

The Bible, part 3

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[0 : 00] We properly interpret the Bible, that is when we are hearing God speak. It is His very mind. We also talked about the usefulness of the Bible and how the Bible gets used in our lives and it's useful for doctrine and for reproof and for correction and for training in righteousness.

And this morning we want to come to then this final part of the use of the Word of God and we're going to preach this morning about preaching. It seems for some people they're kind of like, well, that better be short.

That's all I got to say. Well, we'll just see. So 2 Timothy chapter 4, beginning in verse 1, and I'll just read through verse 5. Hear the word of the Lord.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom.

Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction.

[1 : 15] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Father, we thank you for your word. We pray that you would help us to understand what you inspired Paul to write. Lord, we need to know and understand what this meant so that we can understand what it means, so that we can understand what we ought to believe, so we can understand how we ought to live and how we ought to act.

And so we pray that your spirit would give us the illumination that our minds need, that your spirit would convict us where we have wrong thoughts, and that by the gospel you would cleanse us of our sin, and that you would empower us to live the way you call us to live.

And we pray this in Christ's name and all God's people said, Amen. Amen. So, don't anyone take alarm. I'm just going to pull out my pocket knife for a second.

[2 : 44] Okay? I just don't want you to be alarmed. I always carry a pocket knife with me. I don't really know why, but I just always do. And I just wanted to pull it out because I just want to talk about it for just a second because a pocket knife, this is your point, right?

And if you're going to stab something, if you're going to, this always goes first. You never stab anything this way. You never stab anything this way.

You stab like this. The point goes in, and as the point goes in, everything else follows. And the reason for that is because that is the only way a knife would work.

But the reason I'm talking about it is because as we think about who the church is, what the church is, what the local body of believers is supposed to be all about, one of the questions that we need to ask is what's the point of the church?

Now, that's a double-meaning kind of sentence. But what I'm saying to you is that the point of the church is going to be that which always takes the leadership.

[3 : 51] It's that which always goes in first. It's that which following it, everything else gets right in line with it. And what I think that we need to see and understand is that the point of the church, that which directs, give guidance, and everything else to the church is the preaching of the word.

Preaching is a glorious, beautiful task that the church is in desperate need of. And I want you to enjoy preaching.

I want you to love the preaching of the word. And my task this morning is to give you three reasons why or to expand on preaching in three ways.

I want to look, first of all, at the uniqueness of preaching. I want to look at the necessity of preaching. And I want to look at the commands of preaching, all coming right here out of this text.

Now, let's talk about the uniqueness of preaching because this is something that I've not heard a lot of people talk about. But if you just look at our passage in front of us and you just think about the rest of the Bible, this becomes abundantly clear.

[5 : 04] In verse 1, the uniqueness of preaching is seen in the charge that is given to Timothy. This is Paul writing to Timothy. Timothy's probably pastoring the church at Ephesus.

And as he's there as a young minister, Paul's been writing these letters to him so he knows how to pastor this church properly. And as he gives him this charge, this charge is I solemnly charge you.

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. I mean, in these two letters to Timothy, he has written 114 commands.

Timothy gets 114 commands in 64 verses. And not a one of them is about him being solemnly charged to do something.

Except this one. The point that I'm trying to make is this. A pastor, you can break down a pastor's job into four categories.

[6 : 11] He cares for the flock. He tends to the flock. He leads the flock. And then he must also feed the flock.

That's the preaching of the word. And out of those four tasks, the only one in all of Scripture that is said, I solemnly charge you, is the preaching of the word.

That is not to say that it's not important to care for the sheep. It is. It's not to say that it's not important to tend and to lead the flock. It's super important to do those things.

They cannot be left off. But if we're looking at this passage, this passage shows us this charge is given only for preaching. And it's not just any charge.

It's a super serious charge. If you look at this charge, he says, Before the presence or the face of God and of Christ Jesus. And what does he say about Jesus? He says, Who is to judge the living and the dead.

[7 : 14] He is putting the day of judgment in the mind of Timothy. He's like, Timothy, listen, you had better preach because judgment day is coming.

You had better preach. You had better not back off. You had better not give up. You must preach. Timothy, whatever else you do, know that judgment day is coming. And therefore, preach the word.

This preaching of the word is serious business. And for those who stand and open God's word and preach, it ought to produce a great amount of fear and trembling.

