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PLEASE CHECK

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Awakenings

How Could I Have Missed It?

Raised in a large Southern Baptist family in the 1950s, I grew up hearing and believing that there was one Gospel, the Gospel of salvation.

This "salvation Gospel" secured a believer an eternity with God and secondarily offered the Holy Spirit as an indwelling presence to guide the believers' decisions toward the path of righteousness.

It was from our parents, not the church, that my five siblings and I learned that showing compassion for others and stepping into the needs faced by those whom Jesus called "the least of these" was expected of us whatever our age or situation. We learned about serving others by watching how our parents lived. We watched them "do unto others" with no expectation of return. We watched them sacrifice time and money for the poor. We watched them stand up for the oppressed during the civil rights movement in the turbulent 50s and 60s — not an easy thing to do in Central Florida for a white man and his wife, especially a prominent business owner and community and church leader. They did it despite threats to our safety, the business, and their reputation.

It wasn't until much later that it dawned on me that the church was almost exclusively focused on the "salvation Gospel" while spending very little energy and resources on what one might call "the forgotten Gospel."

This realization answered a question that, for me, had existential significance — "Why don't regular attenders of

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Reclaiming the *Forgotten* Gospel of Jesus

evangelical protestant churches in America engage in a meaningful way in ushering in the kingdom of God on earth?"

The answer isn't that the regular attenders are not Christian. Rather the churches have primarily taught that the Gospel of Christ *only* secures eternal salvation; and they taught this while *not* emphasizing the other Gospel, "the forgotten Gospel of Jesus."

By emphasizing the "salvation Gospel," the evangelical protestant churches in America offered free, no-stress membership along with convenient, family-friendly locations. At the same time these churches stressed the inerrant interpretation of the Bible as interpreted by its pastors.

By the mid-1970s evangelical protestant seminaries in America were producing pastors to meet the growth, positioning graduates in the *salvation-centric* Gospel for generations of pastors to come.

Growth, in number of churches and in the rising membership in churches, created its own challenges that needed continuing growth to meet. As the "salvation Gospel" messaging needed more and more resources, something had to give, and so began the declining emphasis on *forgetting* the Gospel of Jesus.

Slowly, over the next few decades, the only Gospel espoused was the "salvation Gospel" and "the forgotten Gospel of Jesus" became truly forgotten.

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Two Page View

Thumbnail View

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Guides

Quality Check

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