

When It Comes to Controversial Topics, We Must Preach as a Dying Man to Dying Men

I thank God for the wonderful work that many large ministries have done over the years, but there is a very troubling trend in the evangelical church as a whole. And I believe that the pulpit is partly to blame.

The truth is often watered-down in the hope of not offending members and building a large audience. Judgment is never mentioned and repentance is rarely sought. We want to build a church rather than break a heart; be politically correct rather than biblically correct; coddle and comfort rather than stir and convict.

This is not a letter of rebuke (I'm in no position to do that)—it's a tear-stained plea that we return to God's truth ... that is our only hope.

The pulpit regulates the spiritual condition of God's people which affects the nation. A lukewarm, sex-saturated culture (and church) simply reflects the lack of conviction in the pulpit as well as the pew. Most pastors, including myself, struggle with speaking about controversial issues.

I believe that we can be both loving and truthful. How can we warn if we won't confront? How can we correct if we won't challenge? How can we contend for the faith if we won't question lifestyles that oppose it? "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state" (Martin Luther King, Jr.).

There is a huge difference between someone who is struggling with sin and someone who embraces it wholeheartedly. Lovingly confronting the homosexual lifestyle serves to restore the person to God via repentance. Christian leaders must be crystal clear on this issue.

Not everyone is an A.W. Tozer, Leonard Ravenhill or a John the Baptist, but all pastors have a biblical mandate to preach the truth. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), yet, many avoid words such as sin and repentance. The good news about Christ can only be appreciated with the bad news as the backdrop. When we fail to proclaim God's Word faithfully, we run the risk of "encouraging sin" and "perverting the words of the living God" (cf. Jer. 23).

All of us must return to the prayer closet where brokenness, humility and full surrender take place. Without prayer, "the church becomes a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching encourage sin, not holiness ... preaching which kills is prayerless preaching. Without prayer, the preacher creates death, and not life" (E.M. Bounds).

"Without the heartbeat of prayer, the body of Christ will resemble a corpse. The church is dying on her feet because she is not living on her knees" (Al Whittinghill).

Where are the Tyndales and Husses, who were burned at the stake for simply declaring the truth? Where are the Luthers, who, when asked to recant or face possible execution, said, "Here I stand; I can do no other"? Where are the John Calvins, who shaped the religious thoughts of our Western culture? Where are the John Knoxs, who cried, "Give me Scotland [for the cause of Christ] or I die"? Where are the Whitefields, who shook continents?

I say again, "Where are they?" Where are the John Wesleys, who said, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin

and desire nothing but God, and we will shake the gates of hell?" Where are the David Brainerds who spent so much time in prayer that even the great Jonathan Edwards was convicted? Where are the Robert Murray McChesnes, who, even though he died at age 29, was one of Scotland's most anointed preachers—causing people to weep before even preaching a word (not emotionalism, but anointing)?

Where are the Spurgeons, who spoke with such authority that his sermons are read more today than ever before? Where are the D.L. Moodys, who brought America to her knees? Where are the Evan Robertses, who, during the Welsh Revivals of 1904-05, preached so powerfully against sin that people cried out to truly know God? Where are the Puritans like Richard Baxter, who said with such humility, "I speak as a dying man to dying men"?

As the church falls deeper into self-reliance and further from reliance on God, our need for bold leadership has never been greater. Change in our nation will only occur when there is a strong conviction of sin, genuine faith, humility and sincere repentance, beginning in the pulpits. May God grant us the wisdom and strength to proclaim these truths.

We must stop confusing God's patience with His approval and preach with conviction from the pulpits again—as dying men to dying men.

Two-minute sermon on passionate prayer, [click here](#).

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