

DOXOLOGICAL COUNSELING

Instructing Worshipers to the Praise and Glory of God

CLASS 3 - THE GOSPEL AND WORSHIP

Review

Five potential pitfalls of “Gospel-Centered” counseling (and their solutions):

1. Misunderstanding God’s chief end in the gospel

- **Summary:** In counseling, the gospel can be taught as if its chief end is man’s benefit.
- **Solution:** Remember and teach that the gospel was accomplished, primarily because God loves His glory, because He longs to be worshiped.
- “God is love. But the supreme object of that love is himself. And because he loves himself supremely he cannot suffer what belongs to the integrity of his character and glory to be compromised or curtailed. That is the reason for the propitiation. God appeases his own holy wrath in the cross of Christ in order that the purpose of his love to lost men may be accomplished in accordance with and to the vindication of all the perfections that constitute his glory.” — John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (p. 32)
- “It is God’s desire to be known for His love and compassion and mercy to sinners that motivates Him to save us from the wrath we deserve.” — Smedly Yates, sermon: “Missions Must Be Christological” (May 17, 2019)
- **Scripture:** I Thessalonians 1:9. The end for which God saved the Thessalonians was revealed when they turned from idols (repented) upon hearing Paul’s preaching and began to *serve* (worship word!) the true and living God and to *wait* (worship word!)
 - Remember, worship is what happens when we respond rightly to what God has revealed. How did the Thessalonians’ two responses reveal right worship?
- Other passages: see “Passage List: God’s Concern for His Own Glory” handout

2. Assuming that the gospel is all that is needed in counseling

- **Summary:** In counseling, presupposing that the gospel is the solution to all counseling issues.

- **Solution:** Be prepared to utilize the whole counsel of God in counseling, especially the gospel.
 - The gospel has tremendous implications for all of life, therefore, we should find ourselves utilizing the gospel in a variety of ways (next point) and for a variety of counseling situations.
 - God intends all things to be an occasion for worship, not only the gospel.
 - Doctrines/biblical teachings that are not the gospel: Creation, various biblical events (the Exodus, David's numbering the people and choosing his punishment from God, Solomon's building the temple, Israel's exile from the land of Canaan, the apostles selecting Matthias to replace Judas, etc.), Christ's future comings, the doctrine of elect and fallen angels, Christ's Millennial Kingdom, etc.

- **Scripture:** I Thessalonians 4:6, 13-17; 5:10. Paul counseled the Thessalonians (and instructed them to counsel one another) with eschatological realities including, what happens at the Lord's coming and following during the Day of the Lord.

- "Every attribute of God, when contemplated by faith, will make the heart sing. Every doctrine of the Gospel, when truly apprehended, will call forth gladness and praise." — Arthur Pink, *Profiting from the Word* (p. 105)

- "The first objective ground of gracious affections, is the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things as they are themselves; and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest. I say, that the supremely excellent nature of divine things, is the first, or primary and original objective foundation of the spiritual affections of true saints." — Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume One* (p. 235)

3. Rushing too quickly to the gospel for comfort

- **Summary:** In counseling, the counselor might rush immediately and indiscriminately to comfort with the gospel.
- **Solution:** In counseling, discern what is the best use of the gospel for this specific person at this specific time for this specific issue.
 - This requires discernment and there is no one-size-fits-all counseling methodology.
 - Our counsel needs to be able to take as many different shapes as there are passages of Scripture to counsel from! (Cf. Matthew 4:4)
- **Scripture:** I Thessalonians 4:7-8. Paul concludes his reminder, exhortation (4:1-2), and warning (4:6) regarding sexual immorality, Paul concludes the Thessalonian believers of two gospel-related truths: God has not called us for the purpose of impurity (4:7) and whoever rejects these instructions is not rejecting man but the God who gives his Holy Spirit at the point of conversion (4:8). The gospel and its related truths were used by Paul as a warning, not a comfort.
 - Sometimes, the gospel is initially or primarily useful for something other than comfort (Zech 12:10; Lk 23:28 and Acts 2:37)
- “Bring thy lust to the gospel, not for relief, but for further conviction of its guilt: look on him whom thou hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul, ‘What have I done? What love, what mercy, what blood, what grace, have I despised and trampled on! Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, to the Holy Ghost for his grace? Do I thus requite the Lord? Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash, which the blessed Spirit hath chosen to dwell in? And can I keep myself out of the dust? What can I say to the dear Lord Jesus? How shall I hold up my head with any boldness before him? Do I account communion with him of so little value, that for this vile lust’s sake, I have scarce left him any room in my heart? How shall I escape, if I neglect so great salvation? In the mean time, what shall I say to the Lord? Love, mercy, grace, goodness, peace, joy, consolation; I have despised them all, and esteemed them as a thing of nought, that I might harbour a lust in my heart.” — John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin* (122)
- “Watching against sinful thoughts, resisting of sinful thoughts, lamenting and weeping over sinful thoughts, carries with it the sweetest and strongest evidence of the truth and power of grace, and of the sincerity of your hearts, and is the readiest and the surest way to be rid of them.” — Thomas Brooks, *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices* (p. 137)
- “Sorrow for sin should be so great as to swallow up all other sorrow. . . We are to find as much bitterness in weeping for sin as ever we found sweetness in committing it.” — Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (p. 24)

4. Drawing unbiblical implications from the gospel

- **Summary:** The counselor comes to unbiblical conclusions about how believers should live in light of the gospel.
 - Example: Because Jesus embraced the guilt and shame of your sin in your place, you no longer need to experience guilt and shame when you commit those sins for which Jesus died.
 - “The fourth ingredient in repentance is shame...Blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing.” — Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (p. 39)
 - Example: Jesus obeyed in your place. When you don't obey, remember that Jesus obeyed God for you.
 - Example: God is patient with you. Be patient with yourself.
- **Solution:** Temper your thinking and counsel regarding the implications of the gospel with what else Scripture teaches, especially those instances when God draws out the implications of the gospel for us through the biblical writers.
- **Scripture:** I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:14; 5:9-10. Paul expounded biblical implications from the doctrine of Christ crucified and resurrected: (1) they were waiting for the same Jesus who came back from the dead (1:10), (2) that since they already believed that Jesus died and rose again, they should also believe that God would resurrect those who were in Christ who had fallen asleep (4:14), and (3) that one purpose for Jesus' death was so that Church-age believers who died before his coming and Church-age believers who were still alive and remained at his coming would all together live with him once he rescued them from his coming wrath (5:9-10).

5. Teaching only the indicatives (grace realities) of the gospel

- **Summary:** In counseling, the counselor restricts the usefulness of the gospel to comforting truths only (justification, imputation, redemption, reconciliation, adoption, regeneration, etc.).
- **Solution:** Remind the counselee of what is true about the gospel and their new identity in Christ as well as how they are now obligated to live under Christ's lordship, however the occasion might require.
 - “The bringing of the very body into subjection is an ordinance of God, tending to the mortification of sin.” — John Owen, *Mortification of Sin* (p. 125)
 - “By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of that provision which is laid up in Jesus Christ; for this end and purpose that all they lusts, this very lust wherewith thou art entangled, may be mortified by faith.” — John Owen, *Mortification of Sin* (p. 162)
- **Scripture:** I Thessalonians 4:1-6, 10-12, 18; 5:6, 11-22, 24-27. Paul did not only rejoice and express thankfulness to God over the Thessalonian believers. He also urged, exhorted, commanded, and warned them. He also instructed them to comfort, admonish, encourage, and help one another (4:18; 5:11, 14).