



# Turning The World Upside Down

by Charles Willis



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## Introduction

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In the great commission Jesus said to go unto all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:16). The apostle Paul taught that this gospel was God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16) and that people are saved by this gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). By inspiration Paul also taught that if a man or an angel preached any other gospel, let him be accursed (Gallatians 1:7-9).

Despite these clear instructions, man has not preached the gospel, and men do not teach the gospel today. Men have changed the gospel message. They have twisted it and perverted it into something that no longer resembles the pure Bible truth. Galatians 1:6 indicates that this attitude was alive in the first century where some men were disturbing Christians and wanted to *"distort the gospel of Christ."* To combat this attack by worldly minded men, the evangelist Timothy is told to *"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry"* (2 Timothy 4:2-5). Not enduring sound doctrine and turning aside to myths began in the first century. It most certainly continues today.

Regardless that the Holy Spirit confirmed the gospel message by miracles through the apostles and others in the first century, men did not want to believe or follow the gospel. Everywhere the gospel was proclaimed, most of the religious teachers turned away from the apostles in every town and frequently raised prejudice against them. Acts 6:8-14 is a good example of this. *"Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us." Repeatedly as we read through the book of Acts we see religious men following the apostle Paul to discredit him, to teach against the truth, and persuade men to reject the whole truth of God. Men of this same sort on several occasions sought to kill Paul.*

Men continue to persecute anyone that teaches the pure message of the Bible. To demand a return to the Bible is even now frowned upon. It is not socially correct to preach the whole counsel of God. Men shout that the Bible is outdated and our society has moved beyond such myths as to believe in God. A good example is the rise of the acceptance of homosexuality in the last 25 years. All men used to condemn this specific sin, but now many religious leaders accept the sin and even participate in it. For a man to now declare homosexuality is sin, and point to Romans 1:24-32, is condemned by the society. The threats of persecution from the society have silenced many.

To preach the unadulterated truth of God results in outcry, name-calling, and strong attempts to silence or discredit the speaker. All of my life I have heard men say something like "those in the Church of Christ think they are the only ones going to heaven," and "you don't believe in music," and "your church doesn't care about the hungry." All are statements that pervert the truth of scripture, and many times have worked to silence Christians.

Legal actions are now taken against the speaker of truth, much like in the first century when preachers and apostles were being imprisoned for the message preached (for example: Matthew 11:2 - John the Baptist; Acts 24:27, Colossians 4:3, 2 Timothy 2:9 - Paul). There are many actively working to silence the preaching of the truth.

The sad reality that causes men to stop preaching the truth of the gospel is simply they do not want to offend anyone. The truth will always offend the one who has rejected it. Many men will always desire to continue in sin, and reject anyone who says they are in sin. This has not changed since God first identified sin. We, as God's children, must not be naive about the attitudes of the world, and we must be very aware of the attitude of God who demands that we live holy and righteous while sharing the truth with others.

*"If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you... but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name"*  
(1 Peter 4:14, 16).

1. Read Acts 17:1–9.
  - A. What was the attitude of the Jews from the synogoue who did not believe the gospel?
  - B. Who set the city in an uproar? What did the mob mentality accomplish?
  - C. What is meant by the phrase “*These men who have upset the world*” (NASB) which is also translated “*These that have turned the world upside down*” (KJ)? Describe what this means in our society.
  - D. What legal charge was brought against the Christians?
  
2. Read Acts 16:16–24.
  - A. What was the motivation or reason for seizing Paul and Silas?
  - B. What is meant by the phrase “*These men are throwing our city into confusion*” (Acts 16:20)? How did Paul and Silas accomplish that?
  - C. What was the punishment for their crime?
  
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6–8 and 2:1–4, 14–16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4–5.
  - A. Identify the remarks about their persecution, refering to the events in Acts 17.
  - B. What can we learn from the Thessalonians about living as a Christian amid the wickedness of men in our society?
  
4. For each of the following passages, write the phrases that show the same sentiment of men in our society about the truth of God.
  - A. Isaiah 30:9–11
  
  - B. Jeremiah 38:1–6
  
  - C. Amos 2:11–12
  
  - D. Amos 7:10–13
  
5. Discuss how some in our society have reacted to:
  - A. Jesus is the resurrected Christ (Acts 17:3).
  
  - B. The Bible is the word of God, and is the truth (2 Timothy 3:16; John 17:17).