Even James says not many of you should be teachers, doesn't he? We need to have and we need to grasp that the point of the church, the uniqueness of preaching is such that we need to have a healthy view of the preaching of the word.

So let me just make some application of this thought to you and I this morning. If preaching is this unique, if preaching is this thing, then this means for you and I that preaching is the most important task that a pastor does.

[8 : 32] It is. Which means then it's the most important thing that I will ever do in your life. That doesn't mean it's the only thing, but it certainly means it is the most important thing.

Think about it this way. So many people want to talk about how they hear God speak to them, how they hear God's voice. And for me, I hear God's voice in the scriptures because the Holy Spirit inspired every single solitary word.

And when we rightly interpret the word of God, we are hearing the voice of God. And if in that moment, as we properly interpret that passage and we're giving the explanation of that passage to one another, through the preaching, through Bible study, whatever, in that moment, then it is as though we are hearing the voice of God.

And we need that. You can just say it this way. That if that passage is being properly interpreted, that is your burning bush moment.

And you're hearing the voice of God. What is not good is how many times pastors will not spend the proper amount of time in the study preparing and praying and getting ready to preach the word.

[9 : 58] Or when pastors will say that we need to cancel the worship and cancel the preaching of the word so that we can do good deeds in the community as though those two things are contradictory with one another.

There should never be a moment that we shortchange the preaching of the word. And let's just put this out here for a second. Because this sounds extremely self-promoting.

I would be very happy to go home to glory this afternoon and never preach another sermon again. And this would still be true.

You might be happy to tell me, go back to the coast. Fine. I'll go back to the coast. This is still true. And the preaching should never be shortchanged.

And it doesn't matter who it is that's preaching, whether it's me or someone else. It should never, ever, ever, ever be shortchanged. I love music.

[11 : 01] I do. I love music. And I can't tell you the number of pastors that it just irks me. Somebody will sing a beautiful song, and they're so emotionally moved, and then they say, you know, we could just pray and go home right now.

No, we cannot go home right now. A man wrote that song, beautiful as it is, but a man wrote that song, and a man sang it, but God wrote the word.

Let us hear from him. Preaching. What is, then, our attitude about preaching?

Now, I'm just going to tell you, I'm a little wound up this morning about this. Because preaching is so vital to the health of the church.

Your health as a Christian, your growth in grace, your growth in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have to understand that the preaching is not primarily an educational moment.

[12 : 01] The preaching is a moment to hear the voice of God rebuking you, and then giving you the encouragement of the gospel to call your heart towards him. That's what the preaching is.

It is the only way that God has designed for us to grow. And so, what is your attitude about preaching? Do you long for the preaching of the word, or do you long to escape the preaching of the word?

Do you find yourself working hard to listen, or do you find yourself hardly listening? Do you find yourself praying for God to work through the preaching, or do you find yourself praying that God would get you through the preaching?

Because, listen, if this is God speaking, can you just imagine for a moment the burning bush with me again? Just think about that. I think about that sometimes, and I think to myself, you know, if we had been Moses, if we had been Moses, and we had been there that day, and God would have called out our names, and been like, Moses, Moses.

Most of us have been like, whoa, whoa, wait a minute, Jesus. Wait a minute, Lord. I can't talk to you right now. I got the sheep out here, and it's dangerous. And if I lose one of them, that's a month's worth of food. So, like, just hold your horses. Let me take care of the sheep.

[13 : 18] Then I'll come back and talk to you. No, there's not a one of us that would have done that, right? You and I both know that if we had been right there, and we'd have heard the voice of God, and we'd have seen this bush not being burned up, we'd have been like, doesn't matter the sheep.

This is God talking. And my question is, why don't we have that kind of attitude about the preaching of the Word? Because we need to.

Preaching is a serious business. And it's difficult. Right? This is a difficult thing. Like, there you are, sitting there. It's a little warm.

I'm a little warm right now. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm just a little warm. And here's somebody who's talking, and there's you. You're listening. And all the educational philosophy in the world would tell us, well, this is outmolded.

This is outdated. And nobody is going to, you know, really grasp much here. Because people only remember 10% of what they hear. And I'm kind of like, that is not the point. The point is, is that we need to hear what this passage said.

[14 : 32] So that we know how we ought to live. And maybe, maybe there's somebody who's sitting here this morning that, for you, preaching is so, you just can't stand it.

You'd rather do anything than to sit and listen to preaching. Then, can I just very gently say to you, then you need to check your heart to see if you're really a believer.

