Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Compelling Reasons for Biblical Preaching, Part 1
Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-4:4
Code: 90-351

I am grateful for the kind remembrance that this Sunday celebrates 39 years of being at Grace Church. I am often asked, “How has my ministry changed through these years?” There have been many changes in our society. Since I came here in my late twenties in 1969, there have been many changes in the world.

There have been many changes in the culture. Forms of entertainment have changed. Technology has changed. Society has changed. Morality has changed. Education has changed. Philosophy has changed. Everything has changed. The church has changed. The denominations have changed. The interpretation of Scripture has changed. Styles of ministry have changed dramatically.

And...I have not changed. I have not changed. I have been doing the same thing...(Applause)...well, thank you. I didn't say that for you to applaud but I'm grateful. But I have not changed. And one would assume if one listened to those who are the gurus of ministry and church life and growth that not to change is to die. There have been books written that have warned the church...if you do not adapt to the contemporary culture and the way people think and act and respond, and what they expect and what they want, the church will die.

Well, this has proven to be a bogus prophecy. I have changed nothing. When I first came here in February of 1969, I stood behind a pulpit similar to this in the chapel over there and I opened the Bible and explained what it means. And I've done that all these 39 years.I hear a lot today about the necessity to contextualize the message. If I had any sense, I would be wearing a black t-shirt with a skull and crossbones on it and I would have holes in my jeans and there would be no pulpit here. And I would be wandering from pillar to post up here, we would turn the lights down and change this environment because people need contextualization if they're going to respond. I haven't found that necessary, nor am I at all convinced that contextualization means anything or has any value in the church.

I'm particularly uninterested in the society's forms of entertainment. I am widely illiterate about contemporary social literature. I am indifferent to the films and the television programs of our culture. They have no bearing on what I say. I will confess to you tonight that I am largely indifferent to the politics of our day. I understand that we are drowning in a sea of political exposure. For the most part, it has absolutely nothing to do with what I do, what the church does, what the church is, or the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Now why am I stuck in 1969? Why does nothing change? The answer is, because I function under a divine mandate, not under a cultural one. The culture has never and will never dictate to the faithful preacher what he is to do, or what he is to say. It is irrelevant. We do not operate under a cultural mandate. I'm not ready to change the way I preach and become a story-telling, narrative preacher because we live in a culture where stories and narrative are more acceptable to people, because I have a biblical mandate, a divine mandate. And it all boils down, all summarized in a very straightforward command given in 2 Timothy 4:2. So, open your Bible to 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2.

If you've been here any time, you know this very well because I have referred to it on a number of occasions. Second Timothy 4:2, “Preach the Word....Preach the Word.” That defines biblical ministry in one simple command. According to 1 Timothy 3, we are as pastors to have one skill. In 1 Timothy 3, the list of qualifications for those who pastor and those who preach and those who lead the church are given. Only one of them has anything to do with function. They have to do with character. One has to do with function. Pastors are to be *didaktikos*. That means skilled teachers, skilled preachers. That is our only skill. That is the dominant skill because ministry is about disseminating divine truth. And there's only one source for that and that's the Scripture. And so we are commanded, as was Timothy, to preach the Word.

The time for this is given. “Be ready in season and out of season.” What does that mean? Well I perhaps could imagine that Paul had something specific in mind, but since it's not clear what he may have had in mind specifically, generally speaking it's pretty obvious. Whatever he meant by in season and out of season, those are the only two options. You are either in it or out of it, which is another way of saying, “Preach the Word all the time.” Whatever the season is, you're either in it or out of it, which means at all times preach the Word. So the time to do this is all the time.

He not only gives the time, but the tone. “Reprove, rebuke, exhort.” Reprove, rebuke? That has a tone of authority. That is even negative. It implies that you are preaching the Word of God in such a way as to expose people to their own failures, their own sins, their own disobedience, and the inevitable judgment that falls upon sinners. Reproof and rebuke assume an inviolable truth, a demand, a command which must be obeyed or there are consequences. Positively we exhort with great patience and instruction.

