

Preachers Must Preach Christ
Bethany ARP Church
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Well, let us stand now for the reading of God's Word as we turn to our sermon text this morning, which is from the second chapter of the book of Titus. As we look at verses 11 through 15 and close out this chapter this morning. We are in Titus chapter 2, beginning there at verse 11.

Hear the word of the Lord:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you – Titus 2:11-15.

Amen.

Let us pray.

Gracious Heavenly Father, as you provide these words on this day by your providence, we ask in your mercy that you continue to apply your truth unto our hearts and that you might give us ears to hear and tongues to speak. And in Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

Please be seated.

As Paul continues to exhort Titus, he has come now to particularly remind him of the main work of a preacher of the gospel, a man who has been called by the Lord to proclaim the truth of Holy Scripture. And so we start here with the last verse this morning. Paul tells Titus to speak these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, and let no one despise you. Now, when you hear those words, they're fairly straightforward. Titus, where does he get his authority from? Titus gets his authority, not from himself. As we see in the New Testament, as we saw in the Old Testament, the Levite priests in the Old Testament and the preachers of God's Word in the New Testament received their calling from God. Now, that may seem kind of high fallutin' to say that I've been called by God to preach the Word, but that's what the Bible teaches.

Now, the good news is that I'm not the only one who gets a say in what God has declared. Be very careful and very weary of men who claim that God has told them to speak if nobody else has confirmed that calling. In the Presbyterian form of government, in the way the Bible has set this out, how is my call to preach the gospel confirmed?

How is Titus' call to preach?

How is Paul's authority to preach confirmed?

Well, it's confirmed by what we call the Presbyteries.

The Presbytery is just the church of the Lord Jesus Christ spread out from here. We understand the Presbytery is not a top-down, authority-driven order of things. When we join the Catawba Presbytery at their meetings, it's just a bigger version of the local church. When we go to Synod in a month, that's just a bigger version of the local church. The minister at another church has the same authority as I do, and the elders at other churches have the same authority as I do. And at Bethany, the elders have the same authority as I do, because again, the order of things as Paul is laying it out in the book of Titus is that we are a church which believes that everyone is equal in power and glory.

But that doesn't mean everybody's called to do the same work. And so when ministers are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, they meet first with the local session at the local church. When I felt the call to ministry, I met with the elders at the Fairmount ARP church in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, and the elders at Fairmount ARP confirmed that not only did I have the gifts for ministry, but that's what the Lord was calling me to do. Now did it end there? Did I get ordained by the elders at Fairmount? No. You see, again, the beauty of Presbyterianism is we don't trust ourselves. And so what is the next step for a minister?

The next step for a minister is he goes and meets with the Presbytery. So I went to the Northeast Presbyterian meeting in Olney, Maryland, which is a suburb of Washington, D.C., and I met with the elders and the ministers of the Northeast Presbytery who reconfirmed the decision of the local church that I was called to ministry.

Now the beauty of that, again, is there have been multiple sets of eyes. Obviously, we have to be a little careful with that because elders do make mistakes. And one of the things we see in the New Testament is that Paul made mistakes. Paul makes clear that there are men whom he has laid hands on who have apostatized, who have taken the ministry in the wrong direction and led people astray. The good news is that everything is not on Paul's shoulders and many men have been a part of the proceedings.

Well, of course, Paul doesn't have that ability. And Paul wasn't meant to have that ability. However, we are learning that the local church does have that ability. In Sabbath school this morning, we were in Acts 20, and Paul there, as he's making his rounds in Western Asia and in the Aegean visiting all these churches, one of the things that's made clear is that the only reason these churches are functioning is because they have godly elders and deacons who are operating these local churches. And the good news is, as we hear in this passage, is that the authority that Titus has is not his own. And it's also not from the apostle Paul, but it's from the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Titus, if he wants to maintain his credentials, if you will, in the Presbytery of Crete, well, he better make sure that he's only doing what God has called him to do.

And any minister of the gospel has one job.

That is to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.

If you want to come ask my opinion about stuff that doesn't have to do with the church, you're more than welcome to come ask me. I don't have any authority to tell you how to operate your vehicle. That's probably not a wise thing because I don't know how your vehicle operates. That's not my calling. My calling is to know the Bible, to preach the Bible, to teach the Bible, and to admonish and rebuke where the Bible says to admonish and rebuke. There's a beautiful testimony there because when a minister gets outside of his authority, what often happens? All kinds of trouble follows.

