

Ancient Landmarks

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[0 : 00] Proverbs 22 verse 28! Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.

! Ancient landmarks, a landmark!! It's a stone, it's a marker, a marker of a boundary.! The land was marked by these boundaries, by these landmarks.

They were evident signs. God says here, don't move them. Do not move the landmarks. They're important. Not everybody cares about landmarks.

In these times there were people who used to go around and shift the landmarks. Now, at your property, wherever you're living, there's a landmark.

It may be a wooden stake that's rotting and may it's rotted away, but these landmarks were in the four corners of the block as we have today.

[1 : 12] As the surveyors go out and mark the land and spell out what is the extent of the land. But in this time there were people who did not care about the landmarks and they used to come along and move the landmarks secretly.

Secretly, secretively, slightly maybe. Over a period of years. Because moving a landmark can happen slowly and secretly without people even noticing.

It's like the boiling of a frog. Just slowly turn up the heat, turn up the heat, a little bit at a time and then it's too late to save the frog. He's cooked!

That's what people were like with moving these landmarks. They would try to re-establish the boundaries by moving the landmarks. Really, it's theft, it's stealing, it's spoiling. It's highway robbery.

Landmark shifting happens spiritually when doctrines get tampered with. In Colossians 2 verse 8 it says, Beware lest any men spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of man, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ.

[2 : 20] Some people want to spoil or steal, take captive. As the spoils of war it talks about theft. Who's ever been the victim of theft? I have.

I've had. It's not a very pleasant experience is it? Being robbed from, being stolen from. And that's what's happening in this context here. It's saying that some people are moving the landmarks.

It's like someone stealing the land from beneath your feet. Shifting the boundary markers of your land so they get a bit more and you get a bit less. Bit by bit. That can happen in a spiritual sense too.

There's a danger of landmarks being shifted, disregarded and lost. Now when the Germans invaded France, the French switched the street signs around to cause confusion.

They changed the landmarks. They changed the street signs. They changed the landmarks to cause confusion. Changing the landmarks can cause confusion.

[3 : 22] It can be a dangerous thing. Because landmarks aren't important. It's important to know where your land is.

And when landmarks get neglected and lost or moved, we lose direction. Just as the Germans lost direction when they thought it was such and such a street when it wasn't.

The landmarks are important and landmarks need to be preserved. It's an important Bible principle. God sets the landmarks. He sets them. He sets them in the ground. He marks them.

He makes those boundaries clear. And He sets the landmarks forever. God wants us to be faithful as a church. To have some landmarks that are a marker of where we stand.

To be a faithful church. A faithful, soul winning, saved by grace church. God tells us about ancient landmarks. He says, leave them alone. Leave them exactly where they're set.

[4 : 25] Now, friends today, you know, you may not believe this, but I used to have black hair. I've got a photo to prove it. My hair used to be just this glorious jet black.

A bit like Joshua's hair, you know. Just black. Just... And every day over the last 20 odd years, I looked in the mirror and I looked pretty much the same.

But I was changing. I have changed. My hair has gone from that black to a distinguished looking white. And I wonder how many of those grey hairs are because of difficult Christians I've met over that time.

But thank God, God changes us through our lives. He changes us. Change is real. Sometimes it's imperceptible. You know, look in that mirror and they don't look much different from the day before. But your hair, well in my case, it's greyer and there's less of it. And it's funny, but my wife's hair has stayed amazingly the same colour in all these years.

[5 : 30] But, you know, change happens, doesn't it? Change happens. And, friends, in case you haven't noticed it, Australia has changed. Australia has changed and not for the better over the last few years.

And it's happening day by day, day after day, scarcely we notice it from one day to another. But change has happened and is happening.

Australia, we have moved. We have lost some landmarks. That's right. And Australian churches have changed as well. Aussie churches have changed.

Aussie Christians have changed. It's happening and it's happening and it's happening all around us. I can remember a time when I was in a church and one day they just took all the hymn books and they threw them in the bed.