The time to preach? All the time. The tone of preaching? Both negative and positive. Both with reproof for disobedience and with great patience in the event that people are endeavoring to obey. This is what we do. It doesn't matter when. It doesn't matter where, in any age, in any time, in any environment, this is what we're called to do.

Even in the area of evangelism, Paul in Romans 10 says, “How will they hear without a preacher?” God's ordained delivery method is preaching. It was Martin Luther who said, “The highest worship of God is the preaching of the Scripture.” The highest worship of God is the preaching of the Scripture.

And last week we talked about Titus 2:15, if you just go to the right one page or so, you'll come to Titus 2 and you'll remember that this was our subject last time. Verse 1, “As for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” Here is instruction to another young preacher, the first was Timothy, this is Titus. He is told to speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

And then in verse 15, “These things regarding sound doctrine, speak and exhort and reprove.” There again is that authoritative note, you bind people to these things as being the authoritative Word of God “You speak, you exhort, you reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

The preacher is not offering options, not giving suggestions, but proclaiming the Word of God with authority. Our mandate doesn't come from the culture, it comes from God Himself. In one sense it is irrelevant how people in our society entertain themselves, dress themselves. Their felt needs, their personal preferences are irrelevant. They need to hear the Word of the living God in any culture, in any time, in any place. And the only way you can do that is to explain to people what the Bible means by what it says.

This is bound upon every minister from the New Testament, the binding of the conscience of Timothy and Titus to this responsibility, it extends to all who preach and all who lead the church...preach the Word...preach the Word...preach the Word.

Now I'm not trying to be self-serving, but I would be the first one to stand up and say, “This church has not died. This church is not irrelevant.” Sunday night after Sunday night after Sunday night you hear these testimonies of people in baptism upon whom the Word of God has come with transforming power.

Now, surrounding this verse are the reasons why we preach the Word. Preach the Word at all times in all places. Preach it with authority so that people are warned as well as exhorted. And there are five reasons why...five compelling reasons why. And I want you to look at these reasons with me because they are so very important, more than that, they're really urgent.

The first one starts in chapter 3. Let's go back to chapter 3. This statement, this command, “Preach the Word,” is surrounded by these reasons as we will see. When Paul finally gets to the command in verse 2, he's built up to that by laying the groundwork as to why this is critical. Each of the five reasons is a very, very potent motivation. And I will confess to you that these things drive me. They are very powerful motives in my own heart.

Number one motive, go back to chapter 3, let me read the opening nine verses. “But realize this that in the last days difficult times, actually dangerous seasons...dangerous seasons will come. Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power and avoid such men as these for among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith, but they will not make further progress for their folly will be obvious to all as also that of those two, Jannes and Jambres came to be.”

Here's reason number one. We preach the Word because of the danger of the seasons, because of the danger of the seasons. Verse 1, “Realize this,” and this is for Timothy in that very first century. “In the last days,” the last days began when Christ came. The last days had already begun. Christ had come and inaugurated the last days, the messianic era has already begun. That's why John writes, “My little children, it is the last time.” That's why the New Testament says, “Christ appeared in the end of the age.” It is the last days. We are two thousand years deeper into the last days, but they began with the arrival of Christ.

“In the last days, dangerous seasons will come, perilous times.” Not clock time, not *chronos*... *kairos* , epochs, seasons. You could even translate difficult, savage...savage seasons come that threaten the church, that threaten the gospel, that threaten the truth. And they increase in severity. Go down to verse 13 for a moment. “Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” There is an increase of these dangerous seasons. They go from bad to worse. As time goes on, we accumulate these dangerous epochs.

They began at the very start of the life of the church. They are basically fomented, propagated, distributed by the kind of people who are described in verses 2 and following. Men who are lovers of self, which is always characteristic of false prophets. They are proud, arrogant. Men who are lovers of money, which is always true of false prophets who do what they do for filthy lucre. They are boastful, arrogant, they are revilers, they are disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God who have a form of godliness. They have a religious garb and a religious paradigm and a religious frame of reference in which they operate. But they have no true power. You avoid such men as these. These are the kind of men who, verse 6 says, enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins led on by various impulses. False teachers have always done this, false leaders have always done this. They have found their most ready reception among unprotected women, as Satan found Eve in the garden.

