

Dear Friend,

In the light of the true Gospel in Part 1 of our analysis of Rick Warren's "The Purpose-Driven Life" movement, we documented that his "gospel" consists of a formulated whispered prayer and finding one's "true self". In this Part 2, we highlight God's true love as seen in the maintenance of His law and in the manifestation of His justice. In Christ Jesus, God's love and righteousness compliment each other. This emphasis on the true love of God is necessary to reveal the demeaning of this divine attribute that is evident in Rick Warren's writings. The involvement with the Catholic Church with the movement and the connection with Catholicism is also documented

Yours in the grace of the precious Savior,
Richard Bennett

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The Purpose Driven Life: Demeaning the Very Nature of God

Part 2 By Richard Bennett

There is an underlying feature of Rick Warren's book and movement that makes an analysis of it very difficult. It stems from the fact that Warren presents some basic teaching regarding God's purpose to glorify Himself and what man should do in relation to God. The fact that none of these purposes is presented in a biblically accurate way makes Warren's work all the more dangerous to the true understanding of Who God is and His Gospel in Christ. In the first part of our analysis we documented the way in which the Gospel was vitiated by the exaltation of man and so called "true self". This error together the corresponding neglect to show that man is in fact spiritually "*dead in trespasses and sins*" showed that the book is both a hindrance and a deceit. The most dangerous of heresies have always been those that have been presented in the context of general basic truth. In this section, too, we must continue to analyze the saving purpose of God from all eternity in Christ Jesus. Salvation comes from God to sinful man in and through Christ Jesus alone. The origin of free grace and eternal purpose of God is in Christ Jesus alone, "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*"¹ This elementary truth would not need to be emphasized were it not for the fact that Warren misrepresents God's saving love for mankind as being in a man himself.

The nature of God in Scripture is proclaimed to be All Holy, thus the Bible states "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*"² To inspire utter reverence for God's nature, the question is asked, "*Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou only art Holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee. . .*"³ One of the most flagrant sins of Warren and his movement is the failure to respect the nature of the

¹ II Timothy 1:9

² Isaiah. 6:3

³ Revelation. 15: 4

Almighty, All Holy God. For example, in his chapter entitled “Becoming Best Friends with God”, God is portrayed as if He were in need, “Almighty God yearns to be your Friend!”⁴ “Yearns” signifies “craves”, “hankers”, or “covets”, basically meaning He needs to be your Friend. The love of God, however, whereby He gave His only begotten Son, is totally sacrificial and giving. It in no way signifies a lack in God. On the contrary, the giving of His only begotten Son is the total outpouring of His perfect love and certainly not needed to complete or perfect His love. The fact that God demonstrates His love to unworthy sinners in no way implies that God needs sinners to satisfy something lacking in Him! Warren’s terminology misrepresents the nature of God.

Warren builds on this serious error by means of a modern corruption of Exodus 34:14, “He is a God who is passionate about his relationship with you.”⁵ The verse should read, “*for thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*” The jealousy or passion of the LORD God is against those who would worship another god. Such worship is utterly condemned. It is significant that the first part of this verse, “*for thou shalt worship no other god*”, is totally absent from Warren’s chapter. Yet when the terms “jealously” or “passion” are used of God in the Bible, it describes His fervor for the true worship due to His holy name. It demands exclusive devotion to Him. By teaching that God has a passion or infatuation with the reader of Warren’s book rather than a perfect zeal for His Holy Name, Warren has gotten the meaning of the verse literally backwards. His use of a corrupted and partial Bible text to depict his notion that God has a passionate devotion to man renders his work an attempt to flatter men rather than present them with God’s truth concerning their depravity. Thus Warren teaches as truth the very idolatry that a faithful rendition of the whole text condemns. This type of Scripture twisting that degrades the nature of God runs throughout Warren’s book.

