

Dear Friend,

Degrading the Gospel to a formulated whispered prayer and finding one's "true self" is part of what one finds in Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life* movement. With concern I have written on the true Gospel of the Lord Christ Jesus, and in its power, precision and light, thus exposing a widespread movement that is afflicting many souls. This is Part I of a two-part presentation. Thousands across the world who are deceived by this new "success" movement of Rick Warren need the true Gospel!

Yours in the grace of the precious Savior,
Richard Bennett

The Adulation of Man in *The Purpose Driven Life*

By Richard Bennett

Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life* "is more than a bestseller, it's become a movement."¹ In the words of the author himself his megachurch program is "Revival awakening or miracle...Over 12,000 churches from all 50 states and 19 countries have now participated in 40 Days of Purpose. Many of these churches have reported that it was the most transforming event in their congregation's history."² "Rick is also the founder of Pastors.com, a global Internet community that serves and mentors those in ministry worldwide. Over 60,000 pastors subscribe to *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*."³ On this Webpage he states, "Our Purpose is to encourage pastors, ministers, and church leaders with tools and resources for growing healthy churches...Every resource you purchase helps provide free resources to the over 1.5 million pastors and lay pastors in third world countries. God has allowed us through your support to reach over 117 different countries on all 7 continents."⁴ The movement is becoming a global empire. Warren asserts, "God is a global God...Much of world already thinks globally. The largest media and business conglomerates are all multi-national...Get a globe or map and pray for nations by name. The Bible says, 'If you ask me, I will give you the nations; all the people on earth will be yours.'"⁵ (Warren, however, has overlooked the fact that this promise was made uniquely to Christ Jesus, and not to megachurches seeking expansion). Even the business world is looking on with awe. Forbes.com in an article called "Christian Capitalism Megachurches, Megabusinesses" acknowledged that,

"Maybe churches aren't so different from corporations...Pastor Rick Warren, who founded Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., in 1980, has deftly used technology as well as marketing to spread his message... No doubt, churches have learned some valuable lessons from corporations. Now maybe they can teach businesses a thing or two. Companies would certainly appreciate having the armies of nonpaid, loyal volunteers."⁶

The empire of influence of which Warren boasts is echoed by thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world. At least eighteen million copies of his book have been sold since its release in September 2002. It is now selling in many translations. Literally thousands of churches have used the book and the materials that accompany it during special campaigns called 40 Days of Purpose. The book is divided into forty chapters purporting to explain in 40 days the five purposes of one's life. Indeed, the thesis of the book is found on p. 136,

“He [God] created the church to meet your five deepest needs: a purpose to live for, people to live with, principles to live by, a profession to live out, and power to live on. There is no other place on earth where you can find all five of these benefits in one place.”⁷

Warren is dead wrong in his list of “deepest needs”. On the authority of the Bible, the first and foremost need of any man is perfect righteousness before the All Holy God. It is Christ Jesus’ righteousness alone that God will accept as a propitiation for any man’s sin and sin nature. This primary need of man is constantly shown in the Bible but Warren does not even mention this foundational truth in his list of “deepest needs”. Warren’s quick switch from God’s purpose to man’s methods falls under the first temptation ever recorded in the Bible. Satan offered to Eve the fruit as the way of achieving a spiritual purpose, “*in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*”⁸ Warren teaches that God “created **the church** to meet your five deepest needs” just as the Roman Catholic Church says, “**The Church** is the mother of all believers.”⁹ Warren, like Rome, has switched from obedience to the Word and Person of the Living God to submission to a church to achieve one’s needs. It is the oldest and cleverest temptation known to man.

Warren’s gospel, the root flaw

The Apostle Paul showed the need for the Gospel by the fact that whole the world is guilty before God. He declared, “*now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*”¹⁰ All are “*by nature children of wrath*”¹¹, guilty before the all Holy God. To appear before Him, therefore, each needs a perfect righteousness. James summarizes the whole condition of man when he says, “*for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*”¹² Guilt before God shows the need for the Gospel and as such is the basis for the Gospel. Conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit drives the sinner to trust truly on Christ Jesus alone, as the publican in the parable of the Lord cried out, “*God be merciful to me a sinner.*”¹³ With Warren, this conviction of guilt is reduced by psychological terminology to the condition of “unconsciously punishing of oneself”. He states,