They have endless information, always learning, verse 7, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
Verse 8, “They're like Jannes and Jambres,” who oppose Moses, the two magicians in Egypt who are only named here, not there. Apparently tradition passed their names down. These are men who oppose the truth, who have useless minds, who are rejected as regards the true faith.
Paul is saying to Timothy, “Look, they're going to be sin-laden, money-hungry, self-loving, arrogant, boastful, false leaders of religion who will manifest every imaginable form of evil, who will propagate dangerous epochs, damnable epochs that the truth must face in these last days.

Now if I were to do a quick historical survey, I'm not going to drag you through every form of false religion, but I think we're pretty well aware of the fact in this culture that there was very soon in the early days of the church a fast developing Gnosticism. Gnosticism, from the Greek *gnosis*, the people who said they were in the know, they had the secret knowledge. They were the initiated who knew the things that the hoi-polloi know. It was out of that Gnosticism that these false gospels came, the gospel of Judas, the gospel of Thomas, the gospel of Peter, and other false documents that show up in our modern media in things like the DaVinci Code, etc., etc., etc. This is old ancient Gnosticism. It was fraught with feminism. They worshiped the goddess. It is that early Gnosticism that struck very strong blows against the church and incipient Gnosticism is even addressed by the Apostle Paul in his letters.

It did not take long for false religion to develop. And the interesting thing about this is that even ancient Gnosticism which you might say was the first epoch, the first great perilous season that came, still exists. They come and they never go away...they never go away. I suppose historically you could say, and we're looking at very broad...in very broad terms, the second great epoch was Sacramentalism...Sacramentalism. This is that period of time that really starts in the fourth century with Constantine making Christianity the religion of the entire Empire and constituting Christianity as the only two religions and persecuting the people who aren't Christians. Christianity then is not something personal, it is something institutional. It is something kingdom wide. It is something you are born into and baptized as an infant into, this institution called Christianity. This exists until the 1500s, over a thousand years you have a highly developed Sacramentalism. What is Sacramentalism? It is the kind of religion that produces only external, ceremonies, rituals, rites, symbols. The church is a surrogate Christ. You connect to the church, you don't connect to Christ.

Salvation is by automatic ritual. You are saved by a baptism, by the eating of a wafer. You are saved by observing a Mass and having infused grace put into your life. Or by Penance, or by confession, or by buying an Indulgence. This is Sacramentalism. It is one and the same as the Roman Catholic Church that dominated the western world for well over a thousand years. That era is past but Sacramentalism is still with us. Roman Catholicism is still with us. Eastern Orthodoxy, another form of it, is still with us. Greek Orthodoxy is still with us. And other forms of Sacramentalism are still with us in the deadness of Lutheranism and Episcopalian churches, and Anglican churches that are in to

symbols. And I will tell you this in general, it is true, the more symbols, the less reality. The more reality, the less symbols.

We are still today dealing with Gnosticism. We are still today dealing with Sacramentalism. We preach the Word because of the danger of these epochs. They are perilous. They damn the souls of people. They derail them from discovering the true gospel and the true God and the true Christ. It was out of the Reformation that the gospel was recovered and a protest against this Sacramentalism was made, that's why we're called Protestants because we were part of the protest. But it wasn't long after the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century that there came another dangerous epoch, Rationalism. It was in great measure the Reformation that freed men up from the great monolithic Roman system that owned their souls and damned them at the same time. It was the Protestant Reformation that freed them from that. And it liberated them to discover what was capable, what man was capable of. And out of that came the Renaissance, out of that came all kinds of new discoveries of what men could do if they were out from under the tyranny of this dark and damning system. But that all gave birth to a love affair of the human mind and it led to Rationalism.