Love is not the essence of God’s character apart from His righteousness

Warren’s teaching that God has a saving love for everyone demeans the very nature of God. Such particular love for everyone is stated to be “the essence of God’s character”. Warren teaches,

“You were created as a special object of God’s love! God made you so he could love you. This is a truth to build your life on. The Bible tells us, “God is love.” (I John 4:8) It doesn’t say God has love. He is love! Love is the essence of God’s character. There is perfect love in the fellowship of the Trinity, so God didn’t need to create you.” (pp. 24-25)

This is still another contradiction by Warren, who had just previously implied that God was somehow lacking. Now Warren has given his readers the heady notion that God loves each one “as a special object”. With this type of assurance, the reader has security in himself and in his sins. According to Scripture, however, we cannot know that we are the objects of God’s saving love until after we have fled from His wrath against our sin, repented of it, and turned to put our faith in Christ Jesus alone. Warren’s type of god, who loves everyone as a special object of His love, is utter heresy. Love apart from His righteousness is not the essence of God’s character. Rather in Scripture God’s saving love is always in accord with His righteousness, “*mercy and*

⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) p. 85. Page numbers only in succeeding citations.

⁵ P. 86. Verse quotation taken from Holy Bible, *New Living Translation* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”⁶ We must accept God’s love as He himself has defined it rather than how Warren has presented it!

In Scripture God’s love is seen in the maintenance of His law, and in the manifestation of His justice. In the Messiah there is a harmony of the divine attributes, love and righteousness. In Christ, God’s righteousness and peace have kissed each other. In the work of the Redeemer, God’s love is shown in the Messiah being “*wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*”⁷ The demonstration of God is love is “*that He might be just and the justifier of him, who believes in Jesus.*”⁸ God is true to His wrath against sin and He is just in His government to both love and pardon sinners in Christ Jesus. He is just because Christ Jesus’ blood paid the penalty, satisfying God’s justice. He is “justifier” in that Christ’s righteousness is credited to believers. But unbelievers remain under God’s wrath because of their own unrighteousness. In that state they have no reason to believe they are special objects of God’s love.

Warren’s so-called love of God for unrepentant sinners as “a special object of God’s love” is an insult to the true love of God because it attempts to redefine the very nature of God.⁹ The true love of God upholds His truth, His commands, His Word, and His righteousness. For example consider the preaching of C. H. Spurgeon, “O Sinner, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God! Think how often He has shown His love to you by bidding you come to Himself. Think how often you have spurned His Word and refused His mercy. Think how you have turned a deaf ear to every invitation and have gone your way to rebel against a God of love. Think how often you have violated the commands of Him that loved you.”¹⁰ If Warren wrote and preached as Spurgeon did above, he would not be as popular with the thousands of so called “carnal Christians” across the world. However, when the commands of God are preached together with His love, true conversions are seen as righteousness and peace come together in Christ Jesus. God’s saving love is always particularized to those who are in Christ. It is always declared to be in Christ and because of His grace. Thus the Bible proclaims, “*according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him: in love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself... To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved.*”¹¹ Without exception, human beings are the objects of God’s saving love only in Christ Jesus; otherwise, and without exception, they are objects of God’s wrath! “*Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength.*”¹²

God’s focus on Christ is changed for Warren’s focus on man

In Chapter 2, “You Were Not an Accident”, Warren emphasizes God’s sovereignty in appointing every detail of each person’s birth. Warren seems to equate being born with being a child of

⁶ Psalm 85:10

⁷ Isaiah 53:5

⁸ Romans 3:26.

⁹ The love God had for believers while they were as yet unrepentant sinners was in Christ Jesus and not in themselves, “*that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*” (Eph 2:7)

¹⁰ *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, “Sovereign Grace and Man’s Responsibility”, Sermon #207, Ages Software

¹¹ Ephesians 1:4, 5, 6

¹² Psalm 85:10

God for he states, “While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children...God never makes mistakes...God made you so he could love you.”¹³ Leaping over the huge difficulties such as “*the vessels of wrath*” in Romans 9:22, Warren moves to Ephesians 1:4 to make his case, “*according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him*”. He teaches a distortion of its meaning, however. Citing *The Message* he teaches,

“God’s motive for creating was his love. The Bible says, ‘Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love.’” (p 24)

