



A Debate With a Professing ‘Christian’

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by

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Editor's note:

The following discussion/debate is one the editor had with a person who contacted the editor by phone requesting a meeting with pastors, politicians and business men to address the homeless people in a certain town. The editor took notes of the conversation as it was occurring.

This discussion highlights the tragedy of having a false gospel and assuming one is Heaven bound. It thus highlights the need for the true Gospel to be preached and the emphasis to be placed on a salvation not gained by works or good deeds.

Let the reader be the judge of whether this person is a true Christian.

The person is in *italics* and the editor's replies in **bold**. The name has been changed for privacy purposes.

Rowan:

Pastor, I am ringing to see if you are interested in meeting with myself and [a politician named] when she comes up. I want to inform her of the situation...with the homeless, drugs, suicides...

[Rowan went on to state he had a plan to put to politicians. His plan was to show people the value in themselves and give them a 'pathway' to help. He wanted to involve churches and to make politicians aware...]

Editor:

...Personally, I am not into the political side of things. I am more interested in peoples souls. All the social helps and good works in the world will not save peoples souls. We at...are really more interested in the Gospel...more interested in giving them the Gospel first?...

Rowan:

I believe that too but I see there needs to be a way prepared first before we can give them the Gospel...We need to speak their language...tell them that they are of worth...How are you going to reach them if you don't speak their language?

Editor:

The Gospel will speak to them as the Spirit allows?

[I mentioned I did once work with a group of alcoholics and drug addicts and all the programmes (10 step programmes; alcoholics anonymous, even Christian style ones, etc) ...were not working for them...that I taught them the Bible and a 'path out' but by giving them the Gospel. Some were saved and came free, most went back into what their hearts desired]

...Rowan, what is the 'gospel' to you?

Rowan:

[A pause of silence]...*The gospel is to help others, do good deeds...*

Editor:

My Bible says that's a false gospel. The Gospel is not of works - Eph.2:8,9 '*For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*'. We cannot be saved by good works. One has to see we are sinners and believe in Jesus Christ and his offering for sin...it's by faith not of works...[Some expansion of this followed] You could be a 'Mother Theresa' with all the works in the world and still not be saved...[At this point Rowan surprisingly agreed Mother Theresa might be a false Christian]...But she did more works than he or myself will ever do...****

Rowan:

But God has told me to go to people and help people...Let me ask you a question and give me a straight answer. When Moses was told by God to release the Israelites and set them free with God's gospel did he not hear from God and go?...

Editor:

Yes, he heard the Word of God which was later written down for us. Firstly, that Word did not contradict what had gone beforehand. Secondly, that Word was written down as scripture. When God 'spoke' to you does it not contradict what the Gospel is...

Rowan:

Well, God told me to do this...to help people in this way...The gospel is just a word thrown around...

Editor:

How do you know it was God who told you? How do you know it was not your own conscience; another voice, another spirit even?

Rowan:

I know what is in my heart. Don't you follow your heart?

Editor:

No. It's 'deceitfully wicked beyond all measure who can know it' (Jer.17). I don't follow my heart, I follow the Word God has given me in the 66 books of the Bible which are the only inspired, inerrant Word. What I think I hear apart from that is not inspired and sure.

Rowan:

Do you follow your mind then?

Editor:

Only the mind of Christ which I have been given. But that must not contradict the Bible?

Rowan:

You have the mind of Christ!?

Editor:

Yes, this is given when saved so that his Word will rule over our deceitful hearts.

[Jer.17 quoted again and another for the '*mind of Christ*' that Paul said he had - 1Cor.2:16].

Rowan:

Stop quoting scripture! I was raised in a Christian home, my father was a priest...I have heard lots of scripture.

Editor:

Do you read the Bible? God's Word?

Rowan:

I have not read the Bible for 30 years.

Editor:

Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God - why would I not quote what God has said?

Rowan:

It contains the word of God but was relevant in those days...man has been involved since. There are passages that are not relevant today.

Editor:

Name one.

Rowan:

[Long pause]...*I would have to think about that. You need to go with a relevant message. Let me ask you a question: If you spoke to Swahili people would they understand?*

Editor:

Yes. I would be translated. We have a missionary who speaks that language and deals in it. I often also have gone to Arabic churches where they don't all speak English and I am translated. Give me the names of people here you are referring to who do not understand my language and I will see them and bring a translator! Name any people?...

So do you believe the scriptures are not inspired and inerrant. Can you show me where there is any error? Are you aware of 2Tim.3:16,17 '*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*'.

Rowan:

[Pause] *Well, God has told me clearly to do good and to help my neighbour...I know what he has told me to do...*

Editor:

God has told me that these works are 'filthy rags' of unrighteousness unless you are saved. Which word do I believe? Unless we are saved first any such works is 'filthy rags' - Is.64:6 '*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...*'. Rowan, you are putting the cart before the horse. You need to be saved. Salvation is by faith not works

[Eph.2:8,9 quoted again and then verse 10 emphasised '*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*'].

