

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## WORSHIP “Preaching”

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16). Welcome to our study of preaching as an act of worship. God has chosen preaching—the proclamation of His Word—to save the lost. When we use the Bible to preach what God says, then God is glorified, honored, and worshiped in the way He has commanded. When Paul said, “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel,” he illustrated how he felt about preaching. It was both a privilege and a heavy responsibility for him to preach the Gospel. Today we ought to be convicted when it comes to preaching the Scriptures. In 1 Peter 4:11 we read, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.” God wants His Word to be preached. Paul told the young evangelist Titus, “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). In the Book of Jonah we learn how God told the reluctant prophet Jonah to go preach to the city of Nineveh. But Jonah decided to get on a ship and go the opposite direction. Eventually he was swallowed by a great fish that God has prepared for that purpose, and then vomited up on the seashore. In Jonah 3:2 God said to Jonah, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” Jonah finally understood God’s message loud and clear. We today should understand it the same way. Notice what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 concerning biblical preaching.

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

Paul’s encouragement to this young evangelist was to “preach the Word!” He told Timothy to preach when people liked what he was saying, and when they didn’t like what he was saying. Paul told Titus to “convince, rebuke, and exhort” because a time would come when people would not endure sound doctrine. Instead, they would have “itching ears” and would hire someone to preach what they wanted to hear. So, Paul told Titus to preach the Word! We need to understand that in a world that wants to have itself “massaged with good feelings,” there is a great need for Gospel preaching. In Amos 8:11 Amos wrote, “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.” There is a biblical drought in the land today as well. The only way to deal with that is to preach the Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 we are told, “It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” Preaching in and of itself is an act of worship because whenever God’s Word is preached, when Jesus is glorified, and when the truth is taught, God is honored because we preach His Word and not our own. God told Jeremiah, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant” (Jer. 1:9-10). God was honored through the prophet’s preaching when he preached God’s Word. And the same is true for us today.

Today we are going to look at the content, the attitude, and the proper response to biblical preaching. What is the content of God-glorifying preaching? By that I mean, “What should we be preaching?” Should we be telling after-dinner stories, good jokes, or social Gospel ideas? What does **God** want us to preach? There are three things that I want to emphasize in regard to what God wants us to preach.

First, God expects us to preach the Bible as the Word of God. In Romans 4:3 the question is asked, “What do the Scriptures say?” That is what every Gospel preacher needs to remember. When a preacher stands up to proclaim a message, he needs to offer a “thus saith the Lord” so that people know what God has to say on the matter. In Jeremiah 37:17 King Zedekiah asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” That is the same question we today should be asking. We need to ask, “What does God have to say on the matter?” Paul told Timothy to “preach the Word.” Hebrews 4:12 tells us that we need to be concerned about the Word of God because it is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God is where the real power is located. In 1 Peter 1:23-25 Peter wrote of how we have been

“born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because ‘All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”

The Word of God is what will withstand the test of time. We must preach the Bible as God’s Word. James 1:21 tells us that we are to “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls.” What saves man’s soul? Is it a good story, a humorous illustration, or some type of heart-felt testimony? No, it is **the Bible**. God therefore expects us to preach His Word. In 1 Peter 4:11 Peter wrote, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.” God said that if we are going to speak, then we must speak what He has already spoken so that we can be sure that we are teaching what needs to be taught. So, we must preach the Bible.

Second, we need to preach “Christ and Him crucified.” Paul said in Colossians 1:28, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” In Philippians 1:15-18 there were some who had ulterior motives for preaching Christ. Paul acknowledged that the motives of these people were not proper, but he was thankful that at least they were preaching Christ. Paul did not appreciate their motives or attitudes, but Christ was being preached. We need to preach the message of “Christ, and Him crucified.” In Romans 1:16 Paul wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is God’s power unto salvation. We must preach God’s Word, the message of Christ, and the hope of salvation. We also must preach the truth. This is what separates many people from being true preachers of God’s Word. We have to be sure that what we are teaching comes straight from God’s Word. We must make sure that it is true, that it contains no denominational ideas, that it contains no prejudice, and that it is not based upon what has been done for 500 years, but that it instead represents the Word and the will of God. Jesus said in John 8:32, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” It is by the truth that people’s souls will be saved. When the truth is preached, it convicts people in their hearts so they want to ask, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). When they are given a Bible-based answer, that is true preaching. Psalm 119:160 tells us that the entirety

of God's Word is truth. In John 17:17 Jesus said, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." In an age when many people are asking what Pilate asked in John 18:38, "What is truth?," we need to let the clarion call of God be heard by preaching the truth of the Bible. When the truth is preached, don't blame the messenger. Even if the message is not what you think you want to hear, you still ought to be thankful to have the backbone and courage to speak the truth. Let me illustrate. Think about the question that Paul asked in Galatians 4:16—"Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" Do we become a person's enemy by stating the truth of God's Word in the manner in which God wants it stated? Absolutely not! We must preach the message of Jesus, and we must be sure that what we are teaching is true.

