituality over religion.

How many of you have heard people talk about how "spiritual" they are?

They have no “statement of faith,” for them that tends to stop conversation. Alisa points out that even though progressive Christianity says they have no statements of faith and it is wrong to have such statements, their “nonstatements” end up being just as dogmatic as any faith statement progressives might be unintentionally criticizing” (pg. 74).

Although some think the emergent movement is dead, it has simply gone underground and morphed into progressive Christianity.

What Do Progressive Christians Believe?

“Today there is general unity surrounding three topics: the Bible, the Cross, and the gospel” (Childers pg. 76).

The Bible

Alisa was “pushed” into studying Christian history in greater depth because of the “deconstruction” class she was in. She writes, “The one thing that can be traced back through history to the genesis of Christianity is that the Bible—every word—is the word of God” (Childers pg. 70-80).

The progressive view of the Bible is to see it primarily as a human book, and it’s up to you to decide which parts work for you and which parts don’t. This is a radical departure from the historic view of the Bible.

The Cross

Progressive Christians believe that if the Father required a blood sacrifice to atone for sin, it made him like a capricious pagan deity. To say that this sacrifice must be made by his only Son makes him something even worse: a cosmic child abuser.

Here’s what a progressive, Michael Gungor, wrote after hearing a song about the cross:

I would love to hear more artists who sing to God and fewer who include a Father murdering a son in that endeavor... I simply think blood sacrifice is a very limited and less than timely metaphor for what the cross can mean in our culture. . . That God needed to be appeased with blood is not beautiful. It’s horrific” (Childers pg. 86).

The progressive Christians believe Jesus was killed by an angry mob for speaking truth to power. They don’t believe God required blood—humans did. What does the Bible say?

Ephesians 2:13: *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

Hebrews 10:19: *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus.*

1 John 1:7: *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Many Christian hymns and modern worship songs reference the blood of Jesus, emphasizing its power to save and redeem.

The Gospel

Do you believe you were born a sinner? Progressive Christianity questions the doctrine of original sin. “The gospel means “good news” because it is the cure for the disease of sin” (Childers pg. 88).

These Bible verses don’t resonate with progressive Christians:

Psalms 51:5: *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

Isaiah 53:6: *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity (sin) of us all.*

Romans 3:23: *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Romans 5:12: *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—*

Romans 7:18: *For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

The Parable of the W heats and the Tares

Matthew 13:24 – 30

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Have you ever wondered what this parable was all about? Jesus explained it this way:

Matthew 13:36 - 39

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

In this parable Jesus says to let both grow together until the harvest, at which time the weeds will be burned and the wheat will be gathered and brought into his barn. We are not to try to destroy these tares that are growing among us. But throughout the Bible we are told to be discerning and discern the wolves that are invading the church.

Jesus said: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?” (Matthew 7:15 – 16)

Throughout the history of the church of true believers, there have been movements that gained big followings, which were wolves in sheep’s clothing. Here are the key things that identified them then and still do today:

- They add something to what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross. Jesus + anything = a false doctrine.
- The progressive gospel is Jesus + new knowledge. Like Gnostics of old, they believe that Christians today have a more mature view of God than our predecessors who wrote the Bible did.
- They reject all aspects of God and Christianity that include wrath, hell, or judgment.

Alisa writes:

“As I researched the different heresies of the early church, I received tremendous comfort from the knowledge that God has not left us uninformed, unequipped, or ignorant. He has not left us unarmed against these attacks on this truth” (pg. 113).

Childers, Alisa; *Another Gospel? A Lifelong Christian Seeks Truth in Response to Progressive Christianity*, Tyndale, 2020.