“Many people are driven by guilt.... Guilt-driven people are manipulated by memories. They allow their past to control their future. They often unconsciously punish themselves by sabotaging their own success. When Cain sinned, his guilt disconnected him from God’s presence, and God said, ‘You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.’ That describes most people today—wandering through life without a purpose. (pp. 27-28)

Rather than sin being shown to be an evil of infinite significance because it is committed against an infinite Person, Warren’s pop psychology defines sin as acts of people “sabotaging their own success”. He continues,

“God won’t ask about your religious background or doctrinal views. The only thing that will matter is, did you accept what Jesus did for you and did you learn to love and trust him?” (p. 34)

“If you learn to love and trust God’s Son, Jesus, you will be invited to spend the rest of eternity with him. On the other hand, if you reject his love, forgiveness, and salvation, you will spend eternity apart from God forever.” (p. 37)

Biblically speaking, it is absolute folly to tell an unconvicted sinner merely to “learn to love and trust God’s Son, Jesus”. No one can be saved without recognition of his own sin personally against Holy God, and without turning away from that sin. So while it is true that the only thing that matters “is to learn to love and trust Him”, this love and trust is impossible unless the Holy

Spirit has convicted a person that he is a depraved sinner without any hope in himself. Warren does endeavor to define sin when he states,

All sin, at its root, is failing to give God glory. It is loving anything else more than God. Refusing to bring glory to God is prideful rebellion, and it is the sin that caused Satan's fall—and ours, too. In different ways we all lived for our own glory, not God's. The Bible says, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'" (p.55)

While this is true, Warren still has not acknowledged personal guilt and personal need for Christ's perfect righteousness and perfect sacrifice. Warren's persistent declarations one's "self-worth" and "true self", as we will shortly document, totally negates what he says about "prideful rebellion". The book and movement, on the contrary, major in upholding "self-worth" and "true self" thus endorsing the very "prideful rebellion" it states is cause of our fall, even as it was Satan's. This type of a contradictory statement made by Warren makes it difficult to analyze the book. While this is so, it is all the more necessary to do such an analysis. Without the Apostle Paul's conviction, "*I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing,*"¹⁴ there can be no true faith in Christ Jesus, nor even a growth in sanctification before God. The first key flaw in the Warren's gospel message is the negation of the very basis needed for salvation. As the Lord Himself proclaimed, "*they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"¹⁵

The heart of Warren's gospel

Warren's gospel message gets worse as he proceeds in the book. He assures his readers,

"Real life begins by committing yourself completely to Jesus Christ. If you are not sure you have done this, all you need to do is *receive* and *believe*. The Bible promises, 'To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.' Will you accept God's offer?" (p.58)

What Warren has neglected in his teaching of John 1:12 is that the following verse, v. 13, explains how a person is born again, "*which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" Warren has completely ignored the fact that to receive and believe is not of the will of man, but of God. It is the grace of God that makes a person willing to believe, for the heart is changed by God's power alone. To leave out this essential point changes the focus from God to man. Such a change of focus from God to man is lethal to salvation because there is no power within man to change himself. This grace must come from God. If, however, Warren had taught his readers to look to God for His grace, he would not have a ready-made message that is marketable. For Warren it is advantageous to leave out "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*". In leaving out this essential factor of the Gospel he can in fact propose that which this verse of Scripture rules out! The Lord is consistent in His Word, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*"¹⁶ Eternal life is bestowed on a person not because man begins the work, but it is because God gives salvation out of His mercy and grace. Such is the written purpose of God. Warren's written purpose is the opposite. It begins, he says, with man, "Real life begins by committing yourself..." But this is a deception for which Warren will have to pay before the All Holy God. "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked...It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"¹⁷ The power and dread of God's vindictive wrath is great. There will be eternal misery for those who teach a false gospel, their punishment shall come from God's own hand.

Warren progresses in his bogus gospel message,

“First, believe. Believe God loves you and made you for his purposes. Believe you’re not an accident. Believe you were made to last forever. Believe God has chosen you to have a relationship with Jesus, who died on the cross for you. Believe that no matter what you’ve done, God wants to forgive you.

“Second, receive. Receive Jesus into your life as Lord and Saviour. Receive his forgiveness for your sins. Receive his Spirit, who will give you the power to fulfill your life purpose. Wherever you are reading this, I invite you to bow your head and quietly whisper the prayer that will change your eternity: ‘Jesus, I believe in you and I receive you.’ Go ahead. “If you sincerely meant that prayer congratulations! Welcome to the family of God!” (p. 58-59).