This corrupt text allows Warren to exclude the true focus of the Bible text that God’s choice of individuals is “*in Christ*” and not in unrepentant people who, Warren teaches, are loved in themselves. Nowhere in the book does he deal with Ephesians 2:1 nor any of the great passages speaking of being born dead in trespasses and sin. He totally omits dealing biblically with the problem of justification. By disregarding this central issue, Warren utterly fails to acknowledge that Paul is not addressing people who are loved in themselves but rather to “*the faithful in Christ Jesus*”¹⁴, telling them of the riches of His grace which are theirs precisely because they are “*in Him [i.e., Christ]*.” As a magician who with one wave of his hand changes what one sees, so Warren has with one contrived paraphrase of Scripture changed “*chosen us in him*” to read “he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love.” With this switch from “*the faithful in Christ*” to sinful individuals as they are in themselves, Warren has removed the one Mediator and His redemption as the means by which God’s active love has procured its goal. In the context of salvation, which is the whole theme of Ephesians chapter 1, this removal of the Person of Christ Jesus means that Warren presents a god who has saving love for sinful individuals as they are in themselves. His god is not the God of the Bible. Outside of God’s choice in Christ Jesus there is no salvation.¹⁵ The love of God finds satisfaction and delight only in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. His love is not only particularized in Christ Jesus, but His express purpose is to uphold His own righteousness, as the Apostle Paul proclaimed, “*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*”¹⁶

In all things we rejoice that God is almighty and that there is good news for all who are “*dead in trespasses and sins*”. In the light of God’s Word we know, “*the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth....*”¹⁷ By nature we are all children of wrath, and by practice we are rebels against the Lord God and His Word. The perfect and just law of God condemned us all and the Lord God is not responsible to rescue any of us from His just wrath. Despite our sin nature and personal sin, the Lord God has given His beloved Son for all true believers. God is the All Holy One. His holiness is the distinguishing factor in all His essential characteristics. This is the reason why we need to be in right standing before the one and only All Holy God on the terms He prescribes. Turn to God in faith alone for the salvation that He alone gives, by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, based on Christ’s death and resurrec-

¹³ Pp. 23, 24

¹⁴ Ephesians 1:1

¹⁵ There is a consistent Biblical teaching that justification is positional legal righteousness in Christ. Jeremiah 23:6, Romans 1:17, 3:21-22, 4:6, 11, 5:18-19; I Corinthians 1:30; II Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6; Colossians 2:10, 3:3; II Peter 1:1, and elsewhere.

¹⁶ Romans 3:24, 26

¹⁷ Romans 1:16

tion, and believe on Him alone, “to the praise of the glory of his grace.”¹⁸ The understanding of the Gospel causes us to proclaim in loving gratitude, “not unto us, o Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.”¹⁹

The consequences of Warren’s trifling with the Holy and Just nature of God

Warren’s saving love applied universally to all degrades God’s holy and just nature. His love is specifically “in Christ,”²⁰ and for the express purpose of showing forth His righteousness. God cannot and will not accept our sin. Thus Warren significantly distorts the biblical doctrine of the just and holy God and thus disfigures the biblical concept of the nature of God. If God loved man as he is in himself He would be unrighteous. Such a concept is sacrilege. “God is light” as well as “love”, “and in him is no darkness at all.”²¹ His love is a holy love, as are all His attributes. In the Scripture His Holiness is every bit as important as His love. “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”²² Equal to God’s love is His wrath and judgment which produces healthy fear and awe of the Creator, “despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”²³

A sinner ought not to be comforted by assurances of the love of God apart from repentance and faith in Christ. Rather a sinner should be reminded that God hates sinners as Scripture insists, “the boastful shall not stand before thine eyes; thou dost hate all who do iniquity.”²⁴ “I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.”²⁵ Without Christ Jesus “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...”²⁶ God clearly depicts His Holy and just nature in the pages of Scripture. Great is the guilt of anyone who makes it seem that God’s saving love is indiscriminate, rather than focused on sinners as they are in Christ Jesus. The Lord’s glory and redemption in Christ Jesus are what is at stake, “let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”²⁷

