

The Pastor as... Competent!

The Glorious Power & Treasure of God's Word in Pastoral Ministry

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Today we will consider pastoral ministry under the theme *the pastor as competent*. Really? Competent? Adequate and qualified for the task of carrying out the tasks given by God? Isn't this one of the greatest battles of the pastor's heart – a battle that could go either way? "Yeah, I'm competent. Let me loose and I will change the world!" or "I give up, I'm done – it's over. I have failed." I imagine more will err on the side of the second ditch – incompetent. It may come as a bit of a relief that the apostle Paul asks the question we naturally ask in 2 Corinthians 2.16: "To one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?" Who indeed? The ESV translates the question: Who is sufficient for these things?

In fact, Paul's question permeates all of Scripture. We find weak men living fallible lives but accomplishing great kingdom endeavours. Is there encouragement? These questions we will seek to answer as we discuss the pastor as competent to serve by God's amazing grace.

Before we set out on this road, seeking to avoid both ditches, I would like to be very clear as to the purpose of this paper. I know there

are enough discouragements in ministry and that even a balanced pastor can spend a great deal of time with regrets, self doubt and desires of escape (maybe not an exit from ministry by an escape into sin or safe zones). Who is sufficient? We will see, as you already know, no one is competent in themselves. Paul has answered the question even before he asked it: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him" (2 Corinthians 2.14). But the fact that Paul asked the question after he has answered it shows that it will be a battle of the believer's heart, a battle of faith. We may know the truth but will it show in our lives?

And that is why the purpose of the paper is not to know truth alone but it is to find rest in the abounding mercy and vast power of God. Katharina von Schlegel in her hymn "Be Still My Soul" sums up a heart that has grasped the sufficient power of God in the pastor's life.

Be still my soul!
the Lord is on your side;
Bear patiently
the cross of grief and pain;

Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul!
thy best, thy heavenly friend
Thro' thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul! thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy *confidence*, let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul!
the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them
while He dwelt below.

By faith, is your heart still as you enter the hospital room, the marriage battle ground, the pulpit? How do we know? What does stillness look like? Is it not ultimately found in Paul's first words – thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession? Be still my soul.

Incompetent Believers Equipped With Power to Perform God's Calling

When it comes to serving God, the Bible never leaves us alone – we can identify with God's people throughout the ages as we hear the question "who is sufficient?" asked again and again.

Moses

God revealed Himself to Moses in the desert after forty years of shepherding by appearing in a burning bush. After Moses removed his sandals, he learned that God had heard Israel's cry for mercy and He would deliver them from slavery into the land promised to Abraham – the land flowing with milk and honey. But God also had an assignment for Moses: "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3.10). Moses –

go! And Moses' immediate response is "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt (3.11)?" *And who is sufficient, equal to such a task?*

Moses continued to battle God, focusing on his weaknesses rather than God's promises. In a final plea he asks: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it" (4.13). But God persists. Aaron would be sent alongside Moses to aid his stuttering tongue: "I will help both of you to speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him" (4.16).

As the story progresses, we see that there is always more grace given to Moses. He is trapped in the desert between two mountains, one bad army and a wide body of water. Of course he does what every good Christian does: pray. No, God says, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. [*Isn't it obvious Moses what you are to do next??*] Raise your staff and stretch out you hand

over the sea and divide the water so that the Israelites can go through one dry ground" (14.15).

We will meet up with Moses again as he is on the mountain with God – an angry God who is willing to destroy the people of Israel for worshiping a

golden image. Before Moses moves on, we see that he has clearly learned his source of competence: "If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from

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all the other people on the face of the earth?” (33.15-16). As with Samson, Moses learned where his strength lay – not in an eloquent tongue but in God’s presence, power, and promises.

Who is sufficient? Not Moses – for sure. But at the end of his ministry, he finished the work given by God. This friend of God would be taken to glory and the people would cross over into the Promised Land.

Isaiah

What about Isaiah? Isaiah 1 does not begin well for Israel. They are a sinful nation and loaded with guilt, described as evildoers, corrupt, rebellious, injured, afflicted, no soundness, trampling the courts of an angry God, among other ac-

curate, damning descriptions. In Isaiah 6, God is asking a simple question: “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6.8). Isaiah answers: “Here I am. Send me!” Did Isaiah fall off on the other side of the ditch, the one filled with confidence, ready to take on not only Israel but Moab, the Philistines, Assyria and Babylon?

