

Compelling Reasons for Biblical Preaching, Part 2

2 Timothy 3:1-4:4

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Well thanks to Michelle. She and her husband, Ryan, are graduates of the Master's College and they serve in the Crossroads ministry and Resolved ministry as well. How greatly we appreciate their ministry there. John Martin, of course, and Lisa also coming through the Master's College and John doing so many wonderful things to give us leadership in music, including writing all original music every week for our television program. What a blessing, benediction that ministry to us is. We're very, very grateful for all of this.

It is incumbent upon us to understand as Christians that we are under authority. We do not exist in some kind of self-styled freedom. And that authority clearly is divine and it is not oblique, it is not hard to discover the essence of that authority because it is revealed to us on the pages of Scripture. God exercises His authority over us and delineates in clear terms what it is that He requires. And that is why He has given us His Word.

So, we are under authority and we are under the authority of God as revealed on the pages of Scripture. The responsibility of preachers and teachers, elders and leaders in the church, is to delineate then the meaning of Scripture so that the people understand what it is that God demands of them. We are told, as you will remember from a few weeks back, to speak the things that are fitting for sound doctrine, Titus 2:1. And then at the end of that chapter, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority." There is no equivocation about what the Bible means by what it says. And faithful ministers, faithful servants of the Lord, faithful preachers and teachers give the meaning of Scripture clearly and directly. We then speak with authority.

Now we have talked about the fact that we live in a world that is resistant to authority. We live in a world that is in love with personal freedom and autonomy and imagines that every individual should be able to determine his own life, his own directly, his own belief system and be perfectly fitted to do just that. The truth of the matter is, you are either under the authority of God as revealed in Scripture, or you are in rebellion. The responsibility for those in ministry is clear cut, we delineate the people, the will of God as revealed in Scripture.

Now that takes us to our text for tonight as it was the last time we spoke of the subject of authority, and that is 2 Timothy chapter 4...2 Timothy chapter 4. It all comes down to a very simple command, "Preach the Word," verse 2, "Preach the Word," meaning the Word of God, the revealed Word of God inscripturated in the Bible, Preach the Word. That is why in 1 Timothy chapter 3, pastors are to be didaktikos, that's the one skill in the list of requirements, skilled in teaching and preaching, to have the ability to clearly delineate the Word of God. We do it in season and out of season, which is to say we do it all the time, verse 2 says, we do it on the negative side, reproofing, rebuking. We do it on the positive side, exhorting with great patience and instruction.

We then proclaim biblical truth with authority. This is the Word of God that must bind the soul of every person. Our Lord it was who said, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." We are reminded in Romans 10, preachers have a very great responsibility because people must hear the truth of God and how shall they hear without a preacher? Without a preacher.

And so, the Apostle Paul instructs Timothy, his protege, and all preachers who will follow and have followed him, with this simple basic instruction...Preach the Word. Which is to say preaching nothing but the Word, and preach everything in the Word. This is not a cultural mandate, this is a heavenly command.

Now surrounding that command are some compelling reasons. Reason number one, because of the danger of the seasons. And we've already looked at this, but just for a moment, back to verse 1, "Realize this, that in the last days," which, of course, began with the arrival of our Lord Jesus, dangerous seasons will come, difficult times." That is perilous epochs, not clock time, but eras, seasons, epochs. Savage is another way to describe that term. Savage seasons that threaten the life of the church. They will increase, according to verse 13, because evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

We looked at the fact that dangerous seasons have come and have accumulated and accumulated and accumulated until there are so many now and coming so fast that it's hard to step back and even identify them. The character of those who are engaged in these dangerous assaults on the truth, the character of those is delineated in verses 2 and following. It deals with the fraudulent nature of their ministry and their personal wicked character. They're even described as like those who have corrupt minds who have rejected the faith.

So, first of all, it is essential to preach the Word because everywhere in every era there is the accumulation of error which becomes a dangerous thing to the truth. Because of the danger of error, we are called to uphold the truth. Error captivates men, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10, it incarcerates them. They are in prisons, in fortresses of their wrong ideologies. Those fortresses must be smashed if people are to be liberated from damning ideas. That can only happen by the proclamation of the truth. So we preach the Word because of the danger of the seasons.

