

The Centrality of Preaching

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2026

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0:00] It's good to see all of you this morning. Thanks for coming. The pastors had an opportunity this past week to go to a pastor's conference.

! Every year our association, the Ohio Association of Regular Baptists, we meet together and we! kind of fellowship together. We are encouraged from the word together.

And we had a chance to do that Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday as a group of pastors. It was really an encouragement. It's one of those times of being able to hear the word, to be challenged, inspired, encouraged by the word, and to be on the other end of that ministry, which is a true blessing.

So thanks for a chance for letting your pastors be able to do that this week. And I can tell you it was a time well spent. We, as a church, Maranatha Baptist in Columbus, Ohio, will have a chance to do that for our association next year at this time.

And so we'll be calling on your help as we host this OARBC conference here around the same time, October 19th through the 21st or somewhere in those dates.

[1:15] And so we want to encourage you to participate, not only in being a part of the sessions, but especially in serving local pastors who we are partnered with, associated with, a chance to just encourage them, refresh them.

As you can imagine, being a pastor, especially a solo pastor in a smaller church, is a difficult work. And so the opportunity that you get, that I get, to encourage those pastors who come, and we want to just challenge you to be part of that process.

This morning we're going to be back in Acts chapter 5. I would encourage you to open up your Bibles, if you would please, to Acts chapter 5. If you're using the Pew Bible, you'll find us on page 913.

Our passage this morning, what we're going to find is this pivotal moment in the life of the church. This moment that's going to help establish the priorities and the focus and the strategic plan of this group of individuals, the apostles, who God is using to birth this church.

We know from Ephesians chapter 2 that the foundation is laid upon the apostles. In pastors and teachers, Jesus Christ, of course, being the chief cornerstone.

[2:37] And here we find the apostles who are instrumental in being used of God in this incredible church movement that we've been looking at over the past several months.

As we're going to take a peek at this passage, we're going to see what is the strategy that works? What is the strategic plan that we need to use as a church to see and enjoy the benefits of the Holy Spirit's power?

You see, you get the strategy right, you enjoy the benefits of God's work among you as God's people. You get the strategy wrong, then you build a system, an organization, or a structure that rests on a weak foundation.

Our temptation, I think, is to look at what's working. Well, what's working? Well, we're going to do what works. We're going to capitalize on the momentum. We're going to see what God is doing among us, and we're going to continue to maximize that course of action so we can be carried along and continue to enjoy the benefits of God's work among us.

How can we capitalize on this momentum? How can we keep this going? Of course, over the last several weeks, we've been seeing that a lot has been happening in this church.

[4:01] I mean, it's a unified church. It's a church that day by day, they are just enjoying the fellowship of God's people. They are in each other's homes. They are scattered across the city.

It is a unified church. We saw one heart and one mind. We saw it's a giving church, a church that is sacrificial in their giving towards one another. They're selling possessions.

They're distributing as people have need. They have everything in common. This is just this extraordinary work of God to create an affection for people. It is a faithful church. Their willingness to lay down things that would give them a measure of financial security for the sake of distributing to others among them. It's a fellowshiping church. It's a church that just loves to be together.

You see that time and time again. It's a worshiping church. And of course, it's also a power producing church. The spirit of God is so alive among God's people and among the apostles in particular that signs and wonders are being done on extraordinary levels.

[5:07] And of course, it's a growing church. A growing church. It's a church that's multiplying so much so that Luke finally gets to the point where he can't even put a number on it.

So many people, men and women, are multiplied. The growth that is taking place in this church because of the evident work of the Holy Spirit among them. So what will be the strategy to keep this movement going?

Well, it's a strategy that Jesus pointed out in Acts chapter 1. As Jesus has his disciples with him, he wants to center them on one united strategy.

And that is in chapter 1 verse 8, you will be witnesses. You will receive, excuse me, heading back just a bit to the first phrase. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, in the uttermost parts of the earth.

The key strategy for every healthy church movement is preaching. Preaching and teaching the word of God. That is where the power is.

[6:18] The power is in the words of life. God's words flowing through his people in order to produce change in hearts. Why were they unified? Well, they were unified because they were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

Why were they giving? Well, it was an outflow of the teaching of the apostles who were helping them understand the significance of loving God, but also loving their neighbor as themselves. Why was the church growing?

It was growing because of the testimony of the gospel, the work of God. In the gospel we see in chapter 2 and in chapter 3 and 4, the clear gospel testimony that's producing life in God's people. All the worship that's happening day by day could be traced to the power of the word of God among his people. That's the strategy. So the pivotal moment in the development of this church, we might get distracted by seeing all the great things that God is doing.