Well no, because once again another servant of God cries out *who is sufficient?* After Isaiah had seen the angels gathered around the thrice holy God and the temple filled with smoke, he cried out, “Woe to me! I am ruined! I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (5). What did God do next? In sovereign grace he descended: “Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for’” (6-7). Isaiah was now ready for

service, made competent by God’s condescending grace.

David

And David? Before Goliath he stands in the simplicity of a sling and 5 stones to confess: “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. The Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you

down and cut off your head. ... All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord save; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give all of you into our hands” (1 Samuel 17.45, 47).

*And who is sufficient?
Not the power found in a
mighty king but the
strength found in the
Lord who delights in
those who fear him.*

Period. There it is.

And as David matures, the beauty and boldness of his confession does not fade. We read the powerful words of Psalm 147:

Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praised to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him! The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of stars and calls them each by name. Great is the Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit. The Lord sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground. ... His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their

hope in his unfailing love. (1-6, 10-11)

And who is sufficient? Not the power found in a mighty king but the strength found in the Lord who delights in those who fear him.

And More...

Ezekiel stands before dead, dry bones and is asked: "Son of man, can these bones live? I said, 'O Sovereign Lord, you alone know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones ... This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life'" (Ezekiel 37).

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are about to be thrown into the fire and respond to the king (only the most powerful man in the entire world!): "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Who is sufficient to speak words of life or stand before kings?

And to pull a Hebrews 11, what more shall we say about Gideon, Samson (although he learned the lesson in reverse order), Jeremiah, Job and the many, many believers throughout history called to rely on God's power to carry out His calling in their lives?

The Source of our Competence

It is a striking turn of events when Jesus enters the scene, the one of whom John the Baptist says "but after me will come one who is more powerful than I" (Matthew 3.11) and of whom God the Father states: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (3.17). Finally, the Promised One has arrived, competent and sufficient

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to carry out the will of God the Father. The climax of competency is heard when he cries on the cross "It is finished" (John 19.30) and seen when the tomb is empty – He is Risen! Who is sufficient? Jesus alone is sufficient.

But outside of the Messiah, the question continues to be asked *who is sufficient?* We want to look at two portions in the New Testament (2 Corinthians and Colossians 1.28-29) and then narrow in on 2 Timothy 3.16-17 and our competence as preachers of God's Word.

Surely one great theme found in the book of 2 Corinthians is strength found in weakness. The question referred to earlier in the paper and found near the beginning of the book in chapter 2, "Who is sufficient?" sets the scene for Paul to return again and again to the answer: God – His Spirit, His power, His comfort and His grace. While it may seem from a human perspective the Lord's work is about to collapse and God's people crushed, God tells another story – it is in our weakness and insufficiency we find power and life. We want to look at just five examples.

2 Corinthians 3:4:

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves

to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.

2 Corinthians 4.7-11:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not

abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10:

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry may not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in trouble, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in

sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left; through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as imposters; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

2 Corinthians 7.5-6:

For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn – conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus ...

2 Corinthians 12:9:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

What an amazing encouragement for the believer and in particular, the pastor. The pastor, like all who have gone before, is able to be content in his weakness knowing that true strength and kingdom fruit is

not found in his gifts or power. Instead, like David, we come in the name of the Lord or as Paul reminds us, when we are weak, then, brothers, we are strong.

Let's turn to the final passage before we reach 2 Timothy. It is in Colossians 1.28-29 we discover where Paul finds his strength as he proclaims the Word of God:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

These words are living water for the dry soul of the pastor. The goal of preaching is not that we may fill heads with knowledge, nor is it that we may see nice people doing nice things. It is a task higher than we could have imagined – so that we may present everyone *perfect* in Christ. And who is sufficient when we stand before God's people and invite them to turn to open Scripture with us? But then Paul by the Spirit of God encourages the heart – I labour – struggling with all *his* energy, which so powerfully works in me. Do we believe these words in our weakness? Who hasn't walked away from "proclaiming God's Word" and felt powerless and inefficient? In fact, I wonder sometimes if preaching is a very precise way to keep pastors humble. However, it is in our weakness we struggle with *all His* energy *which* works *powerfully* in our hearts. We are sufficient in pastoral ministry and the preached Word because of Him alone.