1. What do we know about God?
  - A. Deuteronomy 10:17
  - B. Acts 10:34–35
  - C. Acts 15:7–9
  - D. Romans 2:9–11
  - E. Ephesians 6:9
  - F. Colossians 3:25
  - G. 1 Peter 1:17
  
2. How does God expect Christians to treat others?
  - A. James 2:1–9, 12
  
  - B. Luke 10:25–37
  - C. Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11
  - D. Galatians 6:10
  - E. Matthew 28:19
  - F. Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14
  - G. Hebrews 13:1; Ephesians 4:1–3
  - H. Romans 14
  
3. Discuss the attitudes of the world that show distinctions and compare that to how the gospel “turns the world upside down.”
  - A. Racism (consider Genesis 1:26–28; Luke 10:25–37; Revelation 7:9–10)
  
  - B. Rank (consider 1 Corinthians 9:8–15; Galatians 3:28; Romans 13:1 & Revelation 1:5 / 1 Timothy 6:15)
  
  - C. Social Distinctions [such as education, wealth, employment] (consider James 1:9–10; James 2:1–12; Acts 4:13; Acts 26:24 and 1 Corinthians 9:19–22)



1. How does the world think a man should serve the King/ruler (1 Samuel 8:10–20; 2 Chronicles 25:6)?
2. How are Christians to serve the King (governing authorities)?
  - A. Romans 13:1–7
  - B. 1 Timothy 2:1–3
  - C. 1 Peter 2:13–17
3. How are Christians to serve Jesus?
  - A. Galatians 2:20
  - B. Colossian 3:3
  - C. Mark 10:45
  - D. Matthew 16:24
  - E. Matthew 22:37; Luke 14:26
4. What are we to do when there is a conflict between the earthly and spiritual?
  - A. The world would silence the truth, silence the believer, silence the church. How are we to respond? (Matthew 26:3–5; Acts 4:18–22; Jeremiah 20:1–2, 38:1–6)
  - B. The world persecutes believers. How are we to respond? (Daniel 3:8–18; Acts 17:5–8; Acts 14:19–22; Acts 28:16–20, 23–24 )
5. For each of the following concepts promoted by governing authorities, indicate how the gospel is “turning the world upside down.” Why must we be opposed to such things?
  - A. Acceptance of LGBTQ/Gender Change.
  - B. Abortion approved and supported by government.
  - C. Teaching sex education to very young children.
  - D. Allowing looters and protestors to damage property, even occupy property, with no repercussions as exemplified in the Occupy Wallstreet movement in 2011 and Portland’s “autonomous zone” in 2020.
  - E. African American History Month, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, National Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month, National Italian American Heritage Month, National American Indian Heritage Month.
  - F. Don’t work. Government provided permanent financial support to all people.
  - G. Faith-Based government funding for social programs.

1. Discuss how the world indicates someone is great. Try to provide scriptural examples. As a starting point consider Acts 8:9.
  
2. Read Mark 10:35–45
  - A. How was the attitude of James and John worldly? Give an example of when a Christian might have this attitude.
  
  - B. How did this attitude effect the other apostles? How will it effect other Christian in the congregation?
  
  - C. What is the teaching of Jesus?
  
  - D. What is the example of Jesus we are to follow (v.45; Philippians 2:5–9; 2 Corinthians 8:9)?
  
3. From the following passages indicate the attitude we are to possess and how it is demonstrated to others.
  - A. Hebrews 9:14
  
  - B. Revelation 7:13; 22:3
  
  - C. Colossians 3:24
  
  - D. Romans 12:1, 3
  
  - E. Hebrews 12:28
  
  - F. Galatians 5:13
  
  - G. Ephesians 4:12
  
  - H. 1 Peter 5:5
  
  - I. Philippians 2:3–4
  
4. For each of the following, why might they have problems with the idea of being a servant? How does needing to become a servant turn the world upside down?
  - A. A political leader.
  
  - B. A wealthy person.
  
  - C. A succesful business owner.
  
  - D. A social personality (an actor, social media success, community activist).
  
  - E. A religious leader.
  
  - F. A prideful person.



1. Discuss how men in the world gain control. Try to provide Scriptural examples. As a starting point consider John 19:10-15 and James 2:6.
  