But all of those great things can be traced back to one. The teaching and preaching, the ministry of the word of God. What established the church from the beginning is what's going to carry it through to the end.

[7:30] A priority of faithful teaching. Commitment to life-giving power of the scripture. Here at Maranatha, we've had the joy, the blessing of a foundation that has been laid for us going back to the 60s, the 1960s, of faithful men who taught the word of God.

And we are beneficiaries of that faithful work of God through faithful men. And if the power of God is going to be resident in us, it's going to be resident through that continued faithful ministry.

A ministry that happens from the front, from the pulpit. But also a ministry that happens as we faithfully know the word of God and share the word of God with others.

As we look at our passage this morning, we're going to see the centrality of the word of God. The centrality of preaching. And we're going to see that through a number of means. But look with me, if you would, in chapter 5, verse 17.

We're going to begin to see the centrality of preaching that is brought to attention because it was the focus of opposition. We see the centrality of preaching. But we see the centrality first through the focused opposition they experienced.

[8:51] Notice, verse 17 says this. We see opposition.

The focus of opposition that draws attention to the centrality of preaching in the ministry of the apostles. As we saw last week, we saw the significance of contrastive words.

And here again, at the beginning of this passage in verse 17, we see this contrastive word, the word but. And as good Bible students, we need to understand there's at least two reasons why this contrastive word is here.

First, it helps us know that something that we're going to list here is going to be different from what we saw before. And second, we need to compare it to what was there before that contrastive word

took place.

There is something that is the standard. There is something that we can come to experience. But then there's something that's opposing it. Opposition says something.

[10:14] Opposition helps us identify what are the main catalysts of the problem. What leads, what are the main reasons for the hostility? It calls attention to the main source of frustration or anger that's prevalent.

So opposition helps us identify the main priorities. Especially when we're following God's instructions. What are those things that seem to provide the greatest opposition in our obedience? Draw attention to those things. Those are the things that are probably the most important things. We continue to read this account and we find out that the high priest and the Sadducees are fed up. They are fed up. And now, here they are. They thought they got rid of the problem. They thought in getting rid of Jesus, they could finally have some peace and quiet in their city. Yet, Jesus was an annoyance to them. His teaching attracted a great deal of attention. And a lot of individuals would gather around Jesus.

[11:22] But one thing that they could count on is the loyalty of the people. The people were still loyal to the religious leaders. They still attended temple. They still followed their direction.

But now, now all of a sudden, this new teaching from the apostles is changing all of that. There seems to be this new unity. This new loyalty. This new allegiance.

This new commitment to what is taking place. Of course, it's because the gospel is having a way in their hearts. And as far as they were concerned, this had to be stopped.

This movement was growing and now spilling into Judea. And we saw that in chapter 5, verse 16. The people gathered from towns, the towns around Jerusalem. And this is what Jesus promised was going to take place in this movement.

That they were going to be witnesses in Jerusalem. And then it was going to grow to Judea. And that's, in fact, what's happening. So, it was gaining popularity. It was gaining momentum.

[12:21] But what was the source of their problem? Yes, there were signs and wonders. Yes, there was unconventional sharing that was taking place. Yes, there was fellowshiping and worshipping that was happening.

But there was one thing that eclipsed it all. There was one thing that drove the religious leaders crazy. And it was the teaching of Jesus Christ.

They name it here in our passage in chapter 5, verse 28. Notice they say, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name.

They can't even name Jesus Christ. That was the central issue. From chapter 4, verse 17. Same interrogation kind of thing that's happening.

Same indictment. They say in verse 17, But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.

[13:22] In chapter 5, verse 40. This is our passage. We find they charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus. But for all of their efforts, for all of their desire to put this movement down, the disciples, the apostles, were determined to follow through.

They were determined to obey the word of God. We must obey God rather than man. And so we find at the end of our passage, chapter 5, verse 42, what do they do?

They did not cease teaching and preaching. The Christ is Jesus. Teaching. The centrality of the word.

Centrality of the gospel. The centrality of teaching and preaching in the name. The name of Jesus Christ. Christ. I wonder this morning if you are willing to face opposition for the name.

I'm not sure what situation you might be a part of. I'm not sure what circles that you are running in. I'm not sure how things are in your place of work or in your neighborhoods or the different groups that you're a part of.

[14:36] But I wonder if there's a willingness to vocalize and to speak about the name. And to face whatever opposition there might come as a result of speaking about Jesus Christ.

