

# Is Andrew Farley's "Naked Gospel" the Authentic Gospel?

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From the **TeachingtheWord** Bible Knowledgebase

**Andrew Farley's "100% natural, no additives" gospel is not the authentic Gospel, but a subtle, deadly counterfeit. However, some Christians are being deceived because elements of Farley's teachings sound plausible, and he falsely claims to be a spiritual descendant of Christian stalwart Martyn Lloyd-Jones.**

*July 2019* - We frequently receive comments from readers and listeners about the purportedly Evangelical preacher, Andrew Farley. Many are reactions to the article below, which we first published in a shorter form in 2017. Some write to commend us for pointing out his deep errors; some former Farley disciples have thanked us for being used of God to help bring them out from under his influence.

Farley's advocates often write to tell us that we misrepresent him, that he is in fact orthodox. We can only say, in view of just the handful of Mr. Farley's many doctrinal deviancies we cite below, that their grasp of authentic Biblical Christianity - especially of the doctrines of sin and salvation - is deficient. Based on the volume of comments we receive on both sides, I believe we need to expose Mr. Farley's heresies once again.

### **Background**

Andrew Farley was formerly a professor of linguistics at the Roman Catholic University of Notre Dame. He is the "lead pastor" of Ecclesia, a purportedly Evangelical church in Lubbock, Texas that is also known as the "Church Without Religion". Farley also hosts a call-in program called "Andrew Farley Live" that airs six days a week on Sirius XM Radio. He is also a tenured professor at Texas Tech University, where he teaches linguistics and a course called "The Early Church and Contemporary Christianity in Conflict."

Farley is the author of the books *The Naked Gospel: The Truth You May Never Hear in Church*; *God Without Religion: Can It Really Be This Simple?*; *Twisted Scripture: Untangling 45 Lies*

*Christians Have Been Told*; and several others. In those books the reader who "test(s) the spirits" (1 John 4:1) will find a mix of teachings that seem, on their face, Biblically sound with much that is clearly heretical. Zondervan's media buildup for Farley's *Naked Gospel* said this:

Jesus plus nothing. 100% natural. No additives. It's the truth you may never hear in church. *The Naked Gospel* is a chapter-by-chapter assault on the churchy jargon and double talk of our day. It puts forth a message that is simple but life-changing. With a fresh take on Scripture and unapologetic style, *The Naked Gospel* will challenge you to re-examine everything you thought you already knew.

### **Farley's True/False Quiz**

Farley's "challenge" takes the form of a true/false "gospel quiz" near the beginning of *The Naked Gospel*. He says that if you answer "true" to any of these statements about sin and salvation, you are wrong. You suffer from what he calls "obsessive-Christianity disorder."

- *"Christians should ask God to forgive and cleanse them when they sin."* False, says Farley. On pages 149 and following, he claims that 1 John 1:9 is a salvation verse, and does not apply to believers. On page 160 he claims that no Christian need ever pray, "forgive us our trespasses," because Jesus' model prayer is "an Old Covenant prayer taught to Jews before once-for-all forgiveness was accomplished." Farley ignores the fact that First John chapter one is addressed to believers in Christ, not unbelievers, and he frequently confuses the covenants.
- *"Christians struggle with sin because of their old self within."* Wrong again, says Farley. On page 104 he says, "The moment we enter into Christ at salvation, our old self is obliterated." He severely twists Paul's discussion of the conflict between the old and new natures in Romans 6 and 7.
- *"When we sin against God, we're out of fellowship until we repent."* False again, says Farley. As noted above, he does not believe this is the intent of 1 John 1:9. He also ignores passages such as the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. On page 163 he states, "It's inaccurate to speak of the Holy Spirit as convicting believers." If that is true, then Jesus lied when He said that the Holy Spirit would guide believers into all

truth (John 16:13), and the Apostle Paul was deluded when he by the inspiration of the Spirit declared,

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Galatians 5:16-17).

- *"The Bible tells us that Christians can obtain many rewards in heaven."* That is a myth, says Farley. On page 168, he dismisses this truth with the specious statement, "The term *rewards* does not appear anywhere in the New Testament." Farley ignores the fact that the word appears in the Authorized Version at least 32 times.
- *"God looks at us as though we're righteous, even though we're really not."* Wrong once more, says Farley. He denies justification by faith, specifically the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to sinners. He teaches that Christians are *inherently* righteous, not sinners clothed in the righteousness of Christ. He says, on page 106, "God certainly doesn't condone our wallowing in a poor self-image. The risen Christ doesn't join himself to filthy worms. The Holy Spirit doesn't dwell in dirty sinners. Christ only unites himself with those who are like him in spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't reside in someone who remains even 1 percent flawed by sin. But we've been perfectly cleansed. And we've been made perfectly righteous at our core through spiritual surgery." What is the nature of this "spiritual surgery"? "Our spiritually dead DNA is miraculously extracted, and new, living DNA is inserted into our spirits" (page 102). Here Farley ignores the essential Gospel doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to sinners. What he teaches is a form of an infused righteousness not unlike that which Roman Catholicism teaches. (Given his Romanist education, perhaps this is not surprising.) Scripture declares in many places that the perfect law-keeping righteousness of Christ is imputed to sinners, and that it is an alien righteousness, not our own:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom

decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10).

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith (Philippians 3:8-9).

### **Beware of Yet Another False Gospel**

Like many heresies, much of Farley's teaching sounds plausible to the undiscerning. But at its core, *The Naked Gospel* and his other books present yet another denial of the fundamental Gospel doctrine of justification by faith alone, in the finished work of Jesus Christ alone. Farley's theology is a strange mix of the perfectionist teachings of Hannah Whitall Smith, Watchman Nee, and others of past generations, with "super grace" teachings similar to those of the deceased heretic Robert B. Thieme.

Thanks to Farley and his media enablers, a false teacher is sowing the seeds of confusion in the church once again, and lost souls are being called upon to believe "another gospel, which is not another." Such false teachers are under God's curse:

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ (Galatians 1:6-10).

Jesus Christ came in the flesh for the very purpose of providing a perfect righteousness that can be imputed to undeserving sinners, but Farley denies that true Christ:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (1 John 4:1-6).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (2 John 7-11).

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