If you do any kind of looking into cults, that's almost how they always start. The minister takes authority unto himself that doesn't belong to him. He either claims to have a lifeline unto heaven where he receives these special voices or he finds plates buried in upstate New York or he receives these visions or whatever. And Paul here is telling the people at Crete, be watchful with your minister. Because they're reading this letter too, right? They're reading this letter. They don't know what Titus is supposed to do. Titus is supposed to do what? Speak these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, let no one despise you.

The beauty of Presbyterian's government is that ministers have somebody watching over them. At least that's the way it should work. The problem is what's the church full of? The Church is full of sinners. And what are sinners going to do? They're going to sin, right? And churches are going to make mistakes, but the mistakes don't overrule the way that God has ordered things. And so as we see this, speak those things, exhort and rebuke with all authority, let no one despise you. Well, what is he supposed to speak?

Well, verse 11 tells us, the minister of the gospel is to speak of the grace of God that brings salvation to all men. And so the first thing we see here that the minister is to do is preaching and he's to preach to all men. And is there anybody who does not need to hear the good news of salvation? The answer is, well, no. Every man's a sinner. Every man needs to hear the gospel. And it's important to note here that as Paul has given Titus this calling, that he's not just supposed to preach the gospel to unbelievers. It's just as important that preachers of the gospel preach the gospel to believers. Because believers need to be reminded of their own salvation. Believers need to be reminded how it is they came to faith. Believers need to be challenged. They need to be rebuked. They need to be admonished that they continue to walk in the paths of righteousness for the name of Jesus Christ. And so the preacher is to preach the whole counsel of God. Traditionally, one of the ways that in the police and the perpetrator world that we've ensured that the whole counsel of God gets preached is we preach through books. Because one of the utilities of preaching through a book is you can't accuse the pastor of picking on you. Well, why are you preaching about that sin this week? Well, because that was the next passage up. Again, there's wisdom to that.

It also forces ministers to preach on things that he doesn't want to preach on. Again, there's a reason behind certain things that we do. And so as Paul is teaching Titus something about the nature of the ministry we need to be reminded of what the gospel is. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. And what has the gospel done? What has salvation done for men? Well, it has taught them to deny ungodliness, worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. That's the foundational purpose of the gospel. It is to take men who are ungodly and make them godly. It is to take men who worship their own lusts, who seek their own

flesh, who walk according to their own ideas, and to destroy that person. To take that idol and crush it under the feet of Jesus Christ. And to show them that not only is there a better way to live, but there is only one way to live.

And we have to be careful of a Christianity which is only about teaching you a better way. And we have to be careful of a Christianity which is only about life skills, which is only about a kind of, you know, Ted Talks and the like. Because while it's true that there is a better way to live in Jesus Christ, that's not the foundation of our faith.

The foundation of our faith is that we are dead in sin and need a Savior. That we are in rebellion against the Lord our God, and our only hope is Jesus Christ. That our only hope of salvation is that Jesus Christ died for our sins on the cross. We could do worse than to summarize the gospel by what Romans 6.23 teaches, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."

That is why we are here this morning.

At least that's why we should be here this morning, because this has happened to us. We who were dead in trespasses, who were in rebellion against God, who hated God, who sought to destroy God in his works have been wonderfully changed. We have been given a new identity, we have been given a new mind, new eyes, a new heart, a new tongue, a new body, and this gift of God comes with the blessings of eternal life. This is the blessing. This is what the preacher ought to be preaching. That salvation comes by Christ. "But the free gift is not like the offense, for if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many." (Rom. 5:15).

We hear a lot of this language when we talk about the gospel being free. I remember my granddaddy one time warning me about people who offered you stuff for free. Because what's the truth? There ain't nothing that's free. Everything has a catch. The old economists used to say that there's no such thing as a free lunch. Why? Because somebody had to pay for it at some point in time. Somebody had to mill the grains, somebody had to milk the cows, somebody had to kill the hog, and labor is worth just as much as money. Nothing's free.

But what about the gospel?