Just a little over a week and a half ago, I had the opportunity. I went to visit Grace Baptist Church in Cedarville, Ohio. And there was a missionary and his wife who were there.

They were actually natives of Pakistan. And he and his wife were there visiting from Central Asia. The very place where I was supposed to go a couple of weeks ago and teach.

And he was supposed to be my translator. And there they were. I got a chance. I couldn't see them in Central Asia. So I got a chance to get to see them there at Grace Baptist Church. Living in Pakistan is not easy.

I don't know the statistics for you, but my guess is it's a fraction of a percentage of the people there who even know the gospel. And yet God, by his grace, through his word, led this man's grandpa to Christ.

[15 : 46] He was working for his grandpa. He was doing... Excuse me. His grandpa was working for a missionary from the States who taught him about the Scripture.

He, over a period of time, accepted Christ as his Savior and then passed that word on to his grandson who came to faith in Christ and is now a pastor. Now he's a pastor in a very, very difficult place.

A place that, by the way, a little bit over a year ago, the pastor of that church was shot and killed by opposition. We don't know that kind of opposition here.

I pray that God gives me courage to speak up for the name of Christ in the face of opposition. There is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.

There is no other name. May we speak the name in the face of opposition. That is the name that must be the priority for us in our ministry.

[16 : 59] It was the focus of opposition, but we see in verses 19 to 21, it was also the priority of their ministry. The priority of their ministry, notice this, again, verse 17, the high priest rose up and all who were with him, that is the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and they put them in public prison.

But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out and said, go stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Get this, the religious leaders arrest the apostles. They put them in public prison. What do you suppose their motivations were? Well, the text doesn't say, but I imagine we can speculate.

Maybe they intended to embarrass. Certainly, they intended to threaten and intimidate through their power and authority. They're like, hey, you listen to us or this is what's going to happen to you.

And then an angel shows up and turns everything upside down. An angel shows up, opens the doors of the prison, brings them out and gives them a command.

[18 : 14] And we saw, by the way, the high priest and the Sadducees who were part of this group. And ironically, God uses an angel of all things to deliver the apostles.

And the significance of that is the Sadducees did not believe in angels. And God uses an angel instrumentally to advance the word of God among his people.

It doesn't matter what you believe. Let me show you who really has authority. Let me show you who really has power. Let me show you what really is the priority. It's the priority of the word, of God, the teaching of the scripture.

And then what do you expect the angel to do? What do you expect the angel to say? What instructions do you think the angel will give? And I know we just read through this so that you know what is here in the text.

But if you were giving advice to prominent individuals who were leading a movement in a very hostile time, what would you encourage them to do?

[19 : 21] What advice would you give? Well, maybe you'd say, things are getting a little dangerous here. Things are getting a little hot here. The movement has really grown.

We've got multitudes who are here. Why don't you take the show on the road? Kind of take things out of the city. You were told to go to Judea and Samaria.

Why don't you just take the show on the road and escape danger for a little while? No, that's not what the angel said. Or maybe the angel would say, hey, just sit tight.

Dial it back a little bit. Things are getting a little hot here. Opposition is coming. Just kind of back off. Concentrate on the things that are working. You know, the miracles, that's a ticket.

You can really get people through miracles. Why don't you keep that up? And fellowship and unity. Yeah, we're a church that loves fellowship and unity. Let's do whatever it takes to make sure the people are comfortable so they'll stay unified.

[20 : 21] No, he doesn't say that either. Or maybe you say, hey, worship is really good. Let's amplify the worship that's taking a place among God's people.

What does keep the worship going? No, he doesn't say any of those things. Matter of fact, he puts them in harm's way.

Anyway, the statement here, head back to the temple and speak all the words of this life is a loaded statement. There are at least three different categories that we can look at here.

There was direction, the where they were supposed to go. There was purpose in what they were supposed to do. There was content in what they were supposed to say.

I think we begin to understand what God's priority is. And this was an important, pivotal time because from this point on, it'll be very clear what the apostles are supposed to place as their ultimate priority.

[21 : 29] We get to Acts chapter six and the apostle Peter will say to the effect, we need to focus on the teaching of the word in prayer.

That needs to be our main objective. Not that other things are unimportant, but we need to focus on the main thing. Keep the main thing the main thing. And we begin to see what matters.

Where is the power? The power is in the message of Christ. Here the angel says, speak the words of this life. That's where the power is.

