



paul's post . . .

Defending the Heart of the Gospel

"The doctrine of penal substitution states that God gave Himself in the person of His Son to suffer instead of us the death, punishment and curse due to fallen humanity as the penalty for sin." So begins the cogent defense of the timeless doctrine of the penal substitutionary atonement provided by the death of Jesus Christ in *Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* + by theologians in the UK Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach.

The above statement stands at the heart of the gospel, which is why it is hard to believe that anyone who calls them self an "evangelical" would raise a dissenting voice against it, yet those dissenting voices are numerous, as the authors point out. The gospel is under attack from within the church. Much of the emerging church movement is a Trojan horse concealing pastors and theologians who purport to be a part of historic evangelicalism. In the name of cultural relevance they are prepared to denude the gospel of its essential distinctive – the bloody, sacrificial death of the God-Man – on the basis that people outside of the faith "don't get it." People outside of the faith have never gotten it (see 1 Corinthians 1,2).

The most valuable aspect of *Pierced for Our Transgressions*, however, is the direct and practical way in which the authors interact directly with the objections raised to the doctrine of penal substitution in our contemporary theological context. Taking six broad categories of the debate (penal substitution and the Bible, the culture, violence, justice, the understanding of God, and the Christian life), the authors frame 26 objections offered by those who hold a dissenting view of penal substitution, dealing scripturally and historically with each (i.e., "The violence involved in penal substitution amounts to 'cosmic child abuse,' Penal substitution relies on biblical words, metaphors and concepts that are outdated and misunderstood in our culture," "Penal substitution is not important enough to be a source of division").

Pierced for Our Transgressions is a theologically saturated pastoral response to the critics of penal substitution. It is not a polemic with heated rhetoric aimed at individuals or groups. It is a cogent response to a heresy that has been fought since the early days of the church. It is an indispensable weapon in our arsenal as we continue to fight the skirmishes of the truth war.

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