The truth of the matter is that the gospel is free. It's not like the gift of men. It's not like the gift of those who we watched before. The gift of the gospel is truly free. It's free because there is no way we could pay for it. There's no way that we could earn our way into the free gift of grace. Grace must come from God alone because God is the only one powerful enough to provide for us the grace that we need for salvation.

And why is that?

Ephesians chapter 2 verses 4 through 10 tell us in kind of exquisite detail. Ephesians 2, 4 says:

"But God who was rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved, and

raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

I want to invite you to spend some time this afternoon just looking at Ephesians 2, 4 through 10. You meditate upon those words because when we consider again what is being said here by the apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus, everything is focused once again on this free gift upon this kindness that has been shown to sinners by the Lord our God.

There is something else about the nature of the preaching of the gospel that we have to be weary of, you have to be watchful for. Don't let any preacher tell you that you have to do something in order to come to Christ. And if you hear a gospel presentation that says you have to repent before you believe, then understand that that preacher is getting the cart before the horse. Of course, you know, I just thought about that. It's kind of a weird illustration because nobody uses carts and horses anymore. But the idea there is pretty straightforward. If you want to hitch a horse and move a cart forward, which end do you need to put them on? You've got to put them at the front. And so when you think about the nature of the gospel, right, if I tell you need to stop sinning so that you can believe in Jesus, well what's the problem with that?

The problem with that is you have no power, no ability to do it. It's like when a few years ago when, the old man who was in charge of everything went up to that fella on the podium and told him to stand up. What was the problem? He was in a wheelchair. He couldn't stand up.

That's what it's like if a preacher tells you to quit sinning and come to Jesus. You don't have the ability. What has to happen first? What has to happen first is that God must come unto you. God must come unto you in the power of the Holy Spirit, applying unto you the righteousness of Jesus Christ. You must be redeemed. You must be born again by the power of the Spirit for you to hear the testimony of the gospel. But even then, we don't believe that you haven't been redeemed, then need to repent before you come to faith. No, faith must come first. Faith is the first fruit of justification. It is the first action, if you will, of our believing in Jesus. It is faith which saves and faith alone.

Now, what does that look like, kind of mechanically, kind of in the order of things when you're hearing the gospel preached? Well, again, if I tell you that you are dead in sin, come unto Christ, well, what verse should come next? But Matthew chapter 11, which says, “Come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

That is the content of the gospel message.

I am telling you to come to Jesus and be relieved of the weight of sin. Because only Jesus can remove that weight from you. Only Jesus can give you the free gift. Because Jesus is the one who has won that gift for you at the cross. But again, that's not even the whole thing. Sometimes we limit the gospel by just talking about the cross. Now, that's not to downplay the cross. Obviously, the cross is important, but that's really not the fulfillment of everything. What is your problem if

you are dead in sin? It's not just the fact that you sin. The real problem is you're a sinner. Your very nature is dead. Your nature is unable to do anything but sin. So what first has to change? It has to be your nature. Well, how did you get to be a sinner?

The scriptures are clear that we are born in sin. That we are born dead. Even in the moment of our conception, we are already spiritually dead. That's what David says in Psalm 51. You sinned, my mother conceived me. Now, we know that David's mama was a good woman. We know that she did not sin in his conception. That's not what David is saying. He's saying that he was already dead because who was his mama related to? His mama was related to Adam. And what had Adam done? Adam had sinned in the garden. Remember, the lie that Satan deceived Eve with is that surely you will not die if you eat of the fruit. And of course, did she die when she ate of the fruit? Well, she was talking to Adam, so obviously she didn't die. But what's the nature of that lie? Again, the nature of that lie is that the moment Adam ate of that fruit, what took place?

Death entered the world.

Not just the death of Adam and Eve, but the death of all living things. It's a very important thing to testify about the gospel that we believe that nothing died before Adam sinned in the garden. Because death is not a natural part of life. That's not how God made things. We are made to live and to live eternally. But Adam sinned in the garden, Adam ate of the fruit, and because we are united to Adam by the covenant of works, we died in Adam. And so we are born dead. We are born spiritually dead in every way.

So what do we need?