It was a life-giving message of Jesus Christ. Peter has said earlier in chapter three, in expounding the gospel to those who are there in Jerusalem, he says, the God of Abraham, chapter three, verse 13, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate.

But you denied the Holy One and Righteous One. You asked for a murderer to be granted to you. You killed the author of life, whom God raised up from the dead.

[22 : 40] On three occasions, Jesus would refer to himself directly as the life. In John chapter six, verse 35, he says, I am the bread of, what church? Life.

In John 11, 25, I am the resurrection and the life. Life. John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

We enjoy life, spiritual life. We convey life to others through the life-giving message of the author of life.

Jesus was the source of life. Jesus was the fullest expression of life. And only through Jesus would eternal life come.

There is no gospel without resurrection life. That was the message. So if we want to enjoy the power of God in our church, want to enjoy the power of God in this city, we want to enjoy the power of God in this nation, we must not lose the message of Christ, the author of life.

[23 : 53] MacArthur has said, the ministry of God's word should always be at the heart and focus of the church's ministry. Spurgeon has said, the direct and downright preaching of the gospel is the most profitable work which I ever engage in.

God has given us the joy of being conduits, witnesses, to testify to the wonder of life, the words of life.

Of all the ministries we carry out, it's the ministry of teaching that is central. It's the ministry of preaching that's the priority because it's the ministry in which we convey life.

In every other ministry in which we do, it hangs on the framework. It's built on the foundation of teaching and preaching. It's the ministry that we're all called to.

In hard times and in good times, just this past week, just a couple of days ago, my wife and I had another opportunity. This was a very unique, a very unique week.

[25 : 00] We got to see another missionary, a missionary that's actually coming from Ukraine. He and his wife live there, his entire family. He's Ukrainian. He was born there.

He lives there. And to hear some of the things that he is doing in the middle of incredible adversity, I mean, walking into very hostile places, having a gun put to his head, I won't get into too many details, but his willingness to preach about Christ in very hostile situations was such a challenge to me to hear.

Him having a family, sons, a wife, who were constantly in jeopardy of their physical well-being, but all for the sake of the word, the message of Christ that leads to life.

Oh, might we as God's people understand not only the significance of the words, but that God would fill us with a zeal for teaching and preaching.

We can do it unhindered, teaching the word of life wherever we are. may we not wait till things get hard before we do the teaching of the word of life.

[26:19] It was a focus of their opposition, it was a priority of their ministry. In verses 21 to 26, it was the reason for caution, the reason for caution. Notice, the second half of verse 21 says, Now when the high priest came and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

I love this. They're going to exert their authority, right? Here they are. This council is there. They are the big dogs in Jerusalem and they're going to let the apostles have it and so they go to fetch them from the prison and now what do we find?

Verse 22, But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison. So they returned and reported. We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors but when we opened them, we found no one inside.

In other words, they were guarding an empty cell. All of the accoutrements of captivity that were there and all the security measures that were put in place, all the authority that was meant to be exerted and evaporates into nothing because here they are.

They're going to exert their authority on vapors that aren't even in the prison cell. Verse 24, Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priest heard these words, they were greatly perplexed.

[27:54] I guess they were. Wondering what would come of this. And someone came and told them, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.

Then the captain with the officers went and brought them but not by force for they were afraid of being stoned by the people. Huh.

Get this. The reversal has happened. Oh, the great reversal. When God is in control and God's people trust God to do what God can do, all of the force and all of the pressure, all of the intimidation of the so-called authorities amounts to nothing.

Amounts to nothing. And where are the apostles? They're not in the place where they should be at least as far as the religious leaders were concerned. They're in the temple that they're preaching and teaching the people.

And notice this comical contrast. All, the senate was there. They're all there. It's kind of the contrast to all the people, all the multitudes, the church that God was working in.

[29:11] And guess who's fearing? This word, they were afraid of the people. We saw that word already. In our passage last week, we saw this word for fear.

It's the same word that we saw in verse 5. Great fear came upon all who heard it. And we saw this in chapter 5, verse 11.

And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things. This unmistakable power has turned the hearts of those in the temple and he's flipped everything upside down.

The religious leaders who thought they were going to bring great fear on these apostles are turned to fear. That's the power of God. That's what it produced.

Fear in the, it produced fear in the apostles. Their fear of God led them to bold witness. We saw them praying, God, give us courage.

[30:11] Acts chapter 4, verse 29. And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with boldness. And God answers their prayer and here they are again in the temple preaching.

And God turns, God turns the, the, the screws on the religious leaders and now they're the ones who are afraid. God did this.

