

Two Faiths, Two Gospels

By Dallas Willard

Announcer:

Let's pray together. Father as we come to the end of the semester I pray that you would throughout the day remind us why we're here. We have come to learn how to live well and to think well as a part of that life in order to know you and to serve you in this world. And I pray that as we face finals and papers you would protect us from the temptation of doing them as assignments only give us the wisdom to remember that we're doing it for you when we want to be skilled at living and thinking for your great cause in this world. Thank you for these brothers and sisters and the opportunity to come together and worship you this morning. Thank you for Dallas and for his ministry and we pray your blessings on him and speak to us through what he has to say In Jesus name amen.

It's a real privilege for me to introduce Dallas Willard to you. There are three people that have impacted my life more than anyone else. Bill Bright had a great impact on me through vision and a desire for holy living. Howard Hendrix at Dallas Seminary through a commitment to dedication to Christ and his desire to be excellent at what he did. Dallas Willard has impacted me through giving me a bloated ontology. [Laughter] No sorry. Kidding only. Dallas has had a tremendous impact on me as a constant role model of a person who tries to combine cultivating spirituality with cultivating critical faculties and thinking well I had a chance to study under him at USC and for my doctorate and he was my main mentor there and Scott Ray and others have

studied under him. He went to the University of Southern California in 1965. I asked him When did you start there Dal- when did you start teaching there. And he said 1965 and I said no and when did you go there when did you just start teaching. And I can assure you that that was 1965. He's one of the best teachers he's received awards at USC for his excellence in teaching and his care for students and he's been teaching philosophy there for quite some time. He's a leading expert in the world and philosophy of Edmund Husserl he's published a number of papers in phenomenology and Husserl philosophy and translated some of his works into English. I suppose his expertise would be metaphysics and epistemology in the areas of philosophy he's preached and lectured around the world most recently in Europe and in South Africa. And he has written some popular books particularly in search of guidance and the spirit of the disciplines and Dallas we're delighted to have you and thank you for coming to join our community this morning.

Dallas Willard:

Thank you very much for that very warm greeting. JP is too generous of course. It's been a real privilege to have associated with him. When I think about J.P. in relation to me I think of what OJ Simpson how he related to John McKay. They used to ask John McKay what do you tell OJ. And he said I tell him to run real fast. And the truth of the matter is I don't want to take too much time on JP but he is was a truly exceptional student walked in the door and took our advanced exams and passed them with flying colors exams which most people take about six years to get around to taking. And he has already done more in terms of publication and straight philosophy work than any other graduate student I know that has been through that program since I've been there. So thank you J.P. and thank you for your invitation to be here. And I want to come right to the point of my message with you this morning by asking you a question.

How do you make disciples? How do you make disciples? If you like to take it out of the personal mode. How is a disciple made you will all remember I'm sure that when Jesus took his departure from his people that he had been training he left with them a command that was based upon his possessing all authority in heaven and earth and wherever else there might be any authority. And he said to them go to all kinds of people and make disciples. He didn't say go make Christians. He didn't say go make Baptists or Catholics or anything else he said make disciples. And he said surround them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit that is submerged them in that reality that is in the name and then teach them to do everything that I have commanded you. And I'm with you always. I'm right there.

So the question is pertinent always to those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus how do we make disciples? I was talking to a leader in another seminary the other day and he was telling that they had been studying their graduates and they had found out that the average time to burn out flame out which usually meant exiting in one way or another from the active ministry was five to six years that doesn't mean that some people don't last longer of course that's an average but it is an astonishing kind of figure isn't it. They want to say and because the time is so short I'm going to say a lot of things which I couldn't possibly prove. But I would use time as an excuse. [Laughter] I want to simply make the statement that the reason for that is basically because our churches are filled with people who are not disciples of Jesus Christ I'm sure that the that the members of the faculty and Clyde Cooke and others who are in roughly similar positions to me of traveling about and going in this church and in that church can tell you of the heart rending stories about the ways that pastors are treated and the problems that they face. Of course there are some heartrending stories too about the way congregations are treated but what is

astonishing is that we should have the state of affairs where it is assumed that most people in our churches are not disciples of Jesus and probably don't even know what it means.

There was a lovely commercial that ran here for some months on our television. You all probably saw it it was a picture of a lovely suburban sort of home with an elephant walking around inside. You remember that commercial? The man would be reading the newspaper and the elephant would stroll up by the sofa and he would glance at it out of the corner of his eye and quickly turned back to his newspaper. The son would be doing homework or the wife would be working in the kitchen the elephant would walk in and they would glance at it out of the corner of their eye. We have an elephant in the church today. It is the elephant of non-discipleship and we go into many of our churches and we find them desperately trying just not to make anybody mad. Of course they're all already mad. They can hardly get along with one another. They don't know how to deal with the basic tensions of loving other people. They've heard Jesus's command that they're supposed to love their enemies but they didn't hear him say you were supposed to love those that bug you. And we've got a lot of difficulties here about very elementary matters simply because of missing the point of discipleship.