I'm not saying that you're lost, but I'm saying you need to test yourself. Because if you don't want to hear the voice of God and the preaching of the word, then something's wrong in your heart.

That's the uniqueness of preaching. Let's talk then, for just a few moments, about the necessity of preaching. We see in verse 3 and 4, that he brings this out, as he talks about how there are going to be Christians and churches who are going to be tempted to reject sound doctrine.

It says that they'll come to a point where they will not endure sound teaching. They're not going to put up with it anymore. Verse 4, they'll turn away from listening to the truth.

[15 : 48] The reason that we must preach is because every Christian in every church is one generation away from falling for false doctrine. It doesn't take long to adopt one thing that's not biblical and then begin to adopt all kinds of things that are unbiblical.

Every mainline denomination in our country started at one point believing certain things about the pastor's role and who could be a pastor, and from that has come all manner of evil.

So much so that I saw this church just recently. They have a pastor of their church who has been called and ordained to be the pastor of their church and he's an atheist.

Right. That's the question. How is that possible? The way it's possible is because we hate preaching because it's difficult to listen to and so we don't have anything that checks us in what we say we believe and therefore we fall for anything.

The preaching of the word is there because we have a tendency to go towards false doctrine. The second reason that it's there is because the church is tempted, Christians are tempted to accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

[17 : 09] It tickles their ears. Right? They want to get someone that tells them what it is that they want to hear. They want to get someone that tells them that makes them feel better about themselves and their decisions in life.

And listen, if you find yourself wanting to avoid the preaching that I'm doing, then we've got one of two problems. You love the truth and I'm not preaching the truth.

That's one problem. If you seek to avoid it, maybe I'm not preaching the truth. That's a possibility. You say, why is that a possibility? Because flash news, I'm a sinner.

Okay? I'm a sinner. I'm a human man and I have faults and I have frailties. And so if you think for one minute that you can just sort of let go and say, well, our pastor, he's always preaching the truth.

Well, I hope and I pray to God and I want people in my life to hold me accountable to make sure that I'm preaching the truth. But the only way we know for sure is for the church to constantly be studying the word to see if what's coming out of the pulpit is really what the word says.

[18 : 14] But the other thing is if you want to avoid the preaching, it could be that you don't want to hear the truth. And you need to, you need to ask yourself where you stand. We need the preaching of the word because in one generation we can lose the truth.

As a matter of fact, there's some people that might even be here or maybe they'll listen to this sermon later. The thing is is that the whole point in being a non-Christian is that you're believing something about God that's not true.

If you're not a Christian, you've never trusted Christ with your life, you're believing things about God that are not true. You're believing that it's not worth your time. You're believing He's not there. You're believing that maybe He'll just wink over your sin and be okay with it.

You're believing all kinds of things about Him that are not true. That kind of false doctrine can take you and lead you to stay right where you are. And I'm saying to you this morning, you've got to repent of that.

You will face the wrath of God one day if you do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[19 : 23] And that is not what we want for you. We want you to turn from your sin and turn to Christ. But Christians, as we're thinking about this idea of preaching, knowing that this is how we combat false doctrine, you need to believe that preaching then is the primary way that God grows the church.

This is the primary, it's not the only way, but it's the primary way that He grows the church. It's the primary way that He safeguards the church from false teaching.

And I'm just going to tell you, as we go further into this, as we get a few years down the road, one of the things that a pastor has to do to safeguard the truth is I'm going to have to tell you things that are out there that are being taught that are wrong.

And, flash news, I may have to call names. Now, a lot of people kind of get a little nervous about that. It's like, wow, that just seems not very nice.

That's just not very nice for you to just say things. We just want to get along with people. And it's like, well, you know what? If we were in a business meeting or something like that and we were selling a company off, then I'd be nice.

[20 : 42] But what we're talking about is we're talking about houses on fire because of hell and people's eternal destinies on the line. So I will do my best to be nice.

but if there's a dangerous doctrine, I will not hold back. And I will say the names and I will do what I need to do to make sure you have clarity about something that you should avoid and run from because it's dangerous for you.

And if you get mad at me, that's fine. Just be mad at me. I will love you anyway. Just know that I won't willy-nilly just call something out. We're looking for that which is dangerous that we need to avoid so that we know what we should believe.