Secondly, we preach the Word because of the devotion of the saints. Starting in verse 10, you remember, Paul said, "You followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings, just as happened to me." You are told again in verse 14, along with Timothy, "If you're in the ministry, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of knowing of whom you have learned them." Take the truth that's been passed down from the apostolic generation through every other generation and remain faithful to that. We preach the truth because of the danger of the epochs of error that surround us. We preach the truth because of the devotion of the saints in the past who set a godly pattern and a godly example which example we are called to follow.

Now let me pick it up exactly where we left it off a couple of weeks ago. Thirdly, we preach the Word because of the dynamic of the Scripture...because of the dynamic of the Scripture. And Timothy is reminded of the power of Scripture in verses 15 through 17, that from childhood you have known the sacred writings, meaning the Scripture, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

I realize that we live in a day when there are endless sophisticated quote/unquote evangelistic methodologies. I have lived long enough to see them all come and go. Certain strategies to reach the lost, I'm very aware of the endless surveys that have been conducted by survey organizations to try to help quote/unquote the church understand the societal thinking, the cultural queues, the social norms. If we're ever going to reach people supposedly, we have to know all of those kinds of things about them. Somehow we have to find the angle at which we can have easy access into their hearts. And so we are told that we have to alter the message, that we have to make the message the kind of message they are ready to hear, given in the kind of form they are ready to accept.

However, the simplicity of Scripture contradicts that. "From childhood, you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom which leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It is the sacred writings, it is the Scripture that gives the wisdom that leads to salvation. In one sense, I don't really care what your social preferences are. In one sense I don't really care what your culture is. I don't really care where in the multiple paradigms of social awareness today you pick your spot. It's all rather irrelevant to me. In one sense, I don't care how you dress or what kind of music you listen to. That has no bearing in my mind on what I would bring to you in order to bring to you the truth that saves. Whatever your societal identification, whatever your cultural preference, it is only the Scripture which is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation. Now that's why I say none of that really matters to me.

I've been thinking a lot about this in preparing for the Shepherds' Conference. And there's so much talk today about contextualizing the gospel, fitting it in to the contemporary context in which some people find themselves comfortable and therefore identifying with them at that point so that the gospel will have access. I don't think that has any significance in salvation at all...none whatsoever. The Scripture is itself able to give the wisdom that leads to salvation. The gospel, Romans 1, is itself the power of God unto salvation whether you're a Jew or whether you're a Gentile...which would be two extremely contrary cultures.

In fact, to the first group of believers gathered together and commissioned by our Lord, in Acts 1 He said this, "You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most part of the earth." They had a message that transcended all cultures. They had a message that you could take anywhere. If you want to pain yourself into the proverbial corner, then tweak your message to talk to one little piece of societal demographics. If you want your message to know no limits and no bounds, then teach the Word of God. It has no bounds. The power of the Scripture knows no limits. There are no cultural barriers.

We're even being told today that we can no longer preach the Law of God. We can no longer preach the Law because people don't live in a society of absolutes anymore and so they don't view Law as absolute, they view Law as arbitrary. So we've got to come up with a new way to address people's sins. The pop way now is to talk about idols of the heart, you're worshiping the wrong thing. If you're worshiping your girlfriend, or you're worshiping your car, or you're worshiping your career, or you're worshiping money, you're worshiping the wrong thing.

Well, that's true. But Scripture lays out unmistakably that the Law of God is designed by God to reveal sin. Whether or not people externally agree that there is such thing as absolute Law, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the sinner of sin and righteousness and judgment. The Spirit of God will work on the heart because no matter what happens in society, no matter what happens in world

view in thinking, the heart never changes in any culture and in any time. The sinner still feels the guilt, the anxiety, the fear and the remorse that comes with the violation of the Law of God which Law, according to Romans 2, is written in his heart. And so we bring the Word of God to bear upon the heart and the Law of God is our aide, the Law of God written in Scripture if known, the Law of God written in the heart which is known, the Law of God is the school master that brings people to Christ. So we preach the Law, and sin, and righteousness and judgment and the gospel of salvation.

And so, in verse 14 we see, first of all, the dynamic of the Scripture. We preach the Word because the Word saves sinners. You are begotten again, says Peter, by the Word of truth, 1 Peter 1:23. It is the Word that saves. So we preach the Word. It's not only the Word that saves, but it's the Word that edifies. Look at verses 16 and 17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, or adequate, equipped for every good work." Scripture is powerful to save and Scripture is powerful to sanctify.

