

The Church Preaching

1 Thessalonians 2:1 ESV (Pg. 573) *For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was not in vain. 2 But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. 3 For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, 4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. 6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. 8 So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. 9 For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. 10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. 11 For you know how, like a father with his children, 12 we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. 13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. 14 For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, 15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind 16 by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last!*

- I. For the next several weeks, we are going to be talking about what the church is to be like, the goal being to build on what we're currently doing in our Life Groups to prepare our church to understand membership at North Ridge Life Church.
 - A. Today we are going to talk about how the church should be a **preaching** church. For some of you this may seem unnecessary, as that is a given.
 1. Isn't that what we're doing right now? Isn't that what we do **every** Sunday? But what do I mean when I say "a preaching church"? I'm not talking about being a church with a preacher, but rather, a preaching church.
 2. So what is preaching? Who does it? Is it first and foremost an "inside the church" or an "outside the church" activity?
 - B. In our text, Paul directly or indirectly references preaching as a verbal communication of the gospel at least 11 times. Let's look at those references:
 1. He describes their "boldness in our God to **declare** to you the gospel of God" (v. 2); and he speaks to them of "**our appeal**" (v. 3).

- a) “Boldness” and “appeal” speak of a **purposeful communication**; an **intentionality** about his message. His preaching wasn’t simply religious salesmanship, or a casual conversation about spiritual things.
- b) Paul talks about his resolve to come preach to the Thessalonians even after he had been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. (Acts 16, 17:1-9)
 - (1) He was so committed to God’s message that the persecution he had just experienced was no deterrent to his continued proclamation.
 - (2) We see here that preaching is not what we do in comfortable surroundings to the applause and acclaim of those around us.
- 2. In the light of this commitment and his faithful integrity, Paul says, “we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, **so we speak**” (v.4). By virtue of their devotion to God, they have no alternative but to speak of Christ’s goodness openly, everywhere, no matter the cost.
 - a) But there’s more! He describes how preaching the Word of God led them to preach not only in some detached way, as “lecturers”; but to literally pour out his life to those to whom he preached as well.
 - b) “we were ready to **share with you not only the gospel of God** but also our own selves” (v. 8); preaching requires more than a platform and a congregation. It requires the outpouring of sacrificial love.
 - c) This heart for them was on display when “we **proclaimed** to you the gospel of God.” (v. 9) Their preaching wasn’t just proselytizing or social benevolence; it involved both an appeal to souls with genuine service!
- 3. Next, he uses 3 synonyms that surely point to the contents of his preaching when he says “we **exhorted** each one of you and **encouraged** you and **charged** you to walk in a manner worthy of God” (v. 12). These words mean they challenged, while they also comforted and corrected the congregation at Thessalonica through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. How did the Thessalonians respond to this proclamation of truth? Paul joyfully reports, “you **received** the word of God, which you heard from us” (v. 13).
 - 1. He also celebrates the fruit continually produced by their ministry when he says that “you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, **which is at work** (present tense) in you believers. (v. 13)”
 - 2. Though Paul had moved from Thessalonica, the gospel he proclaimed was still working among them, convicting of sin and instructing the believers.
- D. His last mention of his preaching ministry among them is tied to a condemnation of the Jews, who “killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out (Acts 17), and displease God and oppose all mankind.”
 - 1. How do they “displease God” and “oppose all mankind”? “by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved” (v. 16).
 - 2. The attack of the enemies of Christ is always directed towards the Word. It has been so since the beginning! When the serpent deceived Eve, he said: **Genesis 3:1b ESV** “Did God **actually** say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