According to Warren’s teaching, it is the prayer that one whispers that changes a person for eternity. Instead of magnifying the enormity of sin and setting forth its eternal consequences, Warren says, “Believe that no matter what you’ve done, God wants to forgive you.” With one sweet lie he attempts to wipe out all the teaching of the prophets in the Old Testament and the Lord Christ Jesus and the Apostles in the consistent teaching on the abhorrence of sin and the need of repentance. In place of the Gospel as “*the power of God unto salvation*” “*in which the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,*”¹⁸ Warren merely gives a whispered prayer. It is difficult to envisage a greater insult to Christ Jesus, whose perfect life and perfect sacrifice are the basis of genuine salvation.

The Apostle Paul declares that the righteousness of God is manifested, “*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.*”¹⁹ Before God, sin had to be punished and true righteousness established. God’s holiness demanded the perfect life and perfect sacrifice of Christ Jesus to satisfy His wrath against sin. But for Warren, as we had seen, sin is said to be “sabotaging...success” so the whole concept of perfect righteousness being manifested before God is totally missing. With the omission goes the omission of the concept of grace as the means of obtaining that perfect righteousness. According to Warren’s doctrine, salvation is “bow your head and quietly whisper the prayer that will change your eternity.” In Scripture, salvation is God’s action based on Christ’s finished work on the cross that is credited to the true believer, “*being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*”²⁰ God’s direct action shows His grace so that our eyes are fixed on Him in faith. Understanding Warren’s bogus gospel, and outrageously presumptuous “welcome to the family of God”, we can but repeat the words of the Lord, “*woe unto you...for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.*”²¹ By a false gospel and false assurance of admittance into the family of God, Warren has excluded further seeking for the truth, “*woe unto you...for ye have taken away the key of knowledge.*”²² The Gospel, in which the finished work of the Lord is proclaimed, is such that it cannot be changed by a lie that ignores repentance and adds a whispered prayer that insults the meaning and application of redemption. This replacement of Warren’s purpose for God’s purpose has dreadful consequences: “*though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*”²³ Christ Jesus the Lord and His Gospel cannot be insulted with impunity. As the receiver of stolen goods is as accountable as the thief, so one who promotes such a pretended gospel is as accountable in the sight of God as the impostor himself.

Self-worth: the Glorification of Man

Basic to Warren's program is the strong appeal of promised instantaneous results in the enhancement of one's imaginations of his own self-worth. What is completely ignored is the solemn fact that by nature man is a fallen creature, alienated from the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins, and that his only hope is outside of himself and in Christ Jesus alone. Although Warren states that the book is "not about you" (p. 17), the main focus is persistently on building up one's "self-worth". He continually appeals to the reader's self-interests. The following are some examples,

"The way you *see* your life *shapes* your life. How you define life determines your destiny" (p. 41).

"You are a bundle of incredible abilities, an amazing creation of God. Part of the church's responsibility is to identify and release your abilities for serving God" (p. 242).

"The best use of your life is to serve God out of your shape. To do this you must discover your shape, learn to accept and enjoy it, and then develop it to its fullest potential" (p. 249).

This equates exactly with the Hinduism in its teaching, "By understanding your true Self, by coming to know one's own undying soul, one then arrives at the knowledge of Brahman itself..."²⁴ While Warren's teaching is comparable with Hinduism, the most likely source of Warren's teaching is Carl Jung. Discovering one's "power of the inner voice" or one's fullest potential is what Jung taught, "Only the man who can consciously assent to the power of the inner voice becomes a personality."²⁵ What is much more serious is that Warren's teaching has the same basic premise as Roman Catholicism. The Vatican's official foundational starting point is man himself. Rome states,

"It is man himself who must be saved: it is mankind that must be renewed. It is man, therefore, who is the key to this discussion, man considered whole and entire, with body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will. This is the reason why this sacred Synod, in proclaiming the noble destiny of man and affirming an element of the divine in him, offers to cooperate unreservedly with mankind in fostering a sense of brotherhood to correspond to this destiny of theirs."²⁶

"Discovering one's shape accepting and enjoy it developing it to its fullest potential" is same basic foundation as the Church of Rome and Hinduism have, as we have already seen, but the same is true also of Islam and Buddhism—all of them have for their focal point the basic goodness of mankind. Warren summarizes this basic foundation in the following words,

"If you are *that* important to God, and he considers you valuable enough to keep with him for eternity, what greater significance could you have? (p. 63)