Change is happening and it's not all good. In Proverbs 24 verse 21 it says, My son, fear thou the Lord and the King and meddle not with them that are given to change.

[6 : 39] That's right. Don't mess around with those who are given to change. Those who want to change things. People want to change the church. And before you know it we'll all be dancing around the golden calf.

Like Aaron and the people did. Led by our song leader. God forbid. Psalm 11 verse 3 it says, If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Some things are foundational. They're foundations, they're landmarks. Foundations need to be strong and firm or we'll just be building on shifting sands.

That's right. We know the story of the Lord that he told of the proverb, of the parable rather that he told of the man building on the shifting sands. And then the man who built on the rock.

The Word of God. The loss of landmarks is a tragic thing. A grievous thing. People have gone astray from a reverence for the Word of God.

[7 : 41] In Psalm 119, 136 the psalmist says, Rivers of water run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law.

It's a serious thing. It's a sad thing when the landmarks are lost. Landmarks are like signposts. Like they were in France, they provide direction. We need direction.

As a church we want to have a direction that is clear and strong and straight. We need to know where we are going. Are we headed in the right direction? And how will we know?

How will we know? Well, know because of the landmarks. Well, know because of the landmarks. Because of those boundary markers. They indicate ownership. Back then the father would will it to his son and his grandson, his great grandson and so on.

The land was marked and then it was apportioned and divided. And down through time it showed ownership. Who the land belonged to.

[8 : 49] And who the people, sorry, they showed God's people where they belonged. There's a sense of belonging when we're in a church that stands for something.

A boundary was sacred. Sacred because God owned the land. God owned the land. He granted it to his own people. The promised land. It was marked out for God's people.

There was a boundary that God set. And he said, this is my land. This is the promised land.

Landmarks provided protection. Protection. When the people needed to flee to the cities of refuge.

They had to go to where that boundary was. And once they stepped across that boundary. And they were in the city of refuge. They knew they were safe and secure. The boundary, the landmarks provided safety.

The landmarks indicate identification. To be within God's promised land. Meant that the people were identifying as God's chosen people.

[9 : 50] The landmarks show whose side are you on. Whose territory are you in. Whose crowd do you identify with it. It shows a domain. A landmark spells out the kingdom.

The land, the domain. The domain. Proverbs 22 verse 28 it says. Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set.

The markers should not be altered. People moving a marker, a landmark were really feely. They were robbing the person to whom the land belonged.

And friends, it happens. I'm sure it still happens today. Even in Australia. People might mess around with the landmarks there. They want to alter things so that they've got a bit more property than their neighbour.

Dishonest people would gradually and slowly move the landmarks to one side. And the other landowner may not even notice it. Especially if it's a big property. And so there's dangers of that.

[10:57] Of that landmark shifting even in churches today. It's incrementalism. Gradualism. Inch by inch. Little by little. And before you know it. Something quite different is happening.

And we need landmarks today. They're important for us. A lack of landmarks creates problems. You know, when a tornado strikes, it sometimes takes the signpost with it.

They get torn out of the ground. And it leaves people without direction. Remove not the ancient landmarks. Do not budge. We will not be shifted from the fundamental principles.

We must not. We must hold faithful as a church, as a people. The landmarks need to be in place and left in their place. If anything, they need to be restored.

So, friends, there's a cry that goes out today. A cry goes out today in Christendom. Move with the times. Move with the times. Times have changed. Chase the newest fad.

[11:57] Draw a bigger crowd at any cost. Let's change the church. But God's word has not changed. The ancient landmarks are being removed. Now, this is not to say that I'm a big fan of technology and of using what we currently can use as means of communication, as means of messaging the world with the message that matters.

We want to do that. We don't want to hold back from that. And we may use different media, different modes of communication. It's not talking about that as such.

