

## *Introduction*

Isn't it odd how somebody coins a phrase, and that phrase catches on and becomes common currency among believers – even to the extent that many regard it as a scriptural expression? But there can be a catch, a very serious catch: what if that phrase has come from a theology that is unscriptural? If so, then it follows that many believers, through their repeated use of the phrase in question, are being unconsciously influenced by the theology behind it. It is very much like the singing of hymns: for many – without them being aware of it – hymn-book phrases carry more weight than Scripture; hymn-book phrases become 'received wisdom'.

The phrase I have in mind is one which appears in countless articles, blogs, books and commentaries: 'a gospel church' – or its stable companion, 'a Christian church'. This phrase – 'a gospel church' – I fully acknowledge is almost invariably used in a casual way by many who never give a second thought as to its origin and substance. Again, I am sure that many use it to speak of a church which practices and preaches the gospel, to distinguish it from churches that do not. The intention is good, but 'a gospel church' is a most unfortunate choice; it compounds the problem I am talking about.

Although 'a gospel church' may seem to be an innocuous phrase, it is, in fact, loaded, and heavily loaded at that. It carries large overtones. Let me explain.