Now we've been only called to do those two things, called to do only those two things, I should say. We have been called to preach a message that people might be saved and to teach that they might be sanctified. The Word of God, inspired, God-breathed, theopneustos, it is the breath of God, meaning it comes from God, is profitable, that is it is useful in four ways. One is teaching, didaskalian, doctrine, that which is taught. Not the process but the content, the body of truth. Scripture breathed out from God is useful to establish the truth.

Secondly, reproof. Once the truth is established, it reproofs all violations of it. It rebukes. This is the other side of teaching. When you lay down the truth, you expose error. And so, by proclaiming the truth, you also expose people to the recognition of their own sin. From these two workings of the Word, doctrine and reproof, which have to do with content, the truth exposes false thinking, false behavior, come two more effective uses of Scripture for correction. Literally, to restore to an upright position in the Greek. The Word is not just true, it not only exposes error, it transform, it restores. Sounds like Psalm 19. It is not just information, it is transformation. It is not just truth, it is power. It is not just divine revelation, it carries with it the energy of God to change lives.

And, fourthly, it is useful for training in righteousness. Once it has corrected and set you upright, the Word then sends you down the path of righteousness. The result is that the man of God, a technical term for the preacher who then is the example is adequate. Let me talk about that word adequate for just a moment.

It means more than barely sufficient, as you might think it means, it means fully equipped for every good work. Why do we preach the Word? Because of the danger of the seasons of error that accumulate. Why do we preach the Word? Because of the devotion of the saints, the faithful ones who come before us who have done it and passed down that responsibility to us. Why do we preach the Word with authority? Because of the dynamic of the Scripture. It saves, it sanctifies, even the one at the highest calling that God gives in the church, the man of God. That's a technical term used 70 times in the Old Testament, always refers to a spokesman for God. It is the Word that equips the spokesman who becomes the model for all others to follow.

That brings us to chapter 4 and verse 1, and a fourth reason why we preach the Word. Because of the demand of the sovereign...the demand of the sovereign. I came across this verse early in my life and it's a formidable thing to deal with, believe me. I don't know how preachers who are unfaithful to the Scripture, unfaithful to the preaching of the Word avoid fearing this verse. "I solemnly command

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.”

This is a very penetrating statement. I'm struck by a kind of holy fear in just reading it. Here the ministry becomes so serious as to be frightening. I identify with John Knox who when first called to preach was so distraught that he burst forth, he writes, in abundant tears at the face of that awesome duty. I solemnly command you....this is a dead serious command, a charge from God. Not unlike chapter 2 verse 15 , “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman doesn't need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”

Here again is the reality that we render this service in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. The Greek puts it in the presence of God even Christ Jesus, which is another way of saying Christ Jesus is God. We preach then under the scrutiny of the sovereign Himself, under omniscient holy scrutiny. That's why James 3 says, “Stop being so many teachers, for theirs is a greater condemnation.”

There's a trend today for people to rush into ministry, start a sort of self-styled pseudo church and think that that's all that's necessary without affirmation from elders, without proper training, and preparation, without proper life examination as to virtue and holiness and integrity. They rush in to this responsibility, present themselves as if they represent Jesus Christ, stand up and say things that they say comes from God. This is a frightening thing to do. Stop being so many teachers, writes James, theirs is a greater condemnation.

Hebrews 13:17 says, “Those who do what we do have to give an account to God.” Have to give an account to God. Paul says, “I have to beat my own body into submission lest in preaching to others I myself might become a castaway.” In other words, not only a matter of doctrine, but holiness, take heed to yourself and to your doctrine, Paul says to Timothy. Take heed to yourself and to your doctrine. It is the most serious thing to enter into this ministry because the sovereign has established the standard.

Why do you preach the Word? Because I have been solemnly commanded in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, the very one who is to judge the living and the dead at the time of His appearing and establishment of His Kingdom, I have been charged by Him to preach the Word. I actually hear people say, “Well, Bible teaching won't cut it in this culture.” Really, so you've somehow been liberated from this divine mandate? You've somehow come out of the weightiness of this passage? That's frightening.