However, in addition to having the right content in our preaching, we also must preach with the right attitude. Our attitude says a great deal about who we are and about our motives. Thus, for our attitude to be correct we must look to the Scriptures to determine what a proper attitude is. The attitude that Christians should have when preaching the truth is one that is based on love. Our preaching must be known for speaking the truth, of course. But it also must be known for its love for the souls of people. In Ephesians 4:15 we are told to "speak the truth in love." It is the truth that is important. We must preach the truth. But what is our motivation? Why are we saying what we are saying? Are we preaching simply to rebuke someone and make ourselves look better? Or, are we supposed to preach the truth in love because we want people to go to Heaven and because we have a sincere love for people's souls? In Proverbs 27:5 when the Bible says that "open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed," it teaches us that love is not always "a good feeling" or "a few kind words," but instead may be corrective in nature. To say that we love someone, yet never point out the error of their ways, would not be true love. Open rebuke is also a type of love. In 1 John 4:8 we are told that "God is love." Yet we know that at times God has had to correct people. For example, He frequently had to rebuke and discipline the children of Israel. Thus, love, by its very nature, cares for a person's best interests. That is what true preaching is all about. We have people's best interests at heart when it comes to their souls.

Another attitude in preaching that glorifies God is when preaching expresses a true urgency. In Zechariah 2:4 we read, "Run and speak to the young man." That attitude expresses the same kind of urgency that we today ought to have in our preaching. We live in a world where thousands of people are entering eternity every day unprepared. There is an urgency to preaching because so many people are dying in a lost condition. In James 4:14 we are told, "What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." In 2 Samuel 14:14 we read, "We will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again." That is what our lives are like. This is our one chance. We see the urgency of preaching expressed in Acts 8:29-30 when we read, "Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot.' So Philip ran to him [the Ethiopian nobleman], and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'" The nobleman was reading God's Word, and the Spirit told Philip to go teach him. So Philip did not hesitate. He went to the man straightaway so that he could tell the man about Jesus and the hope of salvation. True preaching must be done in love, of course. But there must be an urgency about it, and it ought to have some excitement and passion contained within it. Preaching is not to be dull or boring—like something that drones on and on. Preaching needs to include passion because the Gospel itself is passionate and exciting. According to Romans 1:16, the Gospel is the good news about God's power to save. Something that powerful should never be presented in a dull or boring manner. Imagine that you had found a cure for AIDS. How would you let people know of your find? Would you stand up and say quietly, "Today I found a cure for AIDS, and I'd like to tell you about it"? Absolutely not! You would get excited, and people

could see the zeal and happiness in your voice. That is the way Gospel preaching ought to be. Every single day people are entering unprepared the place where “the worm dies not and the fire is never quenched.” If we do not want people to go there, then we need to let them see in us the excitement and joy of being a child of God.

Another attitude that ought to be exhibited in our preaching is one of reverence and respect for God. There ought to be a sense of awe in our preaching. James 3:1 says, “Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” James is not trying to discourage teachers, but instead is trying to impress upon those who would become teachers just how serious the Gospel message really is. We need to have a reverence for God and the Bible—a reverence that causes us to take these things seriously as we preach. God said to Jeremiah, “I have put **My** words in **your** mouth.” Any true Gospel preacher ought to have that same attitude. God’s Word is what we must preach. The God Who said in Genesis 1, “Let there be light,” is the same God Whom we represent when we preach His Word. We therefore ought to feel a sense of responsibility toward, and respect for, God when we preach.

However, not only should we think of the content and attitude of God-glorifying preaching, but we also need to consider the purpose of preaching. What is preaching all about? What purposes has God established for the preaching of His Word? The first and main purpose in preaching is to save the lost! God chose “the foolishness of preaching” to save those who are lost. In Luke 19:10 we are told that Jesus “came to see and save those who are lost.” In James 1:21 we are told to “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls.” In 1 Corinthians 1:21 we find an important passage about the purpose of preaching: “Since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” To the Gentiles, the preaching of the Gospel was foolishness. In their way of thinking, they thought that their wisdom was enough. But God said that He chose the foolishness of preaching to save those who were lost. Preaching, by its very nature then, is evangelistic. It has people’s souls in mind. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Our preaching ought to have as its main purpose to try to reach lost souls with the message of Jesus. If we miss that, we have missed the main purpose in preaching.

But preaching also has as one of its purposes being corrective in nature. That is to say, it is intended to correct error. There is nothing wrong with correcting error. In fact, the Bible says that we must do that. Ephesians 5:11 says, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” In Jude 3 the writer said, “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” At times, we must reprove and correct. And that is indeed one of the purposes of Gospel preaching. In 2 Timothy 4:2 we read, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” The idea of “convincing, rebuking, and exhorting” carries with it the idea of reproof or correcting that which is in error. That is what God’s Word is able to do. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Preaching, by its very nature, corrects that which is wrong and teaches that which is right.

