

## Don't get immunized!

Rev. John Belden

I know too many people who've been immunized. It's such a tragedy. And it's very dangerous. Countless people will die this year from immunizations. But I'm not talking about getting a virus injected into your arm. I'm talking about immunization theology.

How does it work? One day you realize you're a sinner. You decide you don't want to go to hell. So you go down to your corner church on Sunday morning and walk the aisle or pray a prayer. You have no intention of taking up your cross. No intention of putting sins to death. No intention of losing your life for Christ's sake. You just want "fire insurance." You want a "get-out-of-hell-free card." You want a vaccine that will immunize you from judgment when you die.

Now that you've been immunized and the preacher has assured you that you have your ticket to heaven, you need not worry. It would be good if you could still attend church once in a while, unless it gets in the way of your fishing trip. And while the preacher pleads with sinners to come forward, you can relax. You've been immunized. You're off limits. You got your vaccination already. Whatever the preacher is saying to lost people, don't worry, you're not one of them.

The problem is, many people see the grace of the gospel as that which gives us a free pass to heaven while leaving us in sin. May I suggest that this is not a very gracious gospel?

The gospel is a package deal. It includes freedom from the power of sin as well as the guilt of sin. In I Peter 2:24, the design of Christ's atonement was not just that He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He did this for a purpose: "that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-by whose stripes you were healed." In other words, part of the design and purpose of Christ's work on the cross was to deliver us from the dominion and disease of sin as well as the guilt.

It's like buying a loaded car. Jesus bought a loaded salvation on the cross. Through the atonement, He provides forgiveness. But He also provides the power to live holy lives. This is not less grace, it is more grace. It is more in the

same way it would be more gracious if someone bought you a loaded car instead of a base model.

A changed life is so linked to the gospel that if you don't have it, you don't have the gospel. That is why the Bible can say, "Pursue . . . holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14), and "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). A holy life does not save you. But it does prove that you are saved. Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone.

Jesus doesn't offer vaccines. He offers grace that saves from both the guilt and power of sin. If you are looking for a vaccine for hell that will let the disease of sin flourish, you will look in vain. If you are looking for someone to deal with both your bad record and your bad heart, look to Christ. A salvation that leaves you in sin is no salvation. A savior that offers a ticket to heaven without a powerful life-changing relationship is not the Savior of Scripture.

So whatever you do, don't get immunized. It's dangerous! Instead, receive the whole person of Christ with the whole package of salvation. Believe and be crucified with Christ and raised to newness of life (Romans 6:4-6). Come to Christ to receive forgiveness and freedom from sin's controlling power: "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:18).

You will get what you wanted when you got immunized. But you will get more. You will get Christ. You will get life abundantly. Jesus was so gracious that He bought us the deluxe model. It comes with full forgiveness and life-changing power. To have anything less is not to have Christ's gift.

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