The Scriptures, however, depict no such value or goodness within man. Rather the Holy Spirit teaches that "*the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?*"²⁷ "*Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.*"²⁸

Warren even goes so far as to distort a Scripture text to uphold his treasured concept of "true self." He states, "The Bible says, 'Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self'" (p.19). The passage he quotes is a contrived paraphrase of Matthew 16:25 from *The Message*. The Lord in fact said, "*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*" The Lord clearly taught that we are to consider our lives dead in order to follow Him. This passage does not teach any-

thing about “true self” or self esteem. Warren used the counterfeit paraphrase to fantasize that the Lord had spoken of “finding yourself, your true self”. The craze of finding your “true self”, one of the hallmarks of the 1960’s hippy crowd, has now made its mark in this popularized debasing of Christianity.

Self-exaltation “salvation” is worthless

This same glorification of man Warren teaches in many different ways.

“You only bring him [God] enjoyment by being you. Anytime you reject any part of yourself, you are rejecting God’s wisdom and sovereignty in creating you” (p. 75).

“When you are sleeping, God gazes at you with love, because you were his idea. He loves you as if you were the only person on earth” (p. 75).

But Warren does not stop here with his adulation of man. The height of his glorification of man is found in the statement that makes the personal worth of the reader the purpose of Christ’s death on the cross. In doing so, “self-worth” is pushed to the point not only of perverting the Gospel but also of insulting the Lord Himself. Warren states,

“If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at Christ with his arms outstretched on the cross, saying, ‘I love you this much! I’d rather die than live without you’” (p. 79).

These words “I’d rather die than live without you” are part of a lyric of the “backstreet boys.”²⁹ These words, put into the mouth of the Lord Christ Jesus by Warren, are a blasphemy. Christ Jesus the God-man, does not have a love that is dependant on man. If he had such a dependancy, He would not be God. To teach that the love of the Lord Jesus Christ is unholy, as Warren has, is both an insult and irreverence. It exalts sinful man to a position of control regarding the eternal Son of God. Can such an imagination be anything other than profanity? “*He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name.*”³⁰

In Scripture, Christ’s love and sacrifice were to demonstrate that God is “*just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*”³¹ Nevertheless, Warren’s doctrine makes living with sinful man the centerpiece of God’s purpose. In Scripture, the focus of God’s purpose was the demonstration of His justice and holiness in the Person and sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Sinful man was included in this great manifestation of the righteousness of God as a recipient by grace of the redemption paid. Warren’s grandiose glorification of sinful man to the extent that Christ Jesus would rather die than to live without him totally reverses the biblical message that God does all for His own glory. All is of Him and from Him, and therefore all is to Him and for Him. He made all creation according to His will and for His praise. The Lord God Almighty’s purpose exposes the ridicule, vainglory and even blasphemy of Rick Warren.

Fallen man is depraved in every part of his nature and being, and it is not within his power to undo his depravity, to save himself or rescue himself. To try to aggrandize the fallen man, as Warren does, is futile because there is no moral salvation in man’s worth. A person’s only hope lies outside of himself, in divine worth and power. Human nature as such is dead in trespasses and sins. Water cannot flow uphill, nor can the natural man act contrary to his corrupt nature. All human beings are destitute of the principles and powers of spiritual life. They are cut off from God, the fountain of life. They are spiritually dead as a condemned criminal is said to be a dead man. Thus the Lord Christ Jesus declared, “*for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these evil things come from within,*

and defile the man.”³² Christ declared, “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” He signified that that which is propagated by fallen man is depraved. If the principle of self-worth and the ability to choose Christ were true, the conclusion would inevitably follow that those who used their ability to choose Christ could lawfully boast of their active participation in their salvation. But the truth is that faith itself is God’s gift, “*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.*”³³ Until one realizes his personal condition of being spiritually dead before the All Holy God, one will never properly appreciate God’s grace. Salvation begins not in self-worth and self-movement but by divine power. Scripture is utterly clear on this matter: “*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.*”³⁴ “*For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*”³⁵ God gives life to the spiritually dead will of man by giving His grace. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that overcomes the pride of the natural man, so that one is ready to come to Christ to receive life. In the Lord’s own words, “*the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*”³⁶ As the Lord also explained, “*It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me.*”³⁷