But there are ancient landmarks. There are spiritual sacred landmarks. As there was in the physical sense, there was that definite boundary mark.

And these are days that we lay at days of apostasy and compromise. In these days, God is calling us to the landmarks. To the established truth.

To the supernatural accuracy of the scriptures. To be biblical Christians. Because today churches have strayed far off the path and have abandoned the old gospel. In Jeremiah 6 verse 16 it says, Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths.

[13:17] Where is the good way? And walk therein. And ye shall find rest for your souls. But, they said, we will not walk therein. Jeremiah says, ask for the old paths.

Where is the good way? It's talking about biblical teaching. Sound teaching. The faith once delivered for the saints. I pray, God helping us, will be a rock solid church. Amen.

As far as the teaching of this church. That will contend earnestly for it. God has given us the scriptures. You may trust every word in your Bible.

Every word of God is pure. This is God's perfect masterpiece. God's word. We need to get back to it. As a church in our homes in this country.

People have neglected and ignored it. They've removed the ancient landmark. Friends, we believe the Bible is God's word. It's his full revelation.

[14:15] Inerrant, inspired, infallible. And I urge you, one and all, let's be a people to tremble at his word. So we're going to look at four ancient landmarks today.

Let's consider some ancient landmarks we need to hold fast to. And I trust you'll be in agreement on these four landmarks, if you like. Four markers on the boundaries.

Four landmarks. Number one, biblical authority. Biblical authority. It's not the popular culture or a particular experience or some new fan thing which defines what we teach.

It is the Bible. Biblical authority. Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set. Biblical authority is an ancient landmark.

What do I mean by that? People don't like that anymore. Biblical authority. God says it. That settles it.

[15:20] It doesn't matter whether I believe it or not. God says it. That settles it. Biblical authority. The basis for authority must be what God says. What is marked out in God's word.

Biblical authority. It means the biblical order and authority. Our Bible is the final authority. The final authority. We must be a strongly biblical church.

I'm sure we all would concur with that. In Isaiah 8 verse 20 it says, To the Lord and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

We must speak according to this word. We desperately need biblical authority in these days. In our homes. In our churches. God's leadership. Pastoral leadership.

We must submit to the divine precepts. In Isaiah 28 verse 13 it says, But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line.

[16:28] There is a sense where there is a precept here. What is a precept? A precept is a commandment. A commandment. Do we hold fast to the precepts of God? Biblical authority.

Biblical authority. Biblical authority. It matters. It really, truly, it matters. I care enough to tell you the truth. Biblical authority matters today.

It matters. Because it's the Bible that determines what we do. It must be. The Bible is the authoritative basis for our belief, for our theology, for our truth.

Our teachings and our practices must have a biblical basis. It's when we get away from what, thus saith the Lord, that things can get shifted.

The Bible, it contains 3,566,480 letters. 773,693 words.

[17:26] 31,102 verses. 1,189 chapters. And 66 books. It is true, eternal. It is pure, preserved, priceless, precise.

We love the Bible. We care about the Bible. It's authorised. It's a Bible that says, thus saith the Lord. We can trust in that.

It has the stamp of authority on it. In a day when moral sin and doctrinal error abounds, we must have biblical authority.

It's an ancient landmark. Secondly, we must have biblical preaching. Biblical preaching. I'm not here to give you a feel-good motivational pep talk today.

That's right. I'm not here to pat you on the back or to scratch you where it itches. I'm here to say, thus saith the Lord. I must.

[18:24] I must do that. God helping me as faithfully as I know how to. Biblical preaching is what we need today. In Isaiah 30 verse 10 it says of a rebellious people. They say to the seers, see not.

And to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things. Speak unto us smooth things. Prophecy deceits. Sounds a bit like the 21st century, doesn't it?

That's right. If this preacher ever stops warning you and sounding an alarm and starts just trying to pander to people or to be a people pleaser, please sack me.

Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set. Australia needs Biblical preaching. Preaching that's founded on the Word of God.

It's not popular anymore. It wasn't popular in Isaiah's day. It wasn't popular in Jeremiah's day. This is not a day that we need preachers who are like some dumb pathetic so-called guard dog who passively yields to a thug who threatens to break in and harm your household and does not bark.

[19:32] Now, I must confess, sometimes it's good having a dog who doesn't bark. At 6 o'clock in the morning when he wakes up and he wants you to know it, it's not good to have a dog that barks.

But if you've got a thug trying to break into your house, you want to hear that dog bark. Amen? You want to know that you're getting broken into. A guard dog who doesn't bark is useless.

A preacher who fails to do his duty to soundly declare the Word faithfully is useless to you. This age calls for watchmen who will sound the alarm in the holy mountain.

In Isaiah 56-10 it says, His watchmen are blind, they're all ignorant, they're all dumb. Dogs, they cannot bark. Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Sounds a bit like my dog sometimes.

He loves to sleep, lie down, loving to slumber. Have you got a dog like that? I have. But we don't want a guard dog who's going to be like that.

[20:29] We don't want a preacher who's going to fail in his duty as a watchman. We must have biblical preaching. We need to say what God says.

That can sometimes mean that when you come to church you don't get a feel-good message, you get a feel-bad message. No, we must have biblical preaching. Biblical preaching. That can mean hellfire preaching.

It might make you warm up about this cold morning. Preaching without fear or favour. The preaching of an ever-burning lake of fire. The preaching of a biblical hell.

The preaching of a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Biblical preaching. The preaching of the judgement of God that we ought to flee from. The wrath to come. Isaiah 58 it says, Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet.

And show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins. Biblical preaching. It's an ancient landmark. It's a good thing. It's not trendy or cool.

[21 : 31] It's strong and uncompromising. Like Elijah. Elijah was called a troublemaker in 1 Kings 18, 17. Ahab said to him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

You're a troublemaker. Biblical preaching will get you into trouble. That's right. People rile sometimes. Amen.

We will not hold back. We must not. We dare not. We must pull out all the stops. We will, spare not. Biblical preaching. It's preaching that prompts people to say, Amen.

Amen. It's preaching that confronts sin and error and calls a spade a spade. Preaching that prompts people to cry out under conviction like they did in days of old.

Cry aloud to God to have mercy on them. That's right. Amen. 1 Corinthians 1, 18 it says, For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

[22 : 30] But unto us which are saved it is the power of God. Amen. The landmarks are shifting today. Sometimes we're afraid of offending people. I don't want to be afraid of offending people.

Amen. I don't want to offend people. I don't want to cause any offence. Certainly not. But we need Biblical preaching. Biblical preaching. And it's incumbent on me or whoever preaches to spare not. Spare not. Don't hold back. Let it rip. God can save you out of a horrible pit. In Psalm 40 verse 2 it says, He brought me up also out of a horrible pit.

Out of the miry clay. And set my feet upon a rock. And established my goings. That's the kind of message we need today. To get out of the horrible pit. To get out of the miry clay.

To set our feet on the rock. Christ Jesus. It's as if someone has put it. Biblical correctness has been replaced with political correctness.

[23 : 28] That's right. Right. Commitment has been replaced with convenience. Holiness has been replaced by entertainment. That's right. Friends, we need Biblical preaching.

That's what we stand for. We must have it. The preaching of Christ and Him crucified. The preaching of the Gospel. Someone wrote it like this. The New Testament Gospel is a call to self-denial.

The New Trendy Gospel is a call to self-fulfillment. The New Testament Gospel focuses on God's purposes of redemption for man. The New Trendy Gospel focuses on man's purpose for happiness in life.

We can get shifted. Slowly, imperceptibly. Let's not move the ancient landmark. We must have Biblical authority.