Gnosticism is first. Sacramentalism is second. Rationalism comes rushing in soon after the Reformation. And they abandon...they were so enamored with their own reason that they abandoned faith for reason. They abandoned revelation for reason. They put man above God. The key book was The Age of Reason written by Thomas Paine. The first half, the supremacy of reason; the second half, the debunking of the Bible. Rationalism...Rationalism, still a very dominating force in the philosophies and education institutions of our world. It turned religion on its head. It developed religious liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, critical theory, again assaulting and attacking in a destructive way the Bible. Of course it infested all the mainline denominations and brought them literally to their graves. And we still have it around. We still face Rationalism.

My last time to go to St. Andrew, Scotland, when I was over there about a year ago or so, I was reminded again of the great university at St. Andrews and I went there. And it's a very heart-wrenching experience to go there because the college called St. Mary's College which is a school of theology at the University of St. Andrews, and you can always identify a theological student because they wear a red cape if they're in theology. The school of theology is on one side of the street. Across the street is a pub. In order to walk to the School of Theology to the pub, you have to walk across the initials of one of the martyrs that was slaughtered for the gospel when the Catholic Church ruled England and killed those who affirmed the true faith. So students from the theological school walk across the initials of the martyr, Patrick Hamilton, to go to the bar. The building next door is the St. Salvader's(?) chapel, part of the university, and in that building is the pulpit from which John Knox preached the great Scottish Reformation. Great history.

I was told it is still true, there's not one professor in the School of Theology who believes the Bible is the Word of God. That's the legacy of Rationalism. They worship their own minds. And their reason

is above the revelation of God.

In the nineteenth century, another ism came along, Orthodoxism. What happened in the nineteenth century was very, very important. Mass printing came in, I mean really mass printing. There was printing before that from the middle of the fifteenth century. But mass printing came in, in the 1800s, and the first thing that many wanted printed was the Bible. And so Bibles were printed in mass and they were distributed. They had virtually, according to historians, no effect on the churches. The churches were so loaded with liberalism, so loaded with Neo-orthodoxy in Europe that the mass printing of Bibles had no real impact.
In little places here and there, people affirmed the truth of Scripture. They began to read their Bibles, but most historians would say it produced nothing but a kind of dead, cold orthodoxy...shallow spirituality, superficiality and the church in Europe never ever really awoke to a great revival, though the Word of God was made available. A kind of orthodoxism, we have the Bible, we read the Bible, we like the Bible, it just has no effect on our lives.

In the twentieth century, a most interesting thing happened in Europe. I guess you could call this politicism. The church politicized itself. In most cases all throughout Europe, state churches existed. The state church was either the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant Church. The church therefore was inextricably connected to the government. It was a big mistake in the beginning and now they had to live with the consequences. The church was significantly politicized.

I think the most dramatic illustration of that was Nazi Germany. Do you understand that Hitler did not dismantle the church, did not persecute the church, did not attempt to destroy the church, but simply redefined the church? First of all, rejecting the Old Testament because of its Jewish character, and secondly, extracting from the New Testament all those passages which were in any sense favorable to Jews. Hitler came up with a new kind of Christianity that fit perfectly into his agenda.

It was called The German Christian Faith Movement, and it was one and the same with Naziism.

There were other kinds of politicizings in Europe...the social gospel, reconstruction, liberation theology, that's more modern, that's more common in South America where in the name of Christianity you take guns and knock off the palace and the ruling group, or in America this preoccupation with politics which drives many churches. Very dangerous.

Post Millennialism is a form of politicizing the church which believes that we could somehow make the world a better place on our own and bring in the kingdom and give it to Christ. You notice now that these isms are coming faster because communication is getting better and movements come quicker. In the 1950s you have the development of Ecumenism. Ecumenism, the idea of unity without doctrine, sentimentality, tolerance of error, disdain of doctrine, lack of discernment, let's all embrace, let's all get together, let's have a cooperative campaign, a cooperative evangelistic effort. Let's get

the Catholics and everybody together. Let's have all the common ground that we can and we're not going to make anything an issue that divides us. And so all kinds of strange alliances were formed, many of which still exist.