“Self-salvation” promoted on the basis of human worth and dignity is ingrained in human nature. It is found in all man-made religions. It is pivotal to the message of Warren’s book and movement. Warren’s teachings deny the biblical truth that man is totally depraved. Subsequently, he denies the absolute necessity of God’s grace. The relationship between spiritual death and grace is graphically given in Scripture, “*that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*”³⁸ Without understanding the total depravity of those to whom the Gospel is given, the Gospel will remain a dead letter. In leaving out the biblical truth that “*there is none righteous, no, not one*”³⁹ and substituting for it the self-worth of man, Warren’s arrogance has reached a level predicted in the Scripture, “*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*”⁴⁰

Conclusion

Now that we have documented that a bogus gospel message is given in the 40 Days of Purpose in *The Purpose-Driven Life* we are obliged to “*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*”⁴¹, and to “*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*”⁴² Through the Warren movement, multitudes are being deceived on the very meaning of the Gospel of salvation. Vast numbers sincerely believe that they have received Christ as their personal Savior while in fact all that they have received into their right hand is a man-made ritual and “covenant” commitment to a church, which they have obligated themselves by vow to fulfill. While many of the articles regarding Warren commend the good things Warren has had to say, they forget that Lord Himself and His Apostles utterly condemned the presentation of a false gospel. How can we expect any true revival and the bringing of the everlasting righteousness of Christ Jesus into the lives of men and women, if we are not willing to exposed pretensions of him who embraces a “christ” unknown in the pages of Scripture, who presents a sham gospel and who is willing to commend the devotees of the apostate system of Rome? He is a deceiver who willfully defrauds, after all the light of the Gospel of grace has been clearly set forth. It must not be thought strange that there are deceivers of the Lord Christ’s name and dignity now, for there were such of old, even in the Apostles’ times. The danger and evil of departure from the true Gospel is in effect and reality a departure from God Himself. “*Whosoever*

*transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*⁴³ ♦

For more information on the false teachings of Rick Warren, the legion of false teachers he promotes, and the false translations he uses in his *Purpose Driven Life* book, I recommend the documentary book entitled: *Who's Driving the Purpose Driven Church?* by James Sundquist. It is published by Bible Belt Publishers and available at Southwest Radio Church Ministries at: <http://www.swrc.com/offers/index.htm#h616>

Or call Toll Free 1-800-652-1144

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Endnotes

¹ Bruce Ryskamp, president of Zondervan. <http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/s03110083.htm> 10/22/04

² <http://www.purposedrivenlife.com/thebook.aspx> 10/16/04

³ <http://www.pastors.com/aboutus/> 11/15/04

⁴ <http://www.pastors.com/aboutus/> 10/22/04

⁵ <http://www.pastors.com/RWMT/?id=74&artid=3099&expand=1> 10/22/04

⁶ http://www.forbes.com/2003/09/17/cz_1k_0917megachurch.html 10/22/04

⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002) Page numbers only in succeeding citations.

⁸ Genesis 3:5

⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), #181 (Emphasis ours.)

¹⁰ Romans 3:19

¹¹ Ephesians 2:3

¹² James 2:10

¹³ Luke 18:8

¹⁴ Romans 7:18

¹⁵ Mark 2:17

¹⁶ Romans 9:15-16

¹⁷ Galatians 6:7, Hebrews 10:30-31

¹⁸ Romans 1:16-17

¹⁹ Romans 3:21

²⁰ Romans 3:24.

²¹ Matthew 23:13

²² Luke 11:52

²³ Galatians 1:8

²⁴ Atman and Brahman as explained on

www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GLOSSARY/BRAHMAN.HTM 12/2/2002

²⁵ *The Development of Personality* Collected Works 17 as quoted on:

http://www.sacredsandwich.com/warren_jung_chart.htm 11/18/04

²⁶ Vatican II Documents No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 Dec 1965 in *Vatican Council II The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Austin P. Flannery, ed., 1981 edition (Northport, NY: Costello Publ. Co. 1975) Para 3

²⁷ Jeremiah 17:9

²⁸ Jeremiah 17:5

²⁹ <http://sozluk.sourtimes.org/show.asp?t=ill+never+break+your+heart> 11/16/04

³⁰ Revelation 13:6

³¹ Romans 3:26

³² Mark 7:21-23

³³ Ephesians 2:8-9

³⁴ James 1:18

³⁵ Philippians 2:13

³⁶ John 5:25

³⁷ John 6:45

³⁸ Romans 5:21

³⁹ Romans 3:10

⁴⁰ Isaiah 14:14.

⁴¹ Jude 1:3.

⁴² Philippians 1:27.

⁴³ 2 John 9