We need not just Jesus to die for our sins on the cross. We need Jesus to live perfectly for us. We need Jesus to keep the law perfectly on our behalf. Because we have to have our nature changed. We have to be changed from those who love sin to those who love God. The only way that happens is if Jesus keeps the law perfectly from the moment of his conception until the moment of his death. So how does Jesus not get in the same situation as us? How is Jesus not born in iniquity? Again, that's why the virgin birth matters. That's why we proclaim the virgin birth. That's why we believe in the virgin birth. That's why all liberalism starts with the denial of the virgin birth. Because Jesus Christ had to be born of a virgin so he did not receive the sin nature which came from Adam. Now some people take that too far and say that well that means that Mary must have been immaculately conceived as well. And that's nonsense because what has Mary asked for? Mary asked for the forgiveness of sin. Mary worships Jesus because Jesus forgave her of her sin. And so we know that Mary was a sinner so she could not have been immaculately conceived.

But Jesus was.

That's why Mary came with child of the Holy Spirit. Again, when we talk about the gospel we have to have both sides of that. We have to have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and we must have our sins forgiven.

Those two things are necessary for our being brought into the family of God. Again, notice what Paul says to Titus in verse 11. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Who is he talking about? Of course he's talking about Jesus. Jesus has appeared to all men. How has

Jesus appeared? He has appeared in the flesh. And how have men seen Jesus but by his keeping of the law?

By his being a perfect sacrifice for sin.

That's one of the things that the old covenant ceremonies were trying to drill into the heads of the hard-headed Jews. As we've been walking through the book of Numbers on Wednesday evening that has been a constant reminder. What was necessary for every single sacrifice on every single holy day, on every single offering? Every animal had to be without what?

Blemish.

What is a blemish? According to the old covenant, a blemish is everything from a color spot in the hair to an insect bite to everything under the sun. Anything you can point to be wrong with that animal would mean it had a blemish and was unworthy of being sacrificed to the Lord. So again, we take that and we apply it to Jesus. What does that tell us that Jesus must be? Again, Jesus must be without sin. He had to fully keep the law in every single jot and tittle from the time he was conceived until the time he was killed at the cross of Calvary.

Have you ever taken a moment to consider what that must have taken? How did Jesus fulfill the law? Obviously, he was without sin. He did not have a sin nature. He was without that failure that we had. But not only that, one of the things we're told in the book of Luke is that Jesus did not know everything in the moment of his birth. Was Jesus standing up in the manger, speaking Hebrew to his mom and dad? Did Jesus know how the world worked when he was three months old? Well, no. We confess that Jesus had a human body just like ours. And so that means that Jesus had to learn as he grew up. He had to learn of his own Messiahship. He had to learn of his own divinity. Now, how do you think Jesus went about doing that? Well, the scriptures tell us that he grew in knowledge and stature. And he did that because his mom and dad took him to synagogue every week. He did that because his mom and dad prayed with him. He did that because his mom and dad modeled for him a godly life. Jesus didn't sin, but his parents did. His parents sinned. What did he witness? He witnessed his parents confessing their sins to a holy and a righteous God. And he heard in that confession that their only hope was what?

Their only hope was in an alien righteousness, a righteousness which was not their own, a righteousness which came from God.

And Jesus learned as he read the scriptures, as he heard the Word of God proclaim from the pulpit on Sabbath morning and evening, how this was the case. Jesus had something that we don't have which is sin. So when Jesus learned something, did he have that voice in his head constantly telling him to look at the squirrel? Constantly telling him to count the squares in the ceiling. Constantly telling him to think about everything going on in the world except for what was before him. Of course, he didn't. Again, we learned from the example of Christ that diligent obedience unto the Word of God teaches us the nature of our own salvation and reminds us constantly that our only hope is Jesus Christ. The plea of the psalmist is over and over again reminding us of this need in our Christian lives to be humble in the face of the Lord and seek our understanding from him. Psalm 81 verse 10 says, *"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."*

The order there is very important.

Psalm 90 verse 17, “. . . *and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands for us.*”

Yes, establish the work of our hands. Again, Psalm 90 is written by Moses. As the order of things, as the cart and the horse are put in their proper direction, we see again what Paul is telling Titus to preach to the people at Crete. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. Just as God appeared to all men in the land of Egypt and told them that he was there to bring them out of bondage and take them into the promised land, so Jesus has appeared to all men and told them the same thing. That I have come to bring you out of bondage to sin and carry you onto the heavenly places. Give unto you that eternal life that has been promised since the days of Genesis 3.15.