Now I don't know what you want to do with all of these Christians who are not disciples but I would suggest that they are the primary people of whom we should make disciples but that returns us to our question how do you make a disciple. Suppose you had to make a disciple what would you do? And your answer to that will come out of what you believe. I want to just quickly remind you of a story in the eighth chapter of Matthew about Jesus asleep in the boat and as you look at that story you're going to see two kinds of faith and those two kinds of faith correspond to two kinds of Gospels. You remember the story Jesus is asleep in the boat. Apparently he is like the woman you remember who said when I go to bed at night I turn it all over to God because

he's going to be up anyway. And Jesus was asleep in the boat and this storm was raging I mean it was not just a little water here and there the thing was about to sink and Jesus was asleep in the boat. Why do you suppose Jesus was asleep in the boat Jesus was asleep in the boat because he had faith in God. And that's why he was asleep. He really did know that God was in charge of the boat and he probably knew that God would have his disciples waking up in time to do something about it.

Now the disciples for their part were not sleeping. They were screaming they were sure this was the end. And finally in one of the other gospels it indicates that they woke him up rather reproachfully saying don't you care if we perish. Now what you see there is not the faith Jesus had. It was a faith in Jesus but it was not the faith Jesus had. And I would like to call your attention to the distinction between having faith in Jesus and having the faith Jesus actually the Gospel that we most commonly hear preach today is not even faith in Jesus. It is faith in something he did. An outstanding minister from Texas I heard the other day said to his audience some of you are saved as far as heaven is concerned but you are worthless as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned.

Now friends we need to think seriously about that kind of statement. We need to think seriously about it because it is that kind of statement and the accompanying view of what really amounts to the gospel that results in our having churches full of Christians who are not disciples because you see the picture is presented that there has been a credit arrangement made an arrangement whereby Jesus suffered in some sense the equivalent amount of punishment that you should have suffered for all of the bad things you've done and that if you will believe that he did that for you there will be a transfer of credit in the bank of heaven so that when you show up at the gate they will look at the record and say we can't find any reason to keep this one out.

So we must let him in. You see that's a gospel of sin management. The gospel is strictly what are we going to do about sin? Now don't misunderstand me. The Gospel of Jesus is a gospel of forgiveness of sins through the person and work of Jesus Christ. But that's not all there is to it. And in fact that alone is not the gospel. Though I've heard many people many of my dear friends in the ministry say the gospel is that if you believe that Jesus died for your sins your sins will be forgiven you will never find in the Bible that I read that presented as the gospel you will find presented as the gospel. Trusting in Jesus as the entry into new life in the kingdom of the heavens. Jesus himself preached a gospel that reflected his faith. It was not a gospel of sin management. It was a gospel of new life in the kingdom of the heavens. You know it's so difficult to deal with that word heaven because it has come to mean so very much a thing that is far off in time and far away in space.

And I just want to I know you are students of the scripture and I just want to challenge you to take your concordance says and read what they said about heaven. You might begin with some correctives for example, notice how many times that in the older versions especially some of the newer versions do a little better. The plural, the heavens, is translated as singular. For example. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Look into what is meant by the plurality of heavens in the scripture. I'm going to boil it down and make it very simple. No doubt there are many criticisms which can be made of what I shall say about it. I want to say to you very simply that if you will take the idea of the heavens or heaven and follow it through the old and New Testament you will see that the rule of the Kingdom of the heavens means the direct and immediate availability of God to the individual soul. When Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of the heavens. He did not say they exist. Many people present his

doctrine of the gospel of the kingdom as something about an order which almost existed but not quite.

The gospel of Jesus about the Kingdom of the heavens is that it's available. It has drawn nigh. It is now accessible through trusting him and in trusting Jesus we come as his disciple to learn how to live in the kingdom of heaven as he lived in. You see the other gospel of mere sin management is not a gospel for discipleship and that's why people struggle with it so when we have great controversies about lordship salvation and so when you believe the gospel on that version it's all over and done with. Discipleship and obedience simply form no coherent part with the Gospel. You believe and perhaps the only thing left for you to do is to make sure you keep on believing or show up at church regularly to see if people believe the right thing and that's about it. Jesus's presentation of the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven is a gospel of new life in that kingdom in relationship to him. And as we look at him as the one we trust and we realize such things as we can't trust him without trusting what he trusted then we began to understand that the faith of Jesus Christ is different from our faith in him.

