

A Secular Rapper Calls American Pastors to Account

You know we're in trouble when a secular rapper urges pastors to get back to preaching that the Lord is a jealous God of "discipline and obedience." As a recent article declared, "Chart-Topping Rapper Kendrick Lamar Is Preaching More Spiritual Truth Than Most of the Dead Churches In America." So sad, but so true.

Lamar is a 29-year-old, Grammy Award-winning rapper, and his lyrics are typical, hardcore rap: filled with content, packed with protest, laced with profanity. Suffice it to say he is not a pristine, pure, Christian rapper. Yet he sees a gaping hole in many churches today, and it mirrors his experience as a boy.

In an email to Hip Hop website DJ Booth, he wrote, "I went to a local church some time ago, and it appalled me that the same program was in practice. A program that I seen as a kid the few times I was in service. Praise, dance. Worship. (Which is beautiful.) Pastor spewing the idea of someone's season is approaching. The idea of hope."

He continued, "After being heavily in my studies these past few years, I've finally figured out why I left those services feeling spiritually unsatisfied as a child. I discovered more truth. But simple truth. Our God is a loving God. Yes. He's a merciful God. Yes. But he's even more so a God of DISCIPLINE. OBEDIENCE. A JEALOUS God. . . ."

And in words that mirror the words of Paul in Romans 11:22, which urge us to consider both the goodness and severity of God, he wrote, "So in conclusion, I feel it's my calling to share the joy of God, but with exclamation, more so, the FEAR OF GOD. The balance. Knowing the power in what he can build,

and also what he can destroy. At any given moment.”

How ironic that a worldly rapper is more concerned to balance out his message than many a preacher in America. How ironic that someone whom the churches would damn in a moment (in fact, that is the name of his latest project) sees the imbalance in so many of our contemporary churches.

Today, in many of our churches, it’s all about making people feel good about themselves, all about the coming breakthrough (probably financial), all about fulfilling our personal dreams.

But what about the biblical gospel? What about the fact that one day we’ll have to give account to God for our lives? What about the judgment that will come on the whole world? What about the reality that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23)? What about the fact that Jesus saves us from our sins so that we will live the rest of our lives for Him?

I’m all for preaching hope and encouragement and love, but that is not the whole message. What happened to the rest of God’s holy Word?

In my forthcoming book *Saving a Sick America: A Prescription for Moral and Cultural Reformation*, I devoted one chapter to the subject of “Restoring Thunder to Our Pulpits.”

In that chapter, I wrote, “Let the truth be told. There is very little thunder from our pulpits, very little preaching that creates an atmosphere of holy reverence (what the Bible calls ‘the fear of the Lord’), very little that challenges us and confronts us and stirs us and awakens us, very little that equips us to endure hardship or to be courageous or to confront the culture or to live a sacrificial life out of love for our neighbor.

“Many of our leaders preach a toothless, pep-talk gospel that fits in perfectly with our convenience store, quick-fix

Christianity, promising all kinds of benefits without any requirements. What a deal! Who could refuse it? No wonder we are producing consumers rather than disciples. What else can we expect when we so studiously bypass the cross in so much of our preaching? What else can we expect when we preach God the Genie rather than God the Judge?"

Do you affirm these words?

At the beginning of the chapter, I quoted from an 1873 sermon from Charles Finney. He said:

Brethren, our preaching will bear its legitimate fruits. If immorality prevails in the land, the fault is ours in a great degree. If there is a decay of conscience, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the public press lacks moral discrimination, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the church is degenerate and worldly, the pulpit is responsible for it. If the world loses its interest in religion, the pulpit is responsible for it. If Satan rules in our halls of legislation, the pulpit is responsible for it. If our politics become so corrupt that the very foundations of our government are ready to fall away, the pulpit is responsible for it. Let us not ignore this fact, my dear brethren; but let us lay it to heart, and be thoroughly awake to our responsibility in respect to the morals of this nation.

Although the pulpit was more influential in his day than in ours, I believe that what he said remains largely true. If America is in serious moral and spiritual decline, many of our preachers are partly to blame.

I say it's time that we restore thunder to our pulpits. A chart-topping, secular rapper says, "Please do!" {eoa}