And having received that salvation, what do we see?

Those who are saved by grace through faith alone, they live like they are saved by grace through faith alone. That's one of the messages that we see here, right? For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, and so that being true, what is Titus to preach and to teach, but that you are to deny ungodliness, that you are to deny worldly lusts, that you should live soberly, righteously, and godliness. Are we those who receive the salvation, the redemption purchased by Christ, and just sit and wait for Jesus to come back? No, the scriptures tell us all the time that we are to live in light of the gospel truth, that we are to witness our hope in the way that we operate day by day. And so how are Christians to show forth their faith in the living God, but by denying ungodliness and worldly lust.

And one of the things the scriptures teach us is we're not supposed to make a big deal about it while we're doing it. Again, the testimony that we see here is witnessed to us in the first chapter of the book of Daniel. What Daniel does there is so important for us, especially as we live in a wicked and evil age. When Daniel is taken by force into the land of Babylon, what is he asked to do when he gets there? He's asked to live like a Babylonian. He's asked to eat from the table of his master, and what does Daniel and the faithful men do, but they refuse to eat. Now again, are they rude about it? They tell the young man who's assigned over them and say, hey, our God has told us not to eat these things and we're not going to eat them. What do you have that's kosher? And the guy gets all worried because what does he think kosher's going to do?

It's going to make him skinny and make him not worth working. And Daniel says, look, I'm not really worried about what your master says. I'm worried about what my master says. My master has said that if I am obedient unto him, then blessings will come upon me, then I will be taken care of. And so Daniel and these men, they quietly obey the Lord. And when the opportunity comes, what happens there in chapter one, but they are just as good. In fact, they are in better shape than the man who went and ate at the table of the wicked king of Babylon. And that example provides for us a testimony of how we are lived today.

Because how are you to live?

You are to deny ungodliness and worldly lust. You are to live soberly, righteously and godly. It's not complicated. There isn't a bait and switch here. There's nothing more than what God calls you to do than to live in accordance with His word. And how are you to know what the word of God says?

Well, again, there's a two-fold answer that Paul gives.

First of all, I better be preaching what it is you're supposed to do. Because that's my job, right? That's what God has called me to do, is proclaim the word of God. Now, can I do that fully in 34 minutes on a Sunday morning? Well, obviously not. I can't proclaim the whole counsel of God in that short amount of time. Now, I can preach for longer, but as a wise man once said, the ears can only take what the rear end can last. So how are we supposed to maintain and learn all of these things? Well, God has the blessing of giving us two worship services on the Lord's Day. We could have an hour of teaching on the Lord's Day, but that's not it, right? We're not even so much talking here about the gathering, though the corporate worship that we do is very important. But the other means that God gives, and we'll see some more of this later on, but we've already heard a bit of it at the beginning of chapter 2. But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine, that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith and love and patience. The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things.

Again, a lot of the work that exists in a Christian church is not done by me. A lot of the work that is done in the Christian church is by the members of the church witnessing unto themselves, taking time to gather together to learn of the things of the Lord. Whether that's through book studies, whether it's through prayer meetings, whether that's through Bible studies, whether that's through just getting together and eating the victory, it doesn't matter.

But if you think that you can learn the whole counsel of God in 30 minutes a week, then you are lying to yourself. Again, the life that we see from Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the law is that he was diligent in these things. In a sense, Jesus was always in conversation with his Heavenly Father. He was always seeking to know more about his Father. Now, that's kind of strange right in our minds, because what did Jesus spend eternity doing? Hanging out with his Father and with the Holy Spirit. But in his flesh, he did not know these things, but he sought to lift himself up in the knowledge of truth. That's what enabled him to stand strong in the day of tribulation, in the day of trouble, in the day of the wolves seeking to destroy him.

I'll close on this this morning, but remember, what did Jesus say on the cross? In a sense, right, he just repeats himself, because everything Jesus says on the cross is from the Word of God. That is the life blood of our faith. And so as we remember the gospel truth that we are saved by grace through faith alone, that we don't need to do anything to come on to the good gift of Jesus Christ, but to come on to him and lay ourselves at his feet and receive the wages of his righteousness and the forgiveness of sins. We must remember again this keen testimony.

“These things I have spoken to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

Amen, let us pray.