In the 1960s you had a new movement, Experientialism. This is the Charismatic Movement. You move from truth to feeling, from external revelation to internal intuition. You move from the Word of God to visions and prophecies. Dangerous stuff.
I look at my ministry. If you were to ask me, what am I battling when I'm preaching the truth? I could just take you through the list. Look, I'm trying to help people get out of Sacramentalism, superficial ceremonial religion that damns the soul because there's nothing real there. I'm trying to protect people from the Rationalism that calls the Bible into question and puts human reason above revelation. I'm trying to help people get out of dead, cold orthodoxism, some kind of superficial affirmation of Scripture truth that never changes your life. I'm trying to help people understand that the church is not a political organization that...it is a Kingdom that belongs only to God and is ruled only by God and has nothing to do with the kingdoms of this world. Trying to help people know that you can't make alliances that compromise the truth. Trying to protect them from Ecumenism. Trying to protect them from experiencialism which sucks people into the idea that they can intuitively determine what is true and that they ought to be looking for a feeling rather than understanding the revelation of God.

It was the 1980s when subjectivism came in. Subjectivism, everybody got enamored with psychology and everybody wanted to contemplate their navel and see how they felt. And get all their little petty problems solved. Narcissistic navel watching is the bottom line on that movement. Self-esteem, personal needs theology, personal comfort, man-centered subjectivism, these haven't gone away. We're still dealing with the Charismatic Movement and all of its excesses and they get worse and worse and worse and worse. We're still dealing with people who have been psychologized to death so that now while maybe psychology as a counseling method isn't a big deal in a church. Churches define their ministries around what they think people to satisfy their own needs. That's subjectivism.

I don't want to be unkind here, but I really don't care what you think you want. I know what you need. And what you need comes from God through His Word. And I also know that it will do its work and truly satisfy your heart and not in a superficial way.

In the 1990s we had to face a new ism, mysticism, belief in everything. Also in the 1990s, pragmatism, the appropriate means for ministry is whatever is popular, whatever works. Truth is the servant of what works. So whoever has the biggest crowd got it right...right? Wow, look at all the people that go to that place, they've 10 thousand, 11 thousand, 12 thousand. And I've been told you are a pony express horse in a computer age, you're out of touch. I've been told the key to evangelism is image, style, you can't just pound the Word of God into people's minds. Pragmatism is what reigns today, whatever works. Whatever draws the big crowd.

Also in the 1990s we got big doses of syncretism. Hey, Mormons are fine, Christians are fine, Hindus are fine, Ecumenical Jihad, we're all going the same way, we all worship the same God. Let's put our arms around each other and go together. And, of course, now we've got relativism, right? You've got your truth, I've got my truth, he's got his truth, that's the way it ought to be. Just one ism after another, after another, after another, and none of them ever leaves, right? They all stay. So if I gave you twelve, that would only be a smaller number out of the total number. And they're all still here.

I will tell you this. I have no interest in communicating to people on some simplistic, social, cultural level. I really don't...I don't think it's an issue how I dress. I don't think it would make a difference...I don't think it would make one difference in the Kingdom of God if I took off my tie. That doesn't have anything to do with anything. I don't think it has anything to do with the Kingdom of God if I wear one. But I have a certain respect for this. I don't think it has anything to do with anything.

I know that the power is in the Word of God. And you don't want to take the Word of God and simply apply it to the superficial things. You drive the Word of God not at how people play, you drive it at how they think. The Apostle Paul went on Mars Hill and confronted people at the point of their religion, not their life style, not their forms of entertainment. He confronted them at their religious point. And the only way you can do that is with the truth of the Word of God which is the true religion. If you do not preach the Word of God in a pulpit, you have no impact on any of this. You just let it flourish, you become part of the problem. We must preach the Word because of the danger of the seasons.

And understand....you say, “Well, you know, they're nice misguided people.” No they're not, they are lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant revilers, they are unloving, irreconcilable, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God who have a form of godliness but no power. You better avoid people like this because they lead captive women weighed down with sins, they're always learning, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They're just like Jannes and Jambres who oppose Moses, they oppose the truth. And if you love the truth and the truth is precious, then you understand what you're called to do.