There's a fifth reason why we speak the Word of God with authority, why we proclaim the Word of God. We have given you four, the danger of the seasons, the devotion of the saints, the dynamic of the Scripture, the demand of the sovereign, here's one more in that little alliterated outline. We preach the Word because of the deceptiveness of the sensual...the deceptiveness of the sensual.

Verses 3 and 4, “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.”

People can be easily seduced, you see it all the time, don't you? You see it all the time. They can be easily seduced. They're seductive preachers in every community. Some of them are on national

television, you see them seducing massive crowds of people, manipulating their emotions in bizarre ways because they are appealing to the sensual.

We already talked about the dangerous seasons concocted by seducing spirits and propagated by false teachers. And here is, in a sense, what makes them so successful, they appeal to the feelings of people. The truth always goes at the mind. The truth of the Word of God always goes at the thinking of people. It does not go at the feeling of people. We want them to think differently about themselves, about God, about Christ, about truth, about sin, about righteousness. I really am only concerned that your feelings follow your thinking.

You hear sometimes preachers preaching in their sort of stylized way with a constant drone of an organ playing in the background...a means to manipulate people's emotions. And there are a myriad of other means to do that, as well. The time will come, the season, again it's kairos not chronos, and it's been around a long time, when they will not endure sound doctrine, they refuse the truth that saves, they refuse the truth that sanctifies. They have been seduced. They have gone astray from the truth led by men who have gone astray from the truth, which he mentions in chapter 2 verse 18. They abandon healthy doctrine.

And we're in such a season right now where this kind of emotional manipulation of people's feelings abounds and dominates the church today. Doctrine is a bad word. Doctrine is a bad thing. Doctrine is divisive. Doctrine is all about the mind, intellect, and has nothing to do with the heart and feelings and emotions. The prevailing mood in this post-modern culture is that every person certainly has the right to determine truth for himself and truth is going to be determined by how you feel.

I often have thought through the years that the evangelical church fights abortion and the evangelical church fights homosexuality and lesbianism and religious freedom and prayer in the schools, and euthanasia, gets all worked up about those things. The worst form of wickedness existing today is the perversion of sound doctrine.

Far worse than any of the things that I mentioned. But with so many churches and professed Christians, they will fight those popular sins to assault and be absolutely indifferent, if not outright hostile to sound doctrine. The ability to distinguish between the false and the true is essential, and that's a mental thing. It's how you think that matters...it's how you think that matters.

I was introduced one time at a convention as a man, quote, "who is a lot nicer in person than he is in his sermons." Well, I'm glad for that in a way. I want to be nice and I want to be gracious, but the idea was also apparent in the introduction that my preaching was not nice. And I will confess to you that I'm not trying to be unkind, I am bound to the truth...bound to the truth. I understand the antagonism toward doctrine and dogma. I understand that the evangelical church in its wideness and breadth today flourishes at that level because they don't make doctrine an issue. I understand that doctrine divides. But I also understand that the truth is absolutely necessary, it's all we have...it's all we have. A kind of Christianity that people are sucked into today has nothing to do with the mind, nothing to do with rational thinking, nothing to do with doctrine, it is all about what you feel...what you feel.

When I wrote the book *The Gospel According To Jesus* a few years ago, quite a few now, I was taken to lunch by one of the leading evangelical preachers in the country and he said to me, "Your book is divisive." I said, "I know, that's why I wrote it. I'm trying to divide truth from error." He said,

“Your book is going to shred the evangelical community. It is divisive.”

I said, “May I ask you a question? Is it true? Is it true? Is the book true? If it's not true, if it's not an accurate representation of Scripture, show me where it's not true. If it's true, I have no choice.”

What is it about the truth of the Word of God that is such a threat? It was a number of years ago, we had an evangelist in our church named John Blanchard whom I've known through the years, he's an Englishman. He preaches about half the year in America, all over the place in America and he's done it for years and years and years and years. He came to our church to preach after decades of preaching in America. He sat in the service and after the service he had an interesting comment, after he preached he said, “Yours is the only church I've ever been in in America where the Scripture is read.” Yet Paul says to Timothy, “Give attention to reading the Scripture.”