We must have Biblical preaching. And thirdly, we must have Biblical doctrine. Biblical doctrine. 2 Timothy 4 verse 2 it says, as Paul says, and he charges Timothy, Preach the word.

[24 : 33] The instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

But after their own lusts shall heep to themselves teachers, having heep to in years. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned onto fables. As sows of the early church in Acts 2, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

For one thing, doctrine. I read this quote lately. Psychology won't save people the foolishness of preaching Christ and Him crucified will. Why do we need to change the message in order to reach people?

I've had preachers tell me they do not want to preach or teach doctrine because it divides. Of course it divides. It divides the weak from the chaff. It divides the sheep from the goats.

It divides the wise from the foolish. The quote goes on, however, I can also prove to you biblically that doctrine saves. Biblical doctrine is an ancient landmark.

[25 : 40] Not so evident in these days. I'm talking about sound doctrine, not false doctrine. What does Timothy get told by Paul? On Timothy 4 verse 16, Paul says, Take heed unto thyself and unto thy doctrine.

Continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt but save thyself and them that hear thee. End quote. We need the doctrine of salvation.

The doctrine of salvation is fundamental, isn't it? You know, we can miss something very precious.

Salvation is a foundational doctrine. Sadly there's this sloppy kind of gospel message that is often delivered.

And people think that they're saved when really they're not. The doctrine of salvation, it matters. It matters. I don't want someone to be given false hope that they're saved when they're not.

[26 : 44] We want to encourage people, we believe in teaching people about the assurance of salvation, which is a biblical doctrine. But not to give people a false hope that they have salvation when it's just some man engineered thing.

That they're just doing what's the accepted thing. They're just responding to an altar call, but it's not. Deep down, faith in their heart and believing and confessing with their mouth the Lord Jesus.

We don't want to give an unclear message there. That's right, amen. The doctrine of salvation, it really counts. It really matters. You know, there's people who go forward in churches and respond. And that's a good thing to do. I'm not mocking that. We encourage that from time to time, having response opportunities to respond. But we don't want people to think that they're saved when they're not.

Amen. It must be biblical salvation. That Christ died for all men. That the gift of salvation is extended. It can be received or it can be resisted.

[27 : 53] And it's grace. I'm still amazed by grace today. Grace is still amazing today, isn't it? It's still amazing. I thank God that I look back at His grace and it's still amazing.

It's still amazing. I'm still amazed that I can know Him today. Amen. Because of His grace. Salvation is receiving Christ. It's being born again.

There's a conversion. There's an exchange life. We're made eternally secure. We're held in His hands for time and for eternity. Salvation by grace through faith.

Apart from man's work, it's the one and only gospel. Salvation. It has been from Genesis to Revelation. There is that gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

There's no other way. It's like we said earlier that we can go through the motions or go through some religious acts and even have all the religious language and not be saved.

[28 : 59] Friends, if you're not founding your heart's hope and your eternal destiny on the blood of Christ shed for your sins, then you are lost today.

That's right. There's really no clearer way of putting it. And you need to be saved. Biblical doctrine. It matters what we teach. It matters what we teach, what we practice.

It matters what we sing. It should be true. The doctrine, the teaching should be true. It matters what we believe about Christian behaviour and conduct and responsibility.

It matters that we have sound doctrine. Sound doctrine. Biblical doctrine. That's a landmark. So, friends, thus far we've seen we must have biblical authority.

Biblical authority. We must have biblical preaching. We must have biblical doctrine. And fourthly, the fourth landmark is we need biblical standards.

[29 : 59] Biblical standards. Now, let me just preface this by saying this. I'm not talking about man-imposed burdensome extra-biblical standards.

That's what the Pharisees had. The Pharisees had these weights that they would load people up with and burden them down with. Burdening people with things that aren't in the Word or misapplying principles that are for people under the old covenant.

But are not under this time of grace. We're not talking here about burdensome man-made standards where we can truly say that's legalism. We don't want that.