So they are described here, these leaders, according to their character, their immoral character. They are described in verses 5 and following according to their fraudulent ministry. And they are described in verses 6 and 7 according to their danger. They are counterfeit liars, men of corrupt minds, perverted, unfit, disqualified, rejected as regards the true faith. And the progress they appear to have in verse 9, is only apparent not real. Their folly will be obvious, eventually to everyone. We're called then to preach the Word because of the dangers of the seasons.

Let me give you a second point, and I won't finish this, but I'll introduce it. Because of the devotion of the saints...because of the devotion of the saints. There's a transition in verse 10. Paul says, “But

you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings, such has happened to me at Antioch and Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured. And out of them all, the Lord delivered me and indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

What is this saying? Preach the Word, Timothy, because of the devotion of the saints. In other words, follow in the line of the faithful who went before you. Paul was a strong champion for the truth. He set the standard for ministry. Verse 10, he did his ministry duty. You followed my teaching, and conduct. Those are the two things that are critical to effective ministry that you teach and you live what you teach. This is called integrity. You followed my teaching and my conduct. You walked with me, you talked with me, you traveled with me, you saw me all the time. You know what I taught and you know what I live and you followed it. Ministry duties, personal qualities as well, you followed my purpose, my faithfulness, my patience, my love, my perseverance. This uncompromising resolve to walk with the Lord obediently, faithfully, even when it meant persecution, verse 11, suffering because that's what should be expected by all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus.

You followed. You walked in the pattern that I set. And you got what I got, persecution. You expect it, verse 13, "Evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But in spite of that, in spite of the work of evil men, you, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them."

From whom? Paul...Paul. Back in chapter 2 verse 2, "The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

What is it about this New Emerging Church Movement that has such deep-seeded disdain for the previous generation of faithful men? This is not a virtue. You don't mock the faithful preacher of the Word, the faithful pastor. You don't mock him because he's not as cool as you are. But that's the attitude of this Emerging Church Movement...disdain for the faithful in the past. Paul says, "Look, change nothing. Teach what I taught. Act like I acted. Do ministry the way I did ministry."

Lystra was Timothy's home town. Timothy probably heard Paul preach there first. May have witnessed the healing of the crippled man and the stoning of Paul. So he knew from the very outset the uncompromising character of Paul's devotion to Christ and the gospel truth. Paul says, "Follow me no matter what it costs. Follow me no matter what it costs, no matter what it costs."

I look back in my own life to a grandfather who died and on his lips were the words, "I just want to preach one more time, I just want to preach one more time," to a father who died at the age of 91 and had preached into his ninetieth year, never brought a reproach on the church, never brought a scandal on the name of Christ, never accused of anything that would discredit his ministry. Taught faithfully the Word of God. I don't want to change anything. The truth can't change. I can't reinvent

what character is. I just want to be faithful to the legacy of the past.

As you know, Paul is my hero. He set the standard. And following him, godly prophets and apostles, preachers and evangelists have been faithful through the centuries. I don't want to do anything...in fact I find more joy reading dead people than living ones. I just can't understand why you have a whole generation of young people who think the cool thing to do is to show disdain toward the faithful of the past.

Paul says to Timothy, “You preach the Word because of the danger of the seasons and because of the devotion of the saints.” You don't have a right to reinvent ministry. You don't have a right to determine that the Word of God is no more relevant, that we've got to turn it in for something else. You don't have a right to say preaching is out of vogue. Can't do that anymore, expositional preaching especially out of vogue. We've got to come down out of these pulpits, we've got to have a conversation with people, got to have a sharing of ideas. We've got to stop calling people preachers and start calling them sharers, facilitators. You don't have a right to do that. God only had one Son and He was a preacher. And His forerunner was a preacher. And all His Apostles were preachers and it is still the preaching of the cross that causes the transformed heart to believe.

