

# The Social Gospel Trap

Gal. 1:6-8

## Introduction:

- A. Perversion of the gospel usually subtle..
  - 1. A change of wording.
  - 2. A change in emphasis.
- B. “Social gospel” perversion changed face of “Christianity” in this century.
  - 1. Begun by modernist theologians
  - 2. Spread throughout most of Protestantism.
  - 3. Adapted by many churches of Christ since WWII.
- C. We propose to examine three aspects of “Social Gospel” in this lesson:

## Discussion:

### I. It’s Development.

- A. Introduced by liberal theologians influenced by socialism, Darwinism and scientific positivism
  - 1. Most influential writer was Walter Rauschenbusch - *Christianity and the Social Crisis*; 1907
  - 2. The idea was that sin and evil was socially based and could be remedied by social reform.
- B. Protestant churches began paying more attention to social and political issues.
  - 1. Mission and message became socially, politically and humanitarian oriented.
  - 2. Preachers and other leaders deeply involved in human rights, political action, etc.
  - 3. Church facilities and staffs became more “community” and “family” oriented.
  - 4. Preaching gave way to “counseling” to meet various social problems.
- C. Churches of Christ jumped on the bandwagon after WWII.
  - 1. Boys returning from the war had seen human suffering and ignorance in world.
  - 2. Churches were persuaded that tackling these problem would result in the salvation of souls.

### II. It’s Error.

- A. It shifts the focus from personal sin, salvation, and godliness to reforming society’s institutions.
  - 1. NT preachers focused on saving and reforming the person not the system.
    - a. The army officer and jailer — not Roman government (Acts 10, 16)
    - b. The Ethiopian treasurer — not the Ethiopian government (Acts 7).
    - c. Husbands, wives, children, citizens, slaves, masters, etc as persons, not their institutions.
  - 2. NT preachers urged personal obedience and godliness for each member of institution.
    - a. In order to obey God.
    - b. In order to not to hinder Christianity.
- B. It shifts the focus from preparing people for heaven to improving their quality of life here.
- C. It seeks to improve man by improving his quality of life, rather than vise versa.

### III. It’s Manifestations.

- A. Socially oriented church programs.
  - 1. Church assemblies for social purposes — meals etc. (Cf. 1 Cor. 11:22, 34).
  - 2. Recreational programs and facilities.
  - 3. Social welfare and counseling programs
- B. Socially oriented preaching themes.
  - 1. Emphasis upon here and now issues rather than eternal matters.
  - 2. Emphasis on the current political and social ills rather than personal sin.
  - 3. The “family values” bandwagon — again idea is to save souls by reforming institutions.

## Conclusion:

- A. The gospel of Christ automatically improves the quality of life on earth by saving the person.
- B. The social gospel will not save the person by improving man’s quality of life on earth.