2. What does the goeps1 teach about gaining control?
  - A. 2 Peter 1:6
  
  - B. 1 Corinthians 9:24–27
  
  - C. Titus 1:8
  
  - D. Galatians 5:22–23
  
  - E. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7
  
3. How do we gain or maintain self control?
  - A. 1 Corinthians 10:13
  
  - B. Colossians 3:1–11
  
  - C. Romans 12:2
  
  - D. 1 Peter 5:5–10
  
  - E. 2 Peter 3:14
  
  - F. 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Hebrews 10:23
  
  - G. Romans 6:12
  
4. In these specific areas, how does God’s truth turn the world upside down?
  - A. Living together/sexual sin (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:9)
  
  - B. Woman’s choice/Abortion (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Psalm 127:3; Jeremiah 1:4–5)
  
  - C. Homosexuality/Gay pride (Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11)
  
  - D. Gender change/Gender confussion (Matthew 19:4)
  
  - E. Sins of the tongue (James 3:1–12)

1. What is the attitude of the world about enemies? Try to provide Scriptural examples. As a starting point consider Acts 23:12–15.
2. What do we learn from Deity?
  - A. Matthew 5:43–48; Romans 5:8–10
  - B. Luke 6:27; 1 Peter 3:9
  - C. Matthew 9:36; 12:15; 14:13–21
  - D. Luke 23:34
  - E. John 18:10; Luke 22:50–51
  - F. 1 Peter 2:23
3. What other Biblical teaching must be considered?
  - A. Romans 12:20
  - B. Proverbs 24:17
  - C. James 4:4
4. How does God's truth turn the world upside down?
  - A. Political enemies (Matthew 2:16–18; 2 Kings 11:1–3; Matthew 22:15–22)
  - B. Betrayal (Romans 12:17–21)
  - C. Persecution (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:14)
  - D. A tyrannical boss (1 Peter 2:18–20)

1. Define foolishness as seen in 1 Corinthians 1:18 - *“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*
  
2. Discuss how men in the world proclaim foolishness. Try to provide Scriptural examples. As a starting point consider Titus 3:3, Luke 24:25, and Isaiah 32:6–7.
  
3. 1 Corinthians 1:18–27
  - A. How is *“the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing”* (v. 18)? (See also 1 Corinthians 2:14.)
  
  - B. How did God make *“foolish the wisdom of the world”* (v.20)?
  
  - C. How is *“Christ crucified”* a *“stumbling block”* to the Jews, and *“foolishness”* to the Gentiles (v.23)?
  
  - D. Why did God choose the foolish and weak things (v. 27)? (See also Isaiah 55:8.)
  
  - E. How are we to become foolish (1 Corinthians 3:18–19)?
  
  - F. How do we *“silence the ignorance of foolish men”* (1 Peter 2:15)?
  
4. What should be our attitude toward foolishness?
  - A. 2 Corinthians 11:19–20
  
  - B. 2 Timothy 2:23
  
  - C. Proverbs 14:7
  
  - D. Proverbs 22:15
  
5. How does the gospel turn the foolishness of the world upside down?
  - A. Psalm 14:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; 9:14; 10:31
  
  - B. James 2:20
  
  - C. 1 Timothy 6:7–9
  
  - D. Luke 12:18–20; Matthew 25:1–12; Ephesians 5:15–17
  
  - E. Matthew 7:26

1. Discuss the world's concepts about family. Try to provide Scriptural examples.  
As a starting point consider Mark 6:17–19.
2. What does the gospel say about living together outside marriage?
  - A. John 4:18
  - B. Acts 15:29
  - C. 1 Corinthians 6:18–20
  - D. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5
  - E. Hebrews 13:4
3. Divorce and remarriage is common and popular in most of the world. What does God tell us about divorce and remarriage?
  - A. Matthew 19:3–12
  - B. Matthew 5:31–32
  - C. Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18
  - D. 1 Corinthians 7:10–11
4. Marriage problems abound in our country. While peace is attained through mutual effort, what does God say should be our attitude?
  - A. 1 Corinthians 7:3–5
  - B. 1 Peter 3:1–7
  - C. Ephesians 5:22–33
  - D. Colossians 3:18–19
5. Raising children is a great unknown for many adults.
  - A. What is the thinking of the world about raising children?
  - B. What does God say about raising children?
    1. Ephesians 6:1–4
    2. Colossians 3:20–21
    3. Hebrews 12:9–10; Proverbs 13:24; 22:6, 15; 23:22; 29:15, 17
6. How does the gospel turn the world upside down in regard to families?
  - A. Homosexual marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1–2; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10)
  - B. Educating Children (2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 1:5; Deuteronomy 6:4–9)
  - C. The media typically portrays husbands as incapable of parenting or leading the home. (Ephesians 5:22–24; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Hebrews 12:9–10); Proverbs 13:1; 15:5)