The Glorious Calling to Reveal the Power and Treasure of God's Word in

Pastoral Ministry as those Competent to Serve

In Lloyd Jones' booklet *Authority*, he addressed among other topics, the authority of the Scriptures. He battled attacks on the authority of Scripture and in the course of his writing, he said something very striking about preaching. First, a quote for context:

That brings us to my third principle: The authority of the Scriptures is not a matter to be defended, so much as to be asserted. I address this remark particularly to Conser-

vative Evangelicals. I am reminded of what the great Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said in this connection:

"There is no need for you to defend a lion when he is being attacked. All you need to do is to open the gate and let him out" (41).

And now the point:

We need to remind ourselves frequently that it is the preaching and exposition of the Bible that really establish its truth and authority (41).

Lloyd Jones' point helps us understand the importance of a passage like 2 Timothy 3.16-17. Paul is speaking to young Timothy and much of what Paul is saying is an encouragement for Timothy to stand strong and endure hardship. In 1 Timothy 3.1-5, we gain a glimpse into the culture of the early church:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers

of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

These last days – the days from the risen Christ to the return of Christ are found in all ages. Therefore, the days described above are much like our own times.

It is in this context, the weakness of Timothy and the degeneration of a godless culture, that Paul calls Timothy to a simple yet profound task: “Preach the Word.” Is that it? Well, yes and no. Yes, preach the Word but no, the preached Word must be accompanied with godly character. Paul writes to Timothy:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (3.10-11).

Paul has just made the task even more daunting, if that were possible. He has called Timothy and all subsequent pastors to preach the Word in a thoroughly pagan and rebellious, uninterested and hostile culture. You will need to have faith, pa-

tience, great love, and endurance. In short, godly character. Again, who is sufficient? Paul answers this question in some of his final words to Timothy:

But the Lord stood by my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will be me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever (4.17-18).

But what if we tweaked the question? “OK, we know we are called to preach the Word and it will come at a cost. But is there any encouragement to preach the Word? Or more specifically, what makes us competent for the charge of preaching the Word of God?” Those answers lie in our passage in 2 Timothy 3.16-17. Paul answers the question in three ways.

First, Paul reminds Timothy that the power of the Word does not lie in the preacher but in the nature of the Word. “All Scripture is God breathed.” This Word is the living Word of God, breathed out of the mouth of God into the hearts of the writers. What we hold therefore, is the very Word of the living God. What a beautiful expression: *God breathed*. Scripture’s source is the breath of God or conversely, Scripture is the result of the breath of God (*NIGTC The Pastoral Epistles*, George W.Knight III, 446).

When the pastor stands to preach, it is as we read in Exodus:

It is in this context, the weakness of Timothy and the degeneration of a godless culture, that Paul calls Timothy to a simple yet profound task: ‘Preach the Word.’

The Lord said to him [Moses], “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say (4.11-12).

The Lord will help and the Lord will teach through the God-breathed Scripture.

Here lies the great hope and responsibility – the great hope is when we preach we are taking God-breathed words to the people; the great responsibility is to do exactly as Paul exhorted Timothy: “preach the Word.”

Satan is not ignorant. If you had to remove one part from the pastor’s work week, what would it be? If you had to remove, replace, shorten or soften one part of the corporate worship service, what would it be? Would it not be the preparation and preaching of the Word? What happens when the Word is removed from the pastor’s study and the lives of God’s people? Do we not return to that great temptation of Adam and Eve where we first doubt the word of God (Did God really say) and then outright reject His truth (You will surely not die)? And do we not find that in our society as evangelicalism fits more and more people under its great umbrella?

Instead, we need the words of God breathed into us and into His people so we stand equipped to say “thus says the Lord.” This is what our master did when he was presented with the same temptation we have today – the kingdom without the cross. But Jesus stood declaring God’s Word.

Second, Paul reminds Timothy that Scripture “is useful [or profitable, or of yielding a sense of practical benefit] for

teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped.”