Another purpose of preaching is to encourage the saved. If there is anything that preaching the Word of God ought to do, it ought to lift people up. It ought to be a joy to hear faithful preaching. It should lift us up and carry us forward. In Hebrews 3:12-13 we are told, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." If we are to encourage and exhort one another, one of the ways we can do that is through preaching. In Acts 20:32 the apostle Paul told the elders in Ephesus, "Now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Preaching the Word of God ought to be a "shot in the arm" to the child of God. It ought to be something that encourages us to live the Christian life.

Another purpose of preaching is to challenge us spiritually. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." Paul looked at himself first to see if he was living as he ought to be living. We should do the same thing. Preaching ought to challenge us to live better for Jesus every day. It ought to challenge our morals, our dedication, and our devotion to the Cause of Christ.

Too many times, it seems, preaching is a one-sided event. Think for a moment about the proper responses that we ought to make to preaching that glorifies God. Yes, the Gospel preacher has a great deal of responsibility because there are things that he must do in order to be a faithful preacher. But preaching is a two-way street. Not only does the preacher have a responsibility, but the hearers also have a responsibility. What, then, are some responsibilities to preaching that glorifies God?

First, our response to preaching is to listen carefully to God's Word. What does God require of us when the Gospel is preached? Luke 8:18 says, "Take heed **how** you hear." In Mark 4:24 Jesus said, "Take heed **what** you hear." In Revelation 2:11 we read, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" Our responsibility is to listen carefully to the Word of God. In Acts 17:11 we see a good example of that very thing. The Bible says of the Bereans, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." When Paul preached to the Bereans, their response was to search the Scriptures to ensure that what Paul was saying was correct. Our response today must be to listen carefully and then compare what we hear with the Word of God.

Second, we must have the attitude, "Lord, teach us." In Luke 11 we learn how John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray. In verse 1 we read, "Now it came to pass, as Christ was praying in a certain place, that when He ceased one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'" Christ's disciples wanted to learn about prayer, so they asked Jesus to teach them. When we hear Gospel preaching, our attitude ought to be, "Lord, teach us." Our response to the preaching of God's Word should always be the same as the apostle Paul's. Previously, Saul (who later would be called Paul) had been living his life contrary to the will of God by living in rebellion to God's Word. In Acts 9, Jesus spoke to Saul as he was on his way to Damascus. Saul asked, "Lord, who are You?" Christ said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Saul then asked, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" That is the correct biblical response to the preaching of the Word of God. Each of us ought to have the mind-set that asks, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" We ought to be like clay in a potter's hand when it comes to wanting to hear and obey the Word of God. When we hear the Word preached, it should mold and shape our lives. We should be like Isaiah, who said, "Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8). Are we ready to listen to the Word of God and accept it as God wants us to? We need to be

sure that when it comes to the preaching of the Gospel, we make a proper response. The preacher has a heavy responsibility to preach the Word of God. But preaching is not a one-sided event. We as hearers must respond the way God wants us to respond.

Today, our sole purpose in presenting lessons like this one is to help you get to Heaven. We want you to be saved. God wants "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). We, too, have a genuine concern for your soul. We want you to hear the truth of God's Word, obey it, and live faithfully the Christian life. You may ask, "What does God expect of me?" The Bible makes it clear that a person first must hear the Word of God. In Romans 10:17 we are told, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Then a person must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." Then a person must repent and change his ways. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." A person also must confess Christ as Savior (Rom. 10:10). And, last, a person must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. In Acts 2:37 when the Jews cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?," they were told, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." That is what Peter, a preacher of the Gospel, told them that they had to do. Today, then, ask yourself if the preaching you are hearing is true to God's Word. If it is, then you need to have the response, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" May God bless your life as you strive to live according to the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “PREACHING”

1. What did Paul mean when he told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-4, “Be ready in season and out of season”?
2. According to Romans 1:16, what is the Gospel?
3. What, according to James 1:21, can “the implanted word” do for us after we have heard it preached and have obeyed it?
4. What point were Peter and John making when they said, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20)?
5. According to 2 Timothy 1:7, what must proclaimers of God’s Word **not** possess?
6. What did Paul tell Timothy in Titus 2:1 that preachers should preach?
7. What did Peter mean when he wrote, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11)?
8. According to Ephesians 4:15, **how** and **what** are preachers to preach?
9. What did God tell Jonah to preach (Jonah 3:1-2)?
10. How does Paul’s question in Galatians 4:16 (“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”) affect those who hear the Gospel preached?
11. According to Luke 11:1, what should our attitude be as we hear the Word of God being preached?
12. What promise did God make in Isaiah 55:11?
13. Explain the connection between Mark 4:24 and Luke 8:18.
14. What attitude did Samuel portray that we, too, would do well to portray (1 Sam. 3:9)?
15. What, according to Acts 17:11, should we as listeners do when we hear preaching or teaching?
16. What did Paul tell Titus to do in Titus 2:1?
17. According to Jonah 3:2, what message did God want Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh?
18. According to 1 Corinthians 1:21, what “foolishness” does God use to save people?
19. What did God tell the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:9-10?
20. What important question did King Zedekiah ask in Jeremiah 37:17?