What is it about reading the Scripture that is to be avoided? In our culture with its relativism, there is an unwillingness to be, let's call it antithetical. There's an unwillingness to be antithetical, black and white, to say that something is right and something is wrong, something is true and something is false. In the Garden of Eden there were two trees, one allowed, one forbidden. The eternal destiny of the human being, there are two possibilities, heaven, hell. The Bible sets forth two and only two ways, God's way and all other ways. God's way leads to heaven, all other ways lead to hell. People are either saved or lost. They either belong to God's people, or the devil's people. There is Gerizim, the Mount of blessing. There is Ebal, the Mount of cursing. There's the narrow way and the wide way that leads to eternal life or eternal destruction. There are those who are against us and those who are with us. There are those on the inside, those on the outside. There's life and death, truth and falsehood, good and bad, light and darkness, kingdom of God, kingdom of Satan, love and hatred, spiritual wisdom, the wisdom of the world...that's antithetical...that's antithetical. It's on every page of the Bible virtually.

And the Old Testament people were taught very early that there's clean and unclean. They were given all kinds of laws which appear to us to be arbitrary in the Old Testament. They were given them so they would learn to think antithetical. There's the way everybody else does it, and there's the way God wants you to do it. Everybody else cooks a certain way, you cook this way. Everybody else eats a certain way, you eat this way. Everybody else behaves a certain way, you behave this way. Everybody else does such-and-such on the seventh day of the week, this is what you do on the seventh day of the week. Whether it was food, clothing, farming techniques, justice, health care, holidays, methods of worship, there was God's way and there was every other way. And in the ABC world, the primer world of the Old Testament, God was teaching people to think. There is always God's way and the way of the rest of the world. And so we are bound to this antithesis to understand that God's way is different and distinct and unique and singular. And so we preach the Word of God unhesitatingly, the truth of God because we must save people from the seduction that is so abundant that approaches them as if all that mattered was that they feel good.

I remember the radio talk-show host, and I've told you about years ago, and after she interviewed me about a book, I...and she did a three-hour afternoon Christian counseling program on a Christian radio station...after three...after I think it was three segments of conversation, we had an hour, fifteen minute segments, in the break for the commercial, it became apparent to me that she really was clueless about the gospel. And so I said to her, off the air, I said, “How did you become a Christian?” She said, “Oh, it was cool. One day I got Jesus' phone number and we've been connected ever since.”

And I said, "Just exactly what does that mean? One day you got Jesus' phone number and you've been connected ever since, what does that mean?"

To which she responded, "What do you mean what does that mean? I don't even understand the question." She had absolutely no idea. She said if somebody asked you how you became a Christian, what would you say?

And so I just gave her the gospel. To which she replied, "O come on, you don't have to go through all that, do you?" This is somebody doing a three-hour five day a week Christian counseling radio program. This is largely the state of the evangelical church because they have not been brought under the authority of the Word of God with all of its clarity and its power.

Nothing is more important than this. Nothing is more important than this. I've said it so many times, all we have is the truth, that's the only commodity the Lord has given us, it's all in one book. Go out and preach the book. It doesn't matter how you dress. It doesn't matter who you're talking to. It doesn't matter where I go on the planet, I do the same thing. It doesn't matter what the culture is, I don't even know what's going on in the culture. But the human heart never changes from generation to generation, country to country. And the message is transcendent and you can take the same message of the Word of God to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth. And I'll say it again, if you want to paint yourself into a proverbial corner and guarantee the smallness of your ministry and isolate it to a certain time and a certain place and that's it, and question even the validity of that, then figure out a way to talk to only a few select people on a cultural basis and ignore the great power of the Word of God and the great and constant reality of the heart of man which is deceitful above all things, desperately wicked and which at the same time has written in it the Law of God. But if you understand the power of the Word of God and the condition of the human heart, then you will be faithful to preach the Word.

So, preach the Word is the mandate and the reasons are given to us. Without any excuse then, we all stand under this command. I just want you to know why I do what I do because this is all there is to do.

It was a few years ago, and I just want to kind of close with this, it was a few years ago that I was thinking about why you must preach the Word. And I went through these reasons. And I thought, you know, there are probably a lot of other reasons. So once in a while I'll do this. I just took out a pad and I said, I'm going to write down ten reasons why you must preach the Word. And I stopped when I had 62....62 was the number, I said that's too many. I was going to do a seminar with some pastors, expository preaching seminar here with men who were coming from other places, so I condensed it to 50. It took me about three days to unload it. And I've condensed it again and again and again and eventually down to maybe 15.