Next we see it was the center of their commitment in verses 27 to 32. the center of their commitment, their preaching and teaching. It says in verse 27, and when they had brought them, speaking of the religious leaders, they set them before the council and the high priest questioned them saying, we strictly charge you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.

I just want to pause for a moment again, just let you see the repetition and the significance, the priority, the centrality of teaching. We told you not to teach and here you are in Jerusalem teaching. That's the problem. Verse 29, but Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men. That's our commitment.

[31:28] God said it, we're going to do it with courage. We're going to follow through and then he, then Peter, he goes after it, man. He is like a bloodhound.

He is going after it. Look at this, verse 30. So, the God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins and we are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

Main accusation, you're teaching in the name. main accusation, you're teaching in, you're accusing us of this man's blood. We're not even going to speak his name but you know who we're talking about.

it helps us understand that teaching that is empty of Christ is empty of power. Teaching that is empty of Christ is empty of power.

Spurgeon says, the spirit of God bears no witness to Christless sermons. You want to enjoy God's spirit, God's Holy Spirit's power?

[32 : 44] It must be laden with the message of the gospel, the message of Christ. Teaching without Christ may inform the mind, it may stir the emotions, it may even influence behavior but it cannot accomplish the saving work of the gospel.

And the main offense of the apostles teaching you intend to bring this man's blood on us. To that Peter could have said, well no, actually you brought his blood on yourself.

Matthew chapter 27 verse 25 you ask for this. It says, his blood be upon us and upon our children. That's what the assembly of protesters said at the hearing of Christ in front of Pilate.

His blood be upon us and here it is. His blood is there. The verbal connection between chapter 5 and Matthew 27 is striking. And Peter drives it home.

The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging on a tree. And here is this intentional reversal that we see. Maybe it's not quite as apparent but notice the God raised you killed.

[33 : 54] That's what we find in chapter 5 verse 30. But in his previous messages his message in Acts chapter 2 Peter's message in Acts chapter 2 verse 23 is you crucified God raised.

In Acts chapter 3 verse 14 you killed God raised. In chapter 4 verse 10 you crucified God raised and now here God raised you killed.

The emphasis on the message of life. It is a living message. It is the living word.

God raised him. I'm going to leave with that because there's life that is offered because of the message of Christ. God extends life through his son. It doesn't matter what you do.

You may kill him. You may crucify him. You may push him away. But God raised him and God exalted him. And we are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit.

[35 : 00] This is a true message. Our confidence is here. And finally, their source of confidence in verses 33 to 42. 33 says, When they heard this, they were enraged and they wanted to kill them.

But the Pharisees in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men for before these days Theudas rose up claiming to be somebody.

And a number of men, about 400 joined him. He was killed and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him.

He too perished and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you keep away from these men let them alone for if this plan or this undertaking is from man it will fail but if it is of God you will not be able!

to overthrow them you might even be found opposing! God so they took his advice history doesn't really say what happened after this with Gamaliel we don't really know but in this moment God used Gamaliel instrumentally to help the apostles be able to escape what could have been certain death in his words he says you might be found to oppose God here is this assembly of individuals who thought they were defending God and the actual Greek is you are fighting God you are a God fighter not a God defender Peter just challenged this group we must obey God rather than men and all of this seems to be sinking in for Gamaliel the incredible abundance of miracles the fact that the apostles were nowhere to be seen the multitudes that keep increasing the fellowship and the unity among this people the boldness of

[37 : 15] Peter the brazen defiance of the apostles in speaking about the name and the clear commitment of these men to God himself and Gamaliel opens the door for this possibility it's quite striking it's quite astounding he opens the door to the possibility that maybe this is in fact from

God is the one his word is not bound his word will accomplish its work I wonder do we have the same confidence not just do we say that yes the word of God has power and yes God is able to do whatever God wants to do we can give lip service to that and I'm putting myself in this it's so easy for us to acknowledge the truths about God but are we willing to put the action to the knowledge are we willing to do what it takes to demonstrate our commitment to these truths yes Lord your word does have power yes you do have the words of life the writer of the Hebrews warns for us when we hear the word not to harden our hearts as in the day of rejection the day of opposition may God use his word day by day to tenderize our lives and to lead us not only to greater affection for Jesus but greater affection for his work that might look costly and as the days keep moving forward they will look more and more costly is Christ worth it we can start to lay those foundations when things are easy using his word studying his word spending time cultivating an affection for his word speaking his word to others and seeing the benefits of that work happening