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**Being Christian in  
a Dysvangelical  
America**

**March 26, PRC  
Presentation**

TED V. FOOTE JR. AND P. ALEX THORNBURG

**BEING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
IN A  
DYSVANGELICAL  
AMERICA**

A Guide to Reclaiming  
the Good News of God's Grace



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“There’s a direct through line from the Old and New Testament Christian gospels to the development of Western Civilization and the United States of America.”

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth

*“Hegseth Invokes Divine Purpose to Justify Military Might” NY Times March 21, 2026*

“We know that God loves. But did you know that God also hates?...Do you know that God also is a God of war? Many people don’t want to think about that, or forget that.”

Franklin Graham

December 18, 2025 Pentagon Prayer service



# Christian Nationalism Characteristics

- Strongly favors clearly defined roles and hierarchies revolving around patriarchy, power, and sexuality
- Adheres to a desire for authoritarian leaders who through threat of violence, or actual violence, defend the preferred social arrangements and hierarchies
- Characterized by ethno-racial boundaries around national identity

# **The Deeper Theological Crisis in the Church**

Dysvangelical beliefs are a theology that is distorted, dysfunctional, and dystopian, turning the good news into the opposite of what it means to be evangelical

<b>Dysvangelical</b>	<b>Grace-based Theology</b>
Bible is Literal	Bible is Authoritative
Faith is Transactional	Faith is Gift
Discipleship is Following Rulebook	Discipleship is Lifelong Conversion
The Individual is Primary	Diverse Community is Imperative
Future is to be Feared	Future is Hopeful
Truth is Static	Truth is Evolving
Never Change our Minds	Reformed Always Reforming
Authoritarianism	Democracy



# Faith as Transaction

Connection based on the exchange of goods, or benefits, where partners expect a return on their time, affection or effort.

Theology of contract.

Theological belief that I give God my faith, allegiance, good works, correct prayers, etc. therefore I have earned God's love and salvation.

Hell Insurance and/or  
Apocalyptic Immunity

# Faith as Gift

Connection based on a mutual relationship where God initiates and sustains rooted in God's actions and commitment towards Creation

Theology of covenant

Theological belief that God's grace is a gift given freely without strings attached simply out of the abundance of God's love

Transformation and/or New Creation



# Faithfulness Defined

## **Transaction**

“Health and Wealth” Gospel

Church as providing services to its members

Worship as entertainment and spectacle

Metrics of the Three B’s  
(Buildings, Bucks, and Butts)

## **Grace**

“Prodigal” Gospel

Church as people called out to serve God’s mission in the world

Worship as gratitude and awe

Metrics of changed hearts and minds towards the Kin-dom of God

# Spiritual Formation in a Dysvangelical America

What do we teach and embody in our communities?

- Theology of Grace in our liturgy, music, preaching, and teaching rather than transaction
- Community rooted in inclusive and diverse connection rather than polarization
- Contemplative leadership rather than authoritarian rule
- Prayer as participation rather than transactional petition
- Mission as identification and solidarity with the most vulnerable
- Prophetic, collaborative, respectful, and compassionate engagement with all others related to the challenges we face in both local contexts and the global theatre.
- Living in hope rather than fear