But let me just list them for you as kind of a wrap up of our thinking. What happens to people...let's frame it this way...what happens to people who sit under the authoritative preaching of the Word of God? What happens to them?

Number one, the authority of God over their soul is established. The authority of God over their soul is established. If you sit under a clever teacher telling interesting stories with his own clever insights,

you come under the spell of the preacher. If you sit under the teaching of the Word of God, you come under the authority of God. That's absolutely foundational. Whether a preacher boldly proclaims the Word of God, or not is the question of authority. Who has a right to speak to the church, the preacher or God? Whenever anything is substituted for the preaching of the Word, God's authority is usurped. I can't imagine a more prideful thing than to usurp the authority of God over the church He purchased with His own blood.

Secondly, people who sit under the preaching of the Word of God acknowledge the headship of Christ in His church. Who is the head of the church? Is Christ the dominant teaching authority in the church or some man? If the Word of Christ is proclaimed, if the mind of Christ is delineated, then Christ is exercising headship in His church. Modern preachers who neglect the Word of God have replaced Christ and they've become the head of the church. When a church is commandeered by a man, a clever, careful, thoughtful, innovative, strategic-thinking man who may be very skilled and very adept at what he does, but who sets aside the Word of God in favor of his own ideas, as interesting as they are, to tempt to appease the culture. Then the headship of Christ is usurped, no matter how effective he might be on the surface.

Thirdly, people who sit under the expositional preaching of Scripture find the Spirit of God and His work established in their hearts. How does the Spirit do His work? I can't take time to develop all this, the Spirit works through the Word...the Spirit illuminates the Word, the Spirit quickens the Word. The Spirit applies the Word. The Spirit even causes us to disseminate the Word. Being filled with the Spirit, we become witnesses.

What is the instrument the Spirit uses? The Word. It is the Word that regenerates. It is the Word that sanctifies. It is what the Spirit uses. That's why the Word is called in Ephesians 6:17 the sword of the Spirit. So when the Word is taught, God is the authority in the church. Christ is the head of the church. And the work of the church is the work done by the Spirit of God who uses the Word to accomplish everything.

If the Word of God is taught in the church, fourthly, humility and submission characterize the people...humility and submission characterize the people. They know how to worship. They know how to be under authority. They know how to recognize their Lord. They know how to depend upon the work of the Spirit of God. And there is a consequent submissiveness and humility.

I remember many years ago when I preached a series on the role of women here from Ephesians. It was a barn burner, let me tell you. This was at the heyday of the big lesbian and Feminist Movement. And somebody in our church contacted the Los Angeles Times and told them what I was saying, and it showed up on the front page. And so people poured into the church, we had to take the choir out of the loft on Sunday mornings and put guests up there. Boy, that's a very distressing thing for guests to be sitting behind the preacher, but that's where they ended up because they would come late and that would be the only place we could seat them.

ABC, CBS and NBC showed up with their cameras here at the church wanting to know how in the world was I getting away with saying that the husband is the head of the wife and women need to stay home and manage the house and take care of their children and love their husbands, how could I get away with saying that? And I remember going out the door over there and being stopped by one of the reporters, stuck a microphone in front of me and he said, "How in the world do you get these women to come to this church and buy into this? They seem like intelligent women." That's what he

said.

I said, "It's easy." I said, "They already have a complete commitment to the authority of the Word of God and so whatever the Word of God says, they submit to that."

Well they couldn't understand that, of course. Couldn't fathom that. I actually ended up on the NBC nightly news, trying to explain to these people how these intelligent women could buy into submission to their husbands and the priority of the home. This church has always had a kind of humility because it's always had a submission to the Word of God.

There's a fifth and very important reason why it is beneficial for a church to be under expository preaching of Scripture, it is because the preacher himself is regularly connected to the sanctifying grace of Scripture. The great tragedy, of course, of tragedies in the ministry is an unsanctified preacher who scandalizes the church, who gets involved in immorality or steals from the church, or gets caught in some horrible homosexual sting, as I heard about just in the last couple of weeks, a pastor was trapped. You want a preacher who is personally, regularly under the sanctifying power of Scripture. That is a very, very great benefit. I am so blessed to be in the same church, in the same place week in, week out, week in, week out of my life, being under the sanctifying work of the Word of God. That's the only explanation for being here 39 years...39 years. On my own, I couldn't survive that long. It's the wonderful work of the Word in my own heart. It is the sanctifying work of the Word in my own life that sustains me spiritually and allows this ministry to go on and ultimately makes me useful to God in your lives as well.