We're talking about godly principles that are founded again upon the Word of God. Biblical standards. What do you mean? What do you mean? There's some standards that as a church we're going to set some standards.

The pastor will set some standards from time to time to guide the practice and to set the direction of the church. Needful things to support unity so we're in one accord.

[31 : 05] Good and necessary things to support the organisation of things so that there's a sense of decency and order. Standards that are based on biblical principles.

So as a church we'd ask you to submit to such standards out of a respect and humility that's godly. In some of the things that we do there's certain standards.

For example when someone is serving there's a standard. There's a standard there. It's not spelled out directly in here but God says do your best doesn't he?

He says how does it go that scripture that was read earlier in Philippians that we should you know the high calling. The high calling of God.

There's a high calling. It's not a burdensome standard but a standard because we want to aspire to that which is the best.

[32 : 06] And so there's times when a direction may be set that agrees with the word of God. It may not be spelled out in black and white in so much detail.

But there's some standards that our church will set from time to time. And we ask you to, even though you don't agree with them necessarily with all the standards that this church sets. We ask you to abide by them.

There's a good and godly principle there of abiding by the direction that the church is setting. And that's not to say you can't challenge things. I encourage that too.

If I'm wrong I need to hear about it. Come and talk to me privately if you think that I'm wrong. I think that there are some areas that our church can do better.

I really do. We don't want to settle for sloppy. I'd like us to lift the standard. Lift the standard. And while helping weaker Christians amongst us who may not always get things right.

[33 : 07] There are standards. Standards. There are standards all around us in every aspect of life. Standards we live by. For example, the standards that schools have. Schools have academic standards.

They're a good thing. If they didn't, what hope would we have? Standards. They're about what guides our decisions and what we value. Our goals.

In business, the standards that you set. Now I used to work in a production line at the Bon Air factory making air conditioners. And I think I wasn't skillful enough to be actually on the production line.

I was just helping. But there were people there that were quality insurance inspectors. Quality assurance inspectors. And they would go over those air conditioners. They'd test them out.

They'd pull them apart and put them back together again. They'd check that all the specifications were met. Why? Because they wanted to have a good product. It mattered to that company.

[34 : 11] There's business standards. There's professional standards. Standards that protect and promote what's important. You're a doctor. I'm sure that you'd be glad that doctor had to pass certain tests and has to continue to maintain certain professional standards for him to be able to be a doctor.

It helps us trust in his ability to get it right. To treat us. Sure. Now, I'm sure that Mario is a very skillful engineer.

And if we cross the bridge that Mario helped to build, we can know it's safe. It meets certain engineering standards. It has to. Now, I hope it does.

When we go, I know Julie's a bit worried about going over that South Road bridge. She just thinks it just looks a bit scary. It's a bit high. But it's been built to a professional standard.

An engineering standard. It's safe. And as God's people, as God's children, we want to follow and maintain biblical standards in life. So we know what we're doing is right and true.

[35 : 18] And it stands up to the test of time. High standards. High standards in business inspire and encourage excellence. You know, when a business has some good standards, they have people that are switched on and fired up and enthusiastic.

They're motivated. There's a loyalty there because there's a high standard. You know, sometimes it's hard for bosses to maintain that standard when people drag their feet.

In sport, sporting teams need to have that excellent performance. It's because of the high standards that the code sets in the practice, in their conduct.

What about us in the church? Do we aim for that excellence to bring glory and honour to God? Is it something that motivates us? It ought to be ordinary. The high calling. The high calling.

The fastest growing food chains are those who operate with higher standards. You know, I felt like complaining last Sunday night when I got a KFC chook and it was a bit cold.

[36 : 19] You know, we don't like low standards. We want high standards when we go and get some food to eat. And there's a danger of drifting from the standard.

You know, it's like in that factory I worked in. If the quality assurance checks weren't done regularly, some products have slipped by. That's right. Second rate. We don't want that.