Rowan, what you heard from God contradicts the Word of God.

[The parable of the publican and the pharisee was then explained - one had works; the other was humble in repentance for sin and was saved...]

Rowan, your gospel is a false works based gospel. What if the voice you heard was from Satan?

Rowan:

Satan would never tell me to do good!

Editor:

That is exactly what he would tell you to do! Look at the religions of the world - all are based on 'good' works! Are they not false? He will tell you to keep working and ignore the true Gospel!

Rowan:

[A pause of silence]

Editor:

...You need to be saved! You need Jesus Christ to save you from your sins. Do you know you are a sinner and that you cannot go into Heaven? How are you going to go to Heaven with works that God does not approve of in his Gospel?

Rowan:

Then I will be happy to be in Hell knowing I have done good.

Editor:

Where do you think you are going when you die - Heaven or Hell?

Rowan:

You tell me

Editor:

Hell, if you do not receive and you reject the Gospel and say you will get to Heaven by works.

I care enough for your soul to tell you you don't have to go to Hell. Receive Christ as your Saviour. He has been sacrificed for your sin. Then he will give you the good works [Eph.2:vs.10 quoted again]

Rowan:

So, what about all the people who have not heard this message of yours; will they all go to Hell?

Editor:

I will answer this with a scripture and a question - Acts 4:12 *'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved'*

So, tell me who the people you know who have never heard and I will contact a missionary in the area! But are you leading people with the true Gospel? What is your gospel?

Rowan:

My gospel is what God has told me...

Editor:

Is that 'doing good deeds' as you have said? That is not the true Gospel. No one will enter into the kingdom with that gospel...

Rowan:

What about the scripture that says 'you did not give me a drink to drink...'

Editor:

I think you mean Matthew ch.7 which is referring to saved and unsaved - Those that claim salvation by faith but do not have works? These were never saved by true faith...But what about your soul - forget the works, what about your soul...are you born again from above? [Jn.3 quoted and the 'believing' emphasised]...or are you so captivated by the world, politics, etc?

Rowan:

Yes I am in this world, we all are...

[Once or twice he was annoyed with me for 'cutting him off'.
The editor apologised]

Editor:

I am not, just passing through it to Heaven having been rescued from Hell by...[the Gospel given again]

Rowan:

Well I am happy to be in Hell if I go there because of the works he told me to do.

Editor:

Indeed you are heading there because you have a false gospel of works and have not heard from God but from your own heart. Do you understand I say this in love and with a care for your soul? Please understand what the true Gospel is - it is not of works. You need to be saved by a person, faith in Him, not of your own works.

Rowan:

So, all the people who do not agree with you are going to Hell?

Editor:

If they do not accept the Gospel I quote from God's Word - yes! It's the true Gospel and is written clearly...It is the only way. It is the 'narrow way' not the 'broad road'.

Please I ask you to do one thing for me as we must end this: read the Gospel of John all through. You will see Jesus Christ crucified for sin...can I have your details and we can see if we are interested in any meeting about your homeless idea? [The end]

Final Assessment

The editor never heard from Rowan again but a booklet titled '*Eternal Questions*' was sent to his address and a note asking him to read it.

What can be seen in this discussion is the age old religious view of good deeds, works and thus a social gospel. It is likely that Rowan had some knowledge of scripture from a younger age without hearing or understanding the true Gospel of grace through faith without works.

We continued to pray for this man that he would read the epistle of John, attend to the Gospel in the tract '*Eternal Questions*' and think carefully about his eternal destination.

About the Author and the Ministry

Terry Arnold holds a Doctorate in Theology (Dth), a Masters degree (MABS) and several diplomas. He was founder and president of *South Pacific Bible Institute*, a Bible college training and equipping people for ministry. In addition he was the founder of Hervey Bay Bible Church in Queensland, Australia. He has for 25 years served as an elder and then pastor.

Terry is the author of several books and is involved in a full time ministry of *teaching, informing* and *equipping* the church. He is also editor of a growing worldwide publication '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

His ministry includes preaching/teaching and conducting seminars and conferences in a wide range of churches and colleges.

TA Ministries is a non-denominational and non-profit faith ministry founded in 1989 when the book '*To Catholics Whom I Love*' was written by Terry Arnold. This book went through several re-prints and served as a fruitful outreach to Roman Catholics.

In 1996 the ministry became a full-time operation with the introduction of a free newsletter, later named '*Diakrisis (Australia)*'.

Diakrisis is published bi-monthly to *teach, inform* and *equip* the church of Biblical truths and to warn of false teaching. It has also been a valuable reference aid to hundreds of pastors/elders.