- E. The devil hates preaching! Jesus said he was “the father of lies”. It would naturally follow that he would resist the clear proclamation of truth. God speaks truth; the enemy’s agents are “ever-present” to counter that truth with lies.
- II. Every recorded activity of God began with a Word; a proclamation of the truth and God’s plan to prevail. Look at the history of his works in the Bible...
- A. God began creation with a Word, “Let there be light (Gen 1:3)!” He announced his intention within the Trinity to create humanity “in his image” (Gen 1:26).
1. After man fell to the devil’s temptation, God preached the prototype of the Gospel to the serpent, as **a guaranteed curse** upon him!
 2. **Genesis 3:15 ESV** “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Jesus would come and set everything right that the serpent’s cunning and human sin had overturned.
- B. A little later, God revealed his cosmic plan **as a promise** to Abraham the Father of all the people of faith. **Genesis 12:2 ESV** “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. **3** I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
1. Over 400 years later, God commissioned Moses as his preacher, telling him to go to Pharaoh, and tell him in the authority of the Great I AM who was sending him, to let his people go from their slavery in Egypt. (Exodus 5:1)
 2. In the prophecies of the Old Testament, men are commissioned to keep the promise of the coming Messiah ever before the people; men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Zechariah, and others.
- C. Then, when “the fullness of time had come” (Gal. 4:4), one comes who the apostle John recognizes as **The Word**. All that God had said and promised in the past would find its perfect fulfillment in this final, personified Word.
1. God had nothing more to add to what he would proclaim to the world through him. He still hasn’t added anything! Jesus Christ is still **The Word**.
 2. **Hebrews 1:1 ESV** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but **in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.
- III. “Preaching” should be nothing more, and nothing less, than the proclamation of Jesus Christ. He has always been God; he became flesh without losing the divine nature; he fulfilled everything required to be pleasing to God; he suffered the just wrath of God for all the unrighteousness of mankind in our place; he rose from death after three days; he reigns as undisputed King of the Universe forever; he will return one day to judge the world. That alone is the content of Biblical preaching!
- A. It is not a given that the message of Christ is preached in every “church”.
1. The largest church in America rarely points to the biblical Jesus if they mention him at all. What they’re spewing out is not Biblical preaching, just motivational pep talks to comfort, not confront, the lost. Reinforcing, and not wrecking, cultural idols.

2. Preaching God approves persistently warns people to abandon all they trust in for salvation, and to “flee from the coming wrath (Luke 3:7)”. It tells them that they must forsake everything to follow Christ, and in so doing they will gain incorruptible treasure in heaven (Mk. 10:21; Mt. 6:20).
- B. May NRLC always be a place where people are genuinely loved, and faithfully given the truth. May say at the end **Acts 20:26 ESV Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.**
1. Sadly, there seems to be fewer and fewer churches committed to proclaiming Christ alone, no matter the impact to budget and attendance.
 2. May God forgive us if we ever fear the disdain of man more than we fear displeasing God. It’s his church. It’s his message. He gets to make the rules.
- IV. But there is more for us to consider about our preaching...
- A. First, where is preaching to take place, only in the church or elsewhere as well?
1. Often people condemn what they think is a lack of evangelism in Sunday morning services. They believe that the Sunday service exists for the lost, especially the forgotten and destitute.
 2. But, oddly, you cannot make a case for that from the Bible. The purpose it lays out for the gathering of the saints in “services” is **Edification**.
 - a) Many assume that word is a synonym for simple encouragement. It is actually a construction term; literally a building, or the **action** of building. It’s where we get the word edifice.
 - b) So when we come together, we do so for the building up of saints; focusing on enhancing the structural integrity of fellow Christians.
 - c) This is also called “discipleship”, and please note that a church is never divided into “disciplers” and “disciples”. **Hebrews 10:24 ESV And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.** This is always meant to be a mutual action between us all.
 3. The way we stir up one another, and encourage one another, is through the giving and receiving of the Word, the gospel; by proclaiming it, listening to it, singing it, praying it; through “preaching” it in all these ways to one another.
- B. But this is not to say that people can’t or shouldn’t come to know Christ in our midst on Sunday mornings! Thank God they do!
1. We baptized people who were moved to follow Christ by hearing the Word preached at church. Paul acknowledged the possibility that an “outsider” would come into the service and be submit to God (1 Cor 14:24-25).
 2. But the Bible still doesn’t present the congregational gathering as the **first** means of winning the world, even though many churches serve as a kind of mass evangelistic, salvation factory, type of enterprise. So how do we present the gospel to outsiders in a way that compels them to believe?
- C. **1 Corinthians 1:21 ESV For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek**