Well, I'll introduce a third one. I could say a lot more about that one, but that's okay. We preach because of the danger of the seasons, because of the devotion of the saints...what a privilege it is to stand in the long line of faithful men who have done this...faithful to every generation every place in the world, opening and expositing the Word of God.

But there's a third reason we preach the Word, because of the dynamic of the Scripture...because of the dynamic of the Scripture. If I were confronting the dangers of the time, if I were endeavoring to be faithful to the devotion of the saints in the past, I might still deviate from preaching the Word if it didn't have the power. But it does. Look at verse 15, “From childhood, Timothy, you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” That's all I need to know...that's all I need to know.

Does the Scripture give the wisdom that leads to salvation? Answer? Yes. That's all I need to know. I don't have a better message, I don't have a more powerful message. This isn't about me. If you want a clever speech out of me, I could give you one. It would be entertainingly useless. I can't change anybody. I'm not adequate to transform a life. It doesn't come from my ability or my cleverness or my compassion or my sympathy, or my clarity. The power is in the truth. We're begotten again by the Word of truth, Peter says. We're sanctified by the Word. And he says to Timothy, “From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

I don't care who you are, if you're in a church and you call yourself an evangelical and you say you love Christ and you want to be a part of evangelism in building the church of Jesus Christ, if you say that much then I will hold your feet to this verse...if you want to see people saved through faith in Christ, then you must acknowledge that the wisdom which leads to that comes from the sacred writings. That's what the verse says. That's what it says.

The Jews used to claim that their children drank in the Law of God with their mother's milk and it was so imprinted on their hearts and minds that they would sooner forget their names than the Law of God. The law was given to them when they were very small and that was Timothy, he had that experience. He grew up..one of his parents was Jewish and he grew up under that influence of the Law. And from the time he was a *brephos*, an infant, a baby in arms, that's the Greek term here, he was exposed to the Law of God. And it was the schoolmaster that led him to Christ. It was the tutor that led him to Christ because the Law of God exposed his sin and exposed his need for a Savior and when the gospel of that Savior came along, his heart was ready.
What do you mean “sacred writings” here, verse 15? “You've known the sacred writings.” *Hiera grammaton*, holy writings, that's the name for Scripture. That is actually the name for the Scripture used by Greek speaking Jews. If you read Philo, you read Josephus, that's their normal word for Scripture, holy writings. And it is the holy Scripture that provides the wisdom that leads to salvation. Psalm 19:7, “The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting...what?...the soul.” The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.

Failure to preach the Word and to preach the Word with authority comes from a low view of Scripture combined with a high view of yourself. It's unmistakable. If you have a low view of yourself and a high view of Scripture, you preach Scripture. If you have a low view of Scripture and a high view of yourself, you preach yourself. It's that simple.

Now I want to add a footnote and it is this, there are different ways that the Bible can be taught, exposition-verse-by-verse, sometimes a topical message, sometimes a doctrine, theological message using the truth of the Scripture. You can put it together in different ways. So I don't want anybody to assume that if you just don't go verse by verse, letter by letter that you have failed to teach the Bible. The idea is to teach the truths that are contained in Scripture. To do that systematically over the long haul, you go verse by verse. But at any given point in time, you may pull together a number of passages and reflect upon something taught in the Scripture in a number of different places and a different format. So there are lots of ways to get at it, but you're always starting here, right?

There's a lot more to be said about the Scripture, and I have a couple more reasons to give you in this little list, but I'm going to leave you hanging. So I'll come back the week after and we'll pick this up there.

Let's pray.

We have learned, Lord, so much about obedience from Your Word, and yet somehow manifest so little of it. We are to be obedient to this command, this all pervasive and yet simple and direct command to preach Your Word. We are to be held to that, all of us who preach. It's inexhaustible. Its riches are endless. And we must continually mind its powerful transforming, joy-producing truths. I pray, Lord, that You'll raise up many who will be faithful to this. This is the power, this is the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. May we give a voice to the Word in all our preaching and teaching. And may Your people hold their pastors to this standard. We want to be faithful to You, to discharge our responsibility, to do it with joy and humility. We thank You for such a privilege in Christ's name. Amen.

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