Now in Galatians 2 we actually have a discussion which contrasts these two kinds of faith. The newer versions don't preserve the distinction but in the old King James version it's made to stand out very clearly and I want to give this to you as a passage that you might want to chew on and worry about a bit. Paul is here responding to Peter or his his recollection of his response. Verse 16 of Galatians 2 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. I realize that someone is going say well you know there's a thing called the objective genitive and I do realize that I recognize that it is legitimate to translate many passages using that kind of construction. But if you just follow on

you will see Paul as saying in verse 20 I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live yet not high but Christ lives in me. Christ lives in me. You see Christ living in me enables me to have the faith he had not just faith in him but to have the faith he had so I can sleep in the boat too when it's sinking, you see. And you remember that Jesus was always going around saying don't be frightened. Oh little faiths. He uses the phrase in Matthew 8. Oh little faiths. Don't be frightened. You see our fear comes from our lack of faith. And Jesus lived without fear because of his faith in God. And now he lives in me and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

So when you see many other passages we could look at first Peter 1:20, 1:21. Speaking about believing and what our faith is in this great passage and he says who by him we who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory. That your faith and hope might be in God. So we're talking about a faith in God that Jesus has that he gives to us by living in us. Many many other passages as the great Mark 11 passage where the tree has been shriveled by the Word of God. And they say oh how can- master look the tree. It isn't just dead. The thing is shriveled you know it's ready for the fireplace and he replies to them have faith in God. Have faith in God. Verily I say to you that whoever shall say to this mountain be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea and shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that the things that he say shall come to pass. It shall be done. Whatsoever you say. It shall be done. Then he goes on to talk about prayer. You see that's that's an expression of faith like Jesus had. And you see when we understand that and we preach a gospel of the availability of the Kingdom of Heaven we are in a position to make disciples.

A disciple is a person who has decided that the most important thing in life the greatest opportunity they will ever have is to learn how to live in the kingdom of the heavens as Jesus

himself did. We want to be like Jesus. That's what we are. That's the end of the Great Commission. Teach them to do all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And many people present that as if God would somehow almost be disappointed if you straightened up and flew right as if somehow that we have an investment in people just keeping on being disobedient. But Jesus assumed that once we had the vision of the kingdom that he would bring as he moved into our lives we would begin to see sin for slop which is what it is sin is not a good thing which God just doesn't want to let us do. You see people teetering on the edge of temptation. We've almost learned to live our lives thinking that somehow it would be really nice if we could do all of the forbidden things but God just doesn't want us to.

See in this in the path of Jesus we learn the goodness of rightness. And when you read the great statements and descriptions about the life of the Christian in the sense of a disciple because Christian is introduced in the New Testament to refer to disciples then we are in a position to say yes we can do that we can for example love without hypocrisy. We can be fervent in spirit we can be instant in prayer we can be subject to authority. We can we can we can because we know we are living under the rule the direct rule of God from the heavens. So direct that he knows the hairs of our head that he cares about everything that happens to us. He is always in charge. He is never not in charge of those who put their faith in him in this way. So then we're prepared to step out in discipleship. We're prepared to say yes Lord I want to be able to live as you and I am your disciple in learning how to do that and then we're prepared to make disciples. We're prepared to give people a vision of the gospel that makes sense of discipleship. You see the sad thing about our world today is we have this huge nation of people over 96 percent of whom believe in God over 70 percent about seven of eight have some identification with a Christian denomination and yet disobedience is the rule.

I heard a statistic last night from some preacher that taken some poll and they said 13 percent of the people polled thought perhaps the Ten Commandments were not for them. And of course that's the behavior isn't it that that behavior comes out of the lack of a vision of the gospel of the kingdom of heavens. And once we have heard that and preached it and we've given it to others we say you really can live like Jesus did. Then we're in a position to be his disciples and move from a gospel of sin management to a gospel of life in Christ in his kingdom. As Paul says translated from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the son of his love. We've made that transition. Then we are prepared to follow Jesus and learn how to live our lives as he would live them if he were us. Because that's what Jesus wants to do.

He wants to move into our lives and say hang around with me. I'm with you. You'll be with me and I will teach you and show you how to do all of the things that I did and I will show you that it is the natural outflow of the redeemed life. And I will give that to you and we will begin to understand the full meaning of grace. We move out of the category of vampire Christians who say simply I would like to have a little of your blood Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins. But of course I have better things to do than hang around with you. We move out of that category and we move into the category of his companions who are going forth to show a world that continues to just go over the cliff of human existence. I mean it seems like here in America the more prosperous we get the more destructive the inner forces become. You show the world how to live in the love of God in His kingdom. Gracious Lord, give us wisdom to receive your words and instruct us in all our ways as we go forth to follow you in Jesus name, Amen.

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