Involvement with the Catholic Church and more similarities

Since Warren’s policy is to implement church growth without respect to biblical doctrine²⁸, it is no wonder that Catholic Churches such as Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic Church in Cary, NC are now enthusiastically joining in the Warren church growth program. The Webpage for this Catholic Church states, “Having finished the first 21 days of the book, our growing group decided to push on to the end (so if you’ve already read parts of the book and weren’t able to join us in November, now’s the time to hop aboard!)...”²⁹ Another example: “In the Chicago area,

¹⁸ Ephesians 1:6

¹⁹ Psalm 115:1

²⁰ Ephesians Chs 1 and 2, such phrases as “in Christ”, “in whom”, “in him”, “in the Beloved” are spoken of 18 times. This is the same in all of the letters of Paul the Apostle. Likewise the Apostle John consistently teaches that eternal life in Christ Jesus, e.g. “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” (I John 5:11) God’s love seen in salvation is always expressed as being in Christ.

²¹ I John 1:5

²² I Peter 1:16

²³ Romans 2:4

²⁴ Psalm 5:5

²⁵ Psalm 26:5

²⁶ Romans 1:18

²⁷ Hebrews 12:28-29

²⁸ For a very insightful perspective on the church growth movement, of which Warren is cited as a major player at the moment, see <http://www.crossroad.to/News/Church/Klenck1.html>

²⁹ <http://www.stmichaelcary.org/adulteduc.shtml> 11/12/04

more than 200 churches are participating in ‘40 Days of Purpose’ (some used it as a Lenten series). Among them is St. Walter’s Catholic Church in Roselle which had hoped 100 people would sign up for small home groups for the ‘40 Days of Purpose’ program studying Warren’s book. Instead, 700 got involved.”³⁰

Warren quotes from Catholic mystic Brother Lawrence, endorsing Catholic contemplative prayer techniques, which he says are “helpful ideas”. Brother Lawrence was not only traditionally Roman Catholic but also disseminated teachings that have similarities with Hinduism in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and with many New Age writers. Warren endorses him and goes on later to recommend “breath prayers”. He teaches,

“Many Christians use ‘Breath Prayers’ throughout their day. You choose a brief sentence, or a simple phrase that can be repeated to Jesus in one breath: ‘You are with me.’ ‘I receive your grace.’ ‘I’m depending on you.’ ‘I want to know you.’ ‘I belong to you.’”³¹

For centuries Catholic mystics have practiced “breath prayers” such as these. They are simply the Catholic form of old Greek mysticism and akin to the mantras of Hindus. In this same book, Warren cites approvingly the famous Catholic mystic Madame Guyon (p. 193). He approves also of St. John of the Cross (p. 108) and the Catholic priest mystic, psychologist and ecumenist Henri Nouwen (pp. 269- 270). He warmly agrees with Mother Teresa (pp. 125, 231). These misleading techniques are thus propagated and lead further into the whole mystic plague that presently is threatening believers. This plague is the imagination that there is a unity consciousness with God apart from the Person, unique life and sacrifice of Christ Jesus.³² Warren presents a mystical agenda, which the world loves and accepts, but which is an abomination before the Lord God.

Displacement of Pastors and the Consequences

The “40 Days of Purpose” campaign of purpose and community is distinct from other movements we have seen in recent times. Warren asks pastors to devote their church and their people to an intensive forty days of reprogramming their understanding of God, Christ, and how one becomes a Christian. He promises at the end of forty days that the church will be transformed. Through his book and the agenda laid out, he teaches for forty days on nearly every aspect of the Christian life. This type of interference in the running of a church opens the way for an insidious take-over of that church. In Scripture the function of pastors is to teach and to be watchmen and guardians of the flocks the Lord has given to them. “*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.*”³³ To hand over their position before the Lord to another who will for seven weeks teach his own doctrinal messages based on a multitude of flawed paraphrases of Scripture is utterly unbiblical. The church is the pastors’ and elders’ charge. It is not theirs to bring in debased ideas that infiltrate every important area of the church life. In Warren’s book and movement, God’s absolute sovereignty is flatly denied as men are counseled to determine their own destinies.