And just really, this just brings up this last little thing and then I'll get to my last point. If the preaching is as unique as it is, if it is necessary to guard against false doctrine, you need to be committed to the preaching of the word every week.

Every week. And here's what this is going to mean for you. Because some of you, with your jobs, with your family, with whatever else, you've got to be gone on a Sunday.

[22 : 01] I understand that. Nobody's telling you to cancel your life. What we are saying is this. If you're going on vacation, find a church so you can be there Sunday morning.

If you're going to be out somewhere camping where there's no church around, then get on your phone and pull up a live stream. And if there's no signal where you are and you know it, then take a recording of a sermon with you and play it.

And if you don't have a phone, then I've got a books of sermons by Spurgeon and you can take one with you and you can read it. But whatever you do, never miss a preaching of the word if you can help it by God.

There are times in the providence of God that he keeps you from it. There are times that he brings sickness into your life. There's times that he brings accidents into our lives.

There's times that he moves us around and we just can't get there. That's fine. Nobody's going to say a word about that. But I'm saying that our attitude ought to be such that I need the preaching of the word.

[23 : 11] And I just say, if after a little while you're kind of going like, man, I just don't get anything out of these sermons, then let's part ways because I want to preach and I want you to get something out of it. I want to preach and I want you to be challenged.

Here, let me just get my third point and I'll just get back to that. The third point is the commands of preaching. He gives eight commands here, right? He gives preach the word, the big command, and everything else that falls underneath there is something that sort of describes how this preaching takes place, right?

Be ready in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke. So I'm going to summarize those eight commands under four headings, okay? Here are the commands of preaching.

Number one, preaching must be preached. I won't belabor this point, but the word to preach means to herald the truth in order to urge people to comply.

It's to herald the truth in order to urge people to comply. That's why it's not simply an educational thing that's happening here. I am pressing on your conscience.

[24 : 15] I'm going to talk about things that might be in your life that you're going to be thinking about and you're going to be going like, my, he's read my mail. And it's like, yes, I have. You say, how is it that you know all this?

Because I know everything, okay? Just, you'll get used to it, okay? This preaching, this speaking of the truth, it is doing so in order to urge people to comply with the word of God.

Which is why you need to test it. Because if I say something cuckoo crazy, you're not responsible for it. It's got to be out of the word. It's got to test it by the word. I'm not telling you to give Pastor carte blanche and do what he says.

I'm saying, I'm going to preach and I'm going to press on you. But you need to do the hard work of going like, Pastor, I don't think that's in the word. That's the relationship that we need to have.

And you can't get that kind of a thing from a small group or from a discussion or even great singing. Preaching is the only place that it comes from. The second broad category is that preaching must rebuke.

[25 : 18] Rebuke. We talked about that last week. This is the idea of pointing out something that's wrong. A wrong thought, a wrong behavior. Just honestly, when you leave here, you should walk out of here with your toes hurting.

Right? Because I need to dance and step and stomp all over your toes. You should feel that way. When you walk out, you should feel a little bit discouraged. When you walk out, you should feel a little sort of chastised.

When you walk out, you should feel a little guilty. That should be there. And you shouldn't be afraid of it. You should welcome it. Right? So, that's what you need to do.

Preaching must rebuke. Thank you guys. Third thing, preaching must exhort.

Preaching must exhort. Exhort is to encourage. It's to lift up. If rebuke is to say stop it, exhorting is to say start it. If rebuke is to make you feel bad, exhorting is to make you feel better.

[26 : 22] Right? And how does that happen? It happens only about the gospel. As we look at this and we talk about, well, you need to have this attitude of preaching and you find yourself, I don't have this attitude in preaching. Well, the goal is not for me to encourage you to grab your bootstraps and pull it up and have a better attitude.

No, the goal is for me to say, I understand that you have a bad attitude about preaching. And guess what? That's why Jesus died on the cross. He paid the price for that already.

He died for that already. And so the goal is not for you to just all of a sudden have a lot more courage about yourself, but the goal is to run to Jesus and look at your sin there hanging upon the cross, paid for, done.

To recognize that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And to rest and to lean upon Him. And the fourth category about preaching and these commands is that preaching must evangelize.

In verse 5, he says, do the work of an evangelist and most of the time we disconnect that from preaching of the word, but that is not how that should be understood. The work of an evangelist is done in line with, in connection with, the preaching of the word.

[27 : 35] In other words, while I'm preaching right here, I am also doing the work of an evangelist, which means that every single sermon I preach must preach the gospel.

