

Femi Bitrus Adeleye. *Preachers of a Different Gospel*. Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks/Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011. Pages: 148. Price: 1200 naira/\$14.99. Reviewed by Rev. Dr. James Reynolds.

The book entitled *Preachers of a Different Gospel* deals with the vital topic of the so-called Prosperity Theology.

In presenting the problem, the author gave a brief background of his journey in the faith and states that it was a Christ-centred faith. He posits that now there is a shift from this Christocentric gospel to 'one that appeals more to satisfaction of our immediate appetites', a cross-less gospel. This gospel is pedalled by preachers 'who twist the word of God to suit their desired ends.' The resultant effect is "adulterated" or "fraudulent" Christianity which does not prepare people for eternity and is a matter of concern.

The author then discussed what constitutes this different gospel. He used scripture and other resources from other authors who raised similar concerns about the declining state of Christian values due to how the gospel has been adulterated.

Preachers of this different gospel are self-centred; they use any available means and method to achieve their desired ends. For them the dictum 'the end justifies the means' is not only correct but is a "sacred truth". Anything that is likely to stand in the way of their desire

is to be rejected because “it is not their portion”. They project a phoney Christianity which identifies itself with Christ but rejects the cross; rather, it embraces glory and celebration (champagne). The author aptly describes them thus: ‘They pay lip service to Jesus and life service to celebrity culture.’

The expressions ‘Some think that God made the earth out of nothing, but He didn’t. He made it out of something. The substance God used is faith’ and ‘Faith activates God’s power’, as quoted on pages 63 and 66 respectively, are indeed fraudulent expressions, because in the first place, God does not need faith to operate. Secondly, He is almighty, all knowing and all seeing, therefore, He is always active and powerful not inactive. These statements and many others are the result of a misreading of the scriptures and misunderstanding of the Bible. It also adulterates scriptures and qualifies to be referred to as a different gospel and counterfeit faith capable of severing people from true faith.

The third section talks about the effect of this different gospel on Christian public witness. Since these preachers of a different gospel project a counterfeit faith, it has no impact on the society because they have the integrity issue to settle. The picture of Christians as light and salt of the world is no longer visible because some people have a bitter taste of what it means to look up to a Christian leader. Light has been replaced with darkness and the savour of our salt-ness is lost. Rather than being solutions to the problem, Christians are seen as a problem. Instead of preaching Christ, preachers are competing and fighting among themselves. They use catchy expressions such as ‘seed-faith’, ‘the power of positive confession’, ‘name it and claim it’, etc., to deceive gullible Christians – “they are tricksters”. These people are getting richer while their members get poorer.

Preachers of a different gospel use God instead of availing themselves to be used by God. They look bigger than God; hence, they can command or twist God’s hand to do their bidding even when that is against his will and plan. According to the author quoting one of the preachers of a different gospel, God is ‘a celestial errand boy.’ They stripped God of his power and in his place empower and enthrone man. The scripture warns that God cannot share his glory with any man, but these preachers of a different gospel elevate themselves higher than God, they become objects of worship to their followers. Christian worship is and should always be directed to God who is deserving of all worship; anything other than this is idolatry.

Preachers of a different gospel live in delusion and confuse the truth with falsehood. Of special concern is how they see giving as future investment, tithing as divine insurance, and spiritism as confused for spirituality. The gospel which is good news to all is presented as good news for the rich only and poverty is seen as a curse contrary to the gospel which was preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, John the apostle and Paul.

On the fourth aspect, on what constitute the real gospel, the author argues that the real gospel liberates rather than enslaves. The real gospel provides solutions rather than compound people's problems. It is simple and not complicated and is appropriated by faith only. It is cross-centred and enhances our vertical and horizontal relationships. It unites people with God and in so doing creates authentic Christianity. Authentic Christianity is grounded on the word of God and glorifies God rather than man. Authentic Christianity preaches good news to all; it is sincere and glories only in the cross of Jesus. It is committed to gospel truth and aims at transforming society rather than building individuals.

The author wrote with a burden on his heart and he did justice to the subject matter. The book is very evangelical in content; it is very informative and educative. It is a book that every Christian should have and read because of its richness.

The author raised three important questions thus: Where is the impact? What must we do? Should we not be concerned? These are pertinent questions that any Christian reading the book should ponder upon. Any genuine believer in God should be concerned about how the good news for salvation has been relegated to the background, how integrity has been sacrificed for personal gains, and religion turned into merchandise.