

# FACT SHEET ON FALSE BROTHERS/TEACHERS



## False teachers need the Bible.

This is really not as strange as it may sound initially. In fact, I believe that I will show that it makes perfect sense. Pick a church, any church—liberal, fundamental, charismatic, pentecostal, mainline denomination, independent. It doesn't matter. I cannot imagine that you could go to any church and not find some type of scriptural support for the gospel that they preach. Church people want their gospel in some way

to be based on the Bible. So false teachers need the Bible or they will get nowhere fast. This is not merely an interesting bullet point in the discussion of a true versus a false gospel but it is essential in understanding where the battle truly lies.

False teachers need the Bible because they have to blend in—sheep in wolves clothing. Scripture clearly tells us that they are infiltrators, secretive and sneaky.

- (Galatians 2:4 NLT) Even that question came up only because of some so-called believers there—false ones, really—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations.
- (Galatians 2:4 NIV) This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

So it really does not matter which church. You just can't teach the gospel—true or false—in church without the Bible. And this is especially true for the false gospel to be successful in what we might call an evangelical church. It must have a scriptural base; preferably a “go-to” verse that can be called upon to fend off those who would oppose.

For example the main scripture—the “go to” text—for the false gospel of adding the work of water baptism for the forgiveness of sins to the gospel is Acts 2:38.

Those who promote this false gospel will pound Acts 2:38 long and hard. Is Acts 2:38 in the Bible? Yes. Is Acts 2:38 God's word? Yes. Does Acts 2:38 teach that a person must be baptized to be saved? No. Oops. I have been challenged on numerous occasions with Acts 2:38. So you would think that if someone used this as his anchor verse that he would readily admit that he believes that water baptism for the forgiveness of sins is required for salvation. Not in my experience. I have yet to get a clear, straightforward answer. My experience in dealing with such people is limited, but it has also been very intense.

But wouldn't you think that if this text—Acts 2:38—is central to your view of the gospel that

you would own it; plant your flag and raise your banner; proclaim your victory. Again, not in my experience. Instead of a bold declaration, I find vagueness, confusion, anger and accusations.

So let's look at the false gospel that is taught from Acts 2:38. From our Galatians study, we have to ask: Is this the gospel that Paul preached? Because that is what Paul gives as the true or false indicator.

The continental divide, the watershed, for the one true gospel is that it must be the gospel that Paul preached.

- (Galatians 1:6–9 ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.
- (Galatians 1:11–12 ESV) For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Bible is very clear on the content of the gospel that Paul preached. Note the very specific language in the above verses in Galatians and in the Corinthians text below: “the one we preached to you” / “the gospel that was preached by me” / “the gospel I preached to you” / “the word I preached to you.”

- (1 Corinthians 15:1–5 ESV) Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

When Paul speaks of the gospel of grace, the gospel of justification by faith alone, he uses very specific language, and he makes zero mention of baptism by water. To add this work of the flesh you have to distort the meaning of Scripture.

Acts 2:38 does not teach that the gospel must include water baptism for the forgiveness of sins.



## **F**alse teachers cannot tolerate the truth of the Gospel.

Interpreting this verse in the greater context of the entire Bible and its place of significance in view of clearer and more defined and articulated texts on the gospel, such as 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 will overrule the superficial reading and interpretation of this verse.

There is very strong support in the Greek for this translation of Acts 2:38 is this: “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of your sins.”

In Acts 3 we find Peter preaching again, calling the people to repent with no mention of baptism. Repentance, not baptism, was the focus in both Acts 2:38 and Acts 3:19.

- (Acts 3:19 ESV) Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.

What we have to understand about the false gospel is that it is a twisted gospel. It is the gospel but it has been twisted by the natural mind; sometimes twisted by those who have fallen prey to Satan’s schemes. It has been distorted and bent to fit man’s view of God’s teaching. It is the case of the natural mind trying to explain and promote what he or she does not know. The gospel comes from God. The gospel that Paul preached is very distinct and clear. The gospel that Paul preached does not include baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins. We are justified by faith alone. No works justify, including water baptism in any form.

- (Galatians 2:16 ESV) Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

The Apostle Paul has warned the Church from the very beginning of the clear and present danger of false teachers infiltrating the fellowship of believers.

- (Acts 20:28–30 ESV) Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Paul is writing first of all to the overseers. Church leaders have a holy obligation before God to pay careful attention, first to themselves, and then to all the flock. This is a very strategic approach in the way that we are to care for the church—strong biblical direction for the leaders of the flock and a primary duty of godly leadership.

Because our “natural” tendency is to put up with those who hold to a false gospel, we need to “pay careful attention” that we hear the voice of God in the details. What is Paul’s great concern in Galatians? That the truth of the gospel would be

preserved. The false gospel that the false Christians demanded that Paul accept was oh-so-close; so close in fact that Peter fell for it and was soundly rebuked by Paul.

But Paul did not budge an inch.

Paul will teach us in our text today exactly how we are to respond to the challenges from the false brothers within the group to the truth of the gospel.

- (Galatians 2:5 NIV) We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

False teachers want compromise; they want to work their version of the gospel into ours. False teachers are troubled and confused and crave acceptance of their gospel. Conventional wisdom says “Why not?” Compromise, make allowance and get along. Please notice that is exactly the opposite of what Paul did under the same circumstances.

Many make this error that brings the curse of God. (See Galatians 1:8-9.) They rationalize and practice what seems to make sense for the greater good. Remember a major factor in a heretical modification of the gospel is to please people rather than to please God. The spiritual person takes this into account and makes a thorough examination by the word of God.

The spiritual person knows that there is only one gospel and finds that only being close to the gospel, as in adding even only one work, is no gospel at all. We are saved by grace. We don’t pay for the gift; not any part of it. We are totally incapable of any help in our salvation. We are to do one thing—believe.

#### **So what have we learned about false teachers?**

1. False teachers need the Bible to be successful.
2. False teachers are deceivers and the deceived.
3. False teachers cannot tolerate the truth of the gospel. They may tolerate other “different” gospels but not the gospel of saved by grace through faith alone.
4. False teachers infiltrate and contend. They disguise themselves but their purpose is to undermine God’s gospel.
5. False teachers want acceptance and are angered when their gospel is refused.
6. False teachers preach a gospel that may be close but will not stand the scrutiny of God’s word.
7. False teachers are often evasive. They aggressively oppose a clear statement of the gospel. They want to keep things fuzzy.
8. False teachers attempt to intimidate and manipulate by twisting Scripture and hurling accusations at those who oppose them.
9. False teachers count on apathy and a lack of biblical understanding of the issues in their attempt to deceive the flock.
10. False teachers may appear to be very sincere and knowledgeable.

**A strong translation from the Greek of Acts 2:38: “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ on the basis of the forgiveness of your sins.”**