If we don't get to the gospel, we're not preaching. And we need to get the gospel for two reasons. Number one, Christians need the gospel.

The gospel is not the gateway into the Christian life. The gospel is the Christian life. And you need the gospel because if you're sitting and you're listening to any preaching that I'm doing, you're eventually going to look at yourself and go like, oh man, I can't believe that I'm such a sinner.

And in that moment, then you need to hear, yes, that's right, you are a sinner, but Christ died for sinners like you. Not only to cleanse you and to forgive you of that, so run and get that forgiveness, but also to empower you to live differently.

But the gospel needs to be preached because I expect that there are people who are going to be here, who are going to be listening, who are lost. And they need to be challenged that this, what we're doing here is to call them to come to Christ.

[28 : 53] And if you think about the Sermon on the Mount for just a second, and you think about what Jesus was doing in the Sermon on the Mount, there's a lot of gospel going on in the Sermon on the Mount.

One of the things he does is he presses the conscience of people when he starts talking about, you've heard it said, you shall not murder. You've heard it said, you shall not commit adultery. And then he expands and says, here's the meaning of that.

The meaning of that is this, that if you're angry with your brother, you're guilty of murder. If you've looked on a woman with lust, you have committed adultery. He's taking and saying, listen, these commands, the heart is the target.

And so you just ask yourself this question. Have you ever been angry with somebody? What does that make you?

Makes you a murderer. Think about the commandments where he says, you shall not lie. Have you ever lied?

[29 : 58] What does that make you? Makes you a liar. If God judges you on the day of judgment by the Ten Commandments, then will you be guilty or innocent?

I've said it before. I'll say it again. Be guilty. So the good news of the gospel is this. What has God done for guilty sinners to set them free from the punishment that they deserve?

He sent his only son to take the punishment for us there upon the cross. And he says, if you will come to me, I will in no wise cast you out.

And if we believe in him with all of our heart, if we call upon the name of the Lord, we shall be saved. There's not a single one of us that doesn't need to test ourselves to see if that's what we need.

When we talk about preaching the gospel, we're talking about making sure that we get to that place where we say, look at yourself. Now come to the cross.

[31 : 11] Come to the cross. Christians, let me just close with one final application for you. I want you to think about the prophecy that Ezekiel got to see.

Chapter 37, the Lord shows him this valley of dry bones. He says, will these dry bones live again? Ezekiel says, well, Lord, you know.

And so the Lord says, prophesy, preach. So he starts preaching. And the bones start rattling. And they come together, bone to bone, and the sinews and the flesh cover all of these skeletal remains so that they're standing as a lifeless army of human figures.

And then he says, now, Son of Man, prophesy to the wind. And so he preaches again. And the Holy Spirit of God and the wind comes in this vision and puts breath into the life, into the bodies of those in this vision.

And they come to life. And the whole point is this, that the preaching of the Word of God is what brings life to the dead bodies. You look at yourself, First Baptist, look at where you've been, look at how you feel now, look at the past and say, is there ever going to be another day where we're growing?

[32 : 33] Is there going to be another day where we're a light in this community? Is there ever going to be another day when we're going to see God do expansive and wonderful and glorious things here in this church for this community?

And the answer is, so long as we get to the preaching of the Word. We can do all kinds of visits and all kinds of programs and I'm all for it.

Do it all. Let's do it. But if we shortchange the preaching of the Word, then there will be no life. Husbands, you want to be the kind of husband you need to be who loves your wife the way Christ loved the church.

Wives, you want to be submissive to your husbands as the church is to Christ. Parents, you want to raise your kids in the instruction and admonition of the Lord. Children, you want to obey your parents as to the Lord.

Friends, you want to be able to share with your loved ones what the gospel is, but you want to do so in such a way that shows that you're forgiving of the times that they have hurt you, that you're encouraging them, that you're trying to lift them up, that you're trying to bear burdens.

[33 : 37] All of these things, all of these things, the dead bones of our lives will be breathing with life again because God uses the preaching of the Word to change our hearts.

I'm telling you something. if I wasn't preaching, I would be a member of a church with somebody like me who would get in my face because I need it.

I need it. I need somebody who will bother me and then who will say, that's why Christ died.

So we need to love the preaching. You need to come ready for the preaching. And by all means, bring everybody you can.

Bring everybody you can. Let's pray.