The power not lie in the strength of the preacher nor does the power lie in man’s wisdom. God’s Word, mysteriously carried by the Holy Spirit, will do a radical work in the hearts of the hearers and therein lays the power. It will profit and yield

practical benefits. When we yield ourselves to God’s breath we will be rebuked, corrected, and prepared for righteous living. In fact, this is the means God uses to not just equip but thoroughly equip the people of God. The term used by Paul means to fit or to complete so one is capable and sufficient,

able to meet all demands.

The pastor does not stand up and preach from Ephesians and in his vast wisdom share his years of marriage experience to the masses. Humbly, in God’s presence he preaches God’s Word which will rebuke the husband, correct the wife, train the young person – thoroughly equipping them for family life and godly living.

Why would we want to do anything else? Why would you use a nine iron 500 yards away from the hole when you could use the Big Bertha? Why would you stand before God’s people spewing man’s ditties when you could bring the orchestra of God’s breathed Word through expository preaching? Further, how will God’s people be equipped in a pagan, multi-cultural, pluralistic, relative and immoral world? It is no wonder Paul says plainly to Timothy – one task, my spiritual son, one task – preach the Word.

Finally, Paul writes ... “for every good work.” I wanted to save this to the end and separate it because I believe it is Paul coming to Timothy and to every preacher of

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God's Word, saying – it may be rough but it is good, a delight. It is a glorious calling to reveal the power and the treasure of God's deep riches in pastoral ministry. When you stand before God and the congregation in the strength of God, surrounded by the Word of God – you are equipping a generation for "every good work" – at home, on Friday nights, on Monday mornings. How will God's people survive? What has God provided? He has given all generations the preached Word, a treasure of truth and wisdom, which will only grow more precious as the years go by.

Is this not why we read in Psalm 19.7-11:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

The believer's heart longs for revival, wisdom, joy, light, and righteousness. These and much more are found in the sufficient, authoritative, clear and neces-

sary Word of God. What a delight and privilege to mine the treasures of the Word and then, accompanied with His Holy Spirit, to "go" and speak His breathed Word.

Concluding Remarks

Know that the Lord Your God is with You.

This may seem relatively simple but I find that sometimes in the onslaught, ministry can feel very lonely and it does not take much for Satan to convince me that the situation is hopeless. Who has not heard that the crying need for our attention deficit, shallow, and visual society is found in video clips, liturgical dance, casual conversation, and little ditties filled with laughter addressing felt needs?

God prepared Joshua before sending him out into the land with the daunting task of leading the rebellious Israelites in many battles. After

God laid out His promises of victory, prosperity and security, he called Joshua to

be strong and courageous (6) ... be strong and very courageous (7) ... be careful to obey all the law (7) ... do not let the Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it (8) and be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (9)

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It is after those final words (“for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go”) that Joshua begins his journey. Courage in pastoral ministry does not come from vast education or “5 talent” gifts (a reference to those who had been given 5, 2, or 1 talents); it does not come in God’s provision of big or small churches; nor does it come from false humility or great self confidence. Joshua would have great courage because he simply yet profoundly believed that he was never alone and that he need not be discouraged or terrified in the land of the descendants of Anak because God was always present. Period.

And he carried out God’s task faithfully; just as many pastors do today, knowing God’s presence. Is this not Joshua’s confession at the end of his life? We read in Joshua 24.9-11 and 14:

The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. *So be very careful to love the Lord your God.* ... Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and all your soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

Is this not the cry of our generation? Men, knowing God’s presence, proclaiming God-glorifying, Christ-centred and Spirit-enriched “God breathed” words in order that a strong and courageous people of God would arise to “love the Lord [their] God.” A people enamoured with God, loving Him in a generation of blasphemy and spiritual anarchy.

One final thought on this passage. Interestingly, Joshua encourages the people to “be very careful” to love the Lord their God. Are we careful? Are we watchful? Throughout history, the great preachers who have impacted generations are those who had a great love for the God of Scripture. Richard Baxter writes in *A Christian Directory*:

Pretend not any other religious duties against your delights in God and holiness; but use them all in their proper subservience to this – penitent sorrow is only a purge to cast out those corruptions which hinder you from relishing your spiritual delights.... Delight in God is the health of your souls. (Chapter 3, Directive XX, page 142)

So much of our competence in the preaching of God’s