wisdom, **23** but **we preach Christ crucified**, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, **24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1. The world will not figure out how to know God using their intellects, so God armed his all followers with a message called the gospel, the “good news” of Christ crucified, resurrected, ascended and reigning.
 2. The message of Jesus will confound religious folks! It messes with all their rules about how to get to God. It will stink to worldly folks because it pushes back against their illusions of control and unbridled freedom.
 3. But to God’s elect, who have been called and enabled to believe, the gospel is the perfect display of both the power and wisdom of God. Though they say it’s “foolish and weak”, we know it’s “wiser and stronger”!
- D. But who is responsible for this proclamation of God’s wisdom and his strength to the lost, fallen, sinful and dying world? **Everyone one of us who calls on the name of Christ!** As every member is responsible for the edification of the body, we are all also responsible for the declaration of the gospel outside of it. This is another aspect of a preaching church.
1. Paul says the function of leaders who handle the Word in the church (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers) is to “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:12)” The “work of ministry” is the outside, evangelistic stuff; “building up the body” is the inside, edifying the fellow members of the church stuff. Both represent the whole churches call to preach and proclaim the gospel.
 2. If there is any doubt about the every member’s responsibility in this area, let Jesus convince you: **Acts 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**
 - a) If you have placed your trust in Christ, you have received the Holy Spirit.
 - b) If you have the Holy Spirit, you are empowered to declare his reality.
- V. This can be a very intimidating proposition! You might say, “I’ve never been to seminary! I don’t know my New Testament from my Old! I don’t like talking to people!” But “preaching” is not the task of a few religious professionals, either inside or outside the church, but of every redeemed child of God. Therefore, let me ask you a few questions that will hopefully embolden you in your calling:
- A. **Do you love Jesus?** It has been my experience that people have no difficulty talking about what they treasure the most. Don’t believe me? Ask Pastor David about soccer! Ask Paul about heavy metal music! Ask me about Charles Haddon Spurgeon! I assure you, we’ll all talk your ear off!
1. Often when we’re hesitant to talk about Jesus, it is not an information or understanding problem, it is first and foremost a **passion** problem.
 2. But could it you’re assuming there is some preferred strategy for sharing Jesus and convincing people to believe, that you haven’t learned?
 - a) Many books have been written on “how to win souls”, but the best thing you could do to be effective is to fall more in love with Jesus each day!

- b) Have you ever met someone that loved Christ more than anything else? They talked about Jesus; not just church, not just theology, Jesus! They were overwhelmed by his amazing love for them and theirs for him!
 - 3. The only way to love him more is by getting to know him better; immersing yourself in his Word, walking in his Spirit, and getting close to his people.
- B. Second, ask yourself, **Do I have a story to tell; a testimony?** If you have been saved, you don't have to be eloquent! You can just start by telling what Jesus has done for you. When Jesus healed the blind man in John 9, the Pharisees accused Jesus of all kinds of things, and rebuked the man for believing in him. But that didn't bother the man! **John 9:25 ESV He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. *One thing I do know*, that though I was blind, *now I see.*"**
 - 1. What is changed in your life since Jesus found you? Have your eyes been opened? Has your soul been set free? Tell it! How could you keep quiet?
 - 2. If you have difficulty remembering or stating what Christ has done for you, you might ask yourself, "did I really put my trust in him, or did I just do some religious duty?" If you were dead, then resurrected; blind, and then healed, imprisoned, and then set free, you'd talk about it! Jesus did that for you!
- C. Last, if you look at yourself and want to preach to those around you in and out of the church, yet are intimidated by your lack of passion, or understanding, or boldness, ask yourself, **"Am I willing to be changed, to learn, to grow, to surrender?"**
 - 1. Jesus is able to fill you with the joy and compassion necessary to declare his praise. He is able to put you into places and situations where you will have the opportunity. He can give you all the power and wisdom you require.
 - 2. The only remaining question then, is ***are you willing?*** Are you willing to let go of distractions that keep you from knowing him more? Are you willing to spend time in his word, not as dry religious texts, but as a love letter that lets you encounter him. Are you willing to talk openly about matters of eternal importance, rather than passing fads, desires, worries, and complaints? Will you meet with him often in prayer so that he can capture your heart and make you new.
- D. As the people of God, we have two important functions: building up the body of Christ, and proclaiming the resurrected Lord to the lost world. Both of these happen through what can be called "preaching".
 - 1. It is not an assignment for well-trained super Christians, but for every believer.
 - 2. The qualifications for doing this are to love Jesus, be aware and amazed at what he has done for us, and to be willing to do whatever it takes to grow in our love for him, and our knowledge of him, to be filled with wonder at knowing the true God.
 - 3. If we do that, the words will surely come more and more frequently and freely.