³⁰ http://www.saddleback.com/flash/s_PDFs/ChicagoTribuneLivingwithpurpose42504.pdf 11/13/04

³¹ <http://www.pastors.com/RWMT/?ID=71> 10/22/04

³² See our article on *The Mystic Plague* on our WebPage: www.bereanbeacon.org

³³ Acts 20:28

Conclusion

Warren and all who associate with his plans and purposes ought to fear the All Holy God for, *“thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.”*³⁴ This is just one of the Ten Commandments Warren breaks. Another is *“Thou shalt not bear false witness”*. Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, is replete with fraudulent claims. The fact, however, is that the All Holy God reigns as proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, *“The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble.”*³⁵ *“The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.”*³⁶ The Lord God is ruling with complete dominion, fulfilling His eternal purpose, not only in spite of but also by means of those who would misrepresent His nature and that of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His glorious and invincible Gospel. The essence of sin is forsaking the Lord as truly the sovereign God and presenting Him as less, in this case a god who has needs and thereby can be manipulated.

The message for our day is the same as ever: if people do not repent and believe the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, they will die in their sins. If people continue to run after worldly methods to propagate debased forms of what is called Christianity, they will personally or corporately experience what the Apostle Paul wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit, *“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”*³⁷ The Evangelical decline into doctrinal and practical apostasy expressed in sentiment and fleshly experience should be one of our gravest concerns. Warren’s book and movement is a vivid example of what is now so popular and devastating. Hundreds of thousands of souls, likely now millions, around the world have succumbed to the presentation of a false gospel flowing constantly from Neo-Evangelical pulpits and presses. Consequently grandiose Evangelical church buildings, Christian colleges, seminaries, and teaching institutions are presently overrun with people that have been taught by their leadership to confuse manufactured human religious feelings with a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. Multitudes blindly credit themselves as being “born again Christians” while rejecting the Lordship of Christ and authority of His Word, which are the marks of authentic discipleship.³⁸ Only a gracious outpouring of the Holy Spirit to turn the hearts of His people back to Him is the sufficient remedy to answer the assault on the true Gospel that is before us. Pray then that the Lord may be pleased in mercy to heal the affliction of doctrinal compromise and subsequent spiritual blindness that plagues the contemporary Evangelical Church rather than to permit it to run further into darkness. It is mercy for which we are praying. Given the age-old pattern of compromising the Gospel to please the world, and joining hands in the dark with Rome, it is certain that the Evangelical Church deserves nothing but a more severe dispensation from Lord’s hand. This is no time to presume upon the grace of God. Rather it is time to pray urgently for it! The Lord’s glory, Gospel, and promise are at stake! Yet we rejoice that we have a High Priest over the house of God, the Lord Christ Jesus! *“Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword.”*³⁹

³⁴ Exodus 29:7

³⁵ Psalm 99:1

³⁶ Psalm 103:19

³⁷ Romans 1:18.

³⁸ Luke.6: 43-49; Matthew 7:21-27.

³⁹ Isaiah 1:18.

The Lord God demonstrated His love for sinners in the death of Christ. *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*⁴⁰ His love is magnified and made illustrious in that His holy love upheld His righteousness. The biblical Gospel is that the sinners are loved in Christ Jesus. The teaching of the Apostle Paul gives the exact meaning of the Gospel, *“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”*⁴¹ God’s purpose was that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. As the Lord, who knew no sin of His own, was made sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God in Him. The love we receive from God and our subsequent reconciliation with God is only through the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Our great privilege as believers is to be accepted by God, which shows His love and care for us. God cannot thus accept us, except in and through Jesus Christ. He loves His people because of His Beloved. *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*⁴² We take heed against resting on any worth within ourselves and against any platitudes that change the Gospel’s focus away from Christ and towards ourselves as special persons. Multitudes have been so deceived and have perished eternally with a lie in their right hand. The Lord made the will of the Father abundantly clear when He said, *“this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”*⁴³ Where there is true faith and love of the Lord, there is in the midst of all things a joy unspeakable and full of glory. *“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”*⁴⁴ ♦

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⁴⁰ Romans 5:8

⁴¹ 11 Corinthians 5:21

⁴² Ephesians 1:6

⁴³ John 6:29

⁴⁴ Romans 11:36