There's another reason to be under expository preaching of the Word of God, it generates transcendent worship...it generates transcendent worship. Most of the sermons that I hear aren't transcendent, sadly. I listen to sermons from time to time and I just can't imagine how anybody could really engage in exalted worship because there's nothing there that lifts me up. There's nothing about God that's dramatic and transcendent and challenging and inspiring and lofty and grandiose and great and clarifying and magnificent and majestic and glorious. It seems to me that it's all on this flat man-to-man level. I tell young pastors, your people will only go as high in worship as you go deep in teaching. You have the responsibility to go deep down into the Word of God and uncover the great treasure of truth. The deeper they go into the Word of God, the higher they go in worship. If you don't go deep, then you have to be manipulated by the music. You've got to come in and you can't just worship God because of what you understand, that is activated by the words and enriched by the words, you've got to be whipped up by a sort of frenzy into some emotional experience which is not worship at all in most cases.

The only way true worship occurs is when you are expressing praise and thanks to God because you grasp the profound realities of His revelation. Preaching today is neither profound, nor transcendent. The preaching doesn't go down, or up, it's just flat and therefore people's so-called worship is equally flat. So the solution, get a bigger band, get a louder drum, do more sentimental music to stir their emotions. True worship is a direct result of truth understood. This church has the kind of music it has and kind of worship expression it has because you know what you're saying. You understand the depth. That's why we sing hymns. You don't need to sing 7/11 choruses, seven words repeated eleven times. You can go way beyond that. You can sing the nuances of theology in the great songs and hymns of every era because you get it.

Well, there are a lot of other benefits. In the place where the Word of God is taught, you find people

develop the mind of Christ. They know how Christ thinks about everything so they have answers to the issues of life. In a place where the Word of God is expository and taught, Bible study dominates, personal Bible study, incorporate Bible study dominates because people have had a taste of the Word of God and they can't get enough. In a place where the Word of God is taught and preached, the preacher becomes the voice of God. And when he opens his mouth, God speaks. In a place where the Word of God is constantly taught, you have a congregation that is strong and committed to the glory of God.

Another one, in a place where the Word of God is taught, people have a true source of help in the hour of desperate need. All those shallow ministries, all that shallow superficial stuff that carries no biblical weight or authority provides absolutely no foundation for the life and death crises of life. It's not true in a church where the Word of God is taught. They understand the issues of life. They have a foundation for the great crises.

Well I could give you more but I think that's sufficient. We are committed to a ministry that has authority, I admit it. It is authoritative but it is not my authority, I have no authority. We are committed to a ministry that is powerful, that's what the Word of God does, it works powerfully. We're committed to a ministry that doesn't put the stress on the cleverness of the preacher but on the truthfulness of Scripture. We're committed to a ministry that's weighty, that's authoritative, that's powerful. It lays a true foundation in the Word of God because this is what we've been called to do and nothing less, preach the Word. Simple, straight-forward, unmistakable.

And it has been for me the most wonderful privilege to do this. People sometimes ask me if you could live your life again, what would you do differently? And the answer is...nothing, I would be here with you doing exactly what I've done. It cannot possibly be conceivable to me how anything could be more wonderful than this. After all these many years, I just thank the Lord that by His grace and goodness I got started the right way those many, many years ago. And it would be our great joy as a church to send off many more men to do the same and to influence as many as we can around the world to be faithful to this. Let God speak with authority and in that His power to save and sanctify and protect His church is released.

Father, it's just a basic foundational things that we're talking about. But so missing, so absent in the world that calls itself the church today. Thank You for the faithful through the ages. Thank You for the faithful now scattered around the world who are doing just the very thing You've commanded us to do, preaching Your Word. Bless them, make them fruitful, encourage them, strengthen them, give them enough success in ministry to know that Your hand is on it. Lord, raise up more in the future. Your Word is the source of power. We proclaim it without equivocation or hesitation. May You honor it as You promised that when it goes forth it will not return void. Be glorified, Father, through Your truth, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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