1. Define “denomination.” Discuss the world’s concepts about denominations. Try to provide Scriptural examples. As a starting point consider 2 Timothy 4:3–4.
2. What does the gospel teach about divisions?
  - A. 1 Corinthians 1:10–13; 3:1–4
  - B. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27
  - C. Philippians 2:2
  - D. Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:14–15
3. What has caused the development of denominations?
  - A. 2 Timothy 4:3–4
  - B. Galatians 1:6–10
  - C. 2 Timothy 3:1–5
4. How does the gospel turn the world upside down by rejecting these denomination concepts?
  - A. A church appointed priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6).
  - B. Worship God as you see best/Attend the church of your choice (John 4:23–24; Ephesians 4:4; 2:16; Colossians 3:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13).
  - C. There are many roads that lead to heaven (Matthew 7:13–14).
  - D. We accept our differences out of our mutual love for God. Christians should be tolerant (Titus 3:10–11).
  - E. There are many churches (Ephesians 4:4–7).
  - F. God’s way has changed over time and is still evolving as we gain more understanding. This is an explanation for why religious groups have changed doctrine over time. The Catholics point to their changes that comes from the Pope who is supposedly God’s voice (Ezekiel 18:24–29; John 12:48; Hebrews 13:8).

1. Discuss the general teaching of most religious groups calling themselves “Christians” about how a man is saved by faith.
  
2. James 2:14–26
  - A. Define “faith” and “works.” Give close attention to the context and how it defines these words.
  - B. What is the result of faith being by itself (v.17)?
  - C. Can faith without works save a man (v.14)? What is the answer from the remainder of the chapter?
  
3. What does the gospel say that turns the world upside down about this?
  - A. Matthew 7:21
  - B. John 3:36
  - C. Romans 2:5–10
  - D. Romans 6:16
  - E. 2 Thessalonians 1:8
  - F. 2 Thessalonians 3:14
  - G. Hebrews 5:9
  - H. Hebrews 10:26–31
  - I. 1 Peter 1:2
  - J. 1 Peter 4:1–2
  - K. 1 Peter 4:17
  
4. What is the attitude of the religious world when passages like those above are pointed out and we state the error of “faith only”?
  
5. How should we respond when our friend’s world is turned upside down?
  - A. 1 Peter 3:15
  - B. 2 Timothy 2:25
  - C. Colossians 4:5–6
  - D. Matthew 5:14–16



*“For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves” (2 Corinthians 4:5–7). You and I are “earthen vessels” which have been filled with the gospel. Every Christian has a responsibility to stand for and proclaim the truth. We are each to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15). We are each to “let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).*

If we are doing what Scripture says, others will hear the truth and see our obedience to God’s truth. Many Christians are not willing to do this because of the response from men, the difficulty of strife in relationships it may cause, especially within the family. Until we love God more than mother and father we will continue to have a wrong attitude that will neglect obedience to what God has said (Matthew 10:34–37). This lesson is intended to cause us to examine ourselves to determine if we are living as Christ and the first century Christians did.

1. What is the attitude of some when the truth is taught?
  - A. Matthew 15:1–12
  - B. Galatians 4:16
  - C. Why would we desire to speak the truth knowing this may be the response? (2 Timothy 2:26)
  
2. Why can Christians not compromise the truth of God?
  - A. Matthew 6:24; Joshua 24:15; John 14:15
  - B. James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8
  - C. John 12:48
  - D. James 4:4
  - E. How do Christians demonstrate a compromise with some in the world?
  - F. How can we prevent this (Acts 20:27)? What might this sound like or require?
  
3. What issue is present in the following two examples that prevent the gospel from turning the world upside down?
  - A. Revelation 2:20–25
  - B. 1 Corinthians 5:1–2, 6–8
  - C. What is required of the Christian which will turn the world upside down?
    1. 1 Corinthians 5:7, 13
    2. Galatians 6:1–2
    3. Matthew 18:15–17
    4. Luke 17:3
    5. Galatians 2:11
  - D. What happens if we ignore and disobey these instructions?