

# **The Gospel Remedies Pastoral Malpractice**

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## The Gospel Remedies Pastoral Malpractice

I would consider pastoral malpractice among the greatest treasons a minister can commit against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, it is practiced weekly without inhibition.

What do I mean by pastoral malpractice? I mean ministers who stand and preach a gospel other than God's rightful need for punitive justice against our sin and His wrath being appeased by pouring out upon Christ judgment intended for us. He in turn sets us in right legal standing before Himself, through faith in what Jesus has done, while simultaneously giving to us His holy righteousness.

Regrettably, too many evangelical churches have become centers for motivational speaking where congregants learn that "God helps those who help themselves;" that sin is something that keeps us from reaching our full potential, not an infinite offense against the Creator who demands from His creation unblemished righteousness.

The apostle Paul tells us that humans inherently know we are separated from God by our sin and we try to suppress that truth through drugs, sex, greed, power, alcohol, etc. Sadly, too often when desperate individuals arrive in our churches looking for a solution they get messages about how to improve their lives or their relationships, but the Gospel is absent in the remedy. J.I. Packer, in his quintessential work, *Knowing God*, correctly writes:

"We have all heard the Gospel presented as God's triumphant answer to human problems—problems of our relation with ourselves and our fellow humans and our environment. Well, there is no doubt that the Gospel does bring us solutions to these problems, but it does so by first solving a deeper problem—the deepest of all human problems, the problem of man's relation with His Maker. And unless we make it plain that the solution to the former problems depends on the settling of this latter, we are misrepresenting the message and becoming false witnesses of God."

The reality is that fewer people are showing up in our churches to get even a watered down Gospel because the age of attractional evangelism is rapidly dying, as recent research shows. It is not enough to throw the doors open and shout at the culture, "Come in." Gospel malpractice goes beyond the pulpit and is a trait of a complacent church that limits the mandate of the Great Commission to an invitation to come when we are clearly told to "Go!"

How contemporary is Paul's letter to Timothy?

"But know this: difficult times will come in the last days. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the form of religion but denying its power" (2 Tim 3:1–5; HCSB).

I believe with every fiber of my being that the transformation of the church lies within the pages of the Bible. If individuals and churches are going to become effective incarnational

witnesses in culture we must dig in. Paul, again to Timothy, says: “you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:15–17).

How my heart pleads with God to transform our churches to being training and equipping centers that send people out into culture to be Jesus’ ambassadors. I’m not talking pious moralists who point people to their sins, but servants who through humility and loving relationships point people to an all-sufficient Savior.

We must meet people in their context, but we *must* share the Gospel. Morality does not reconcile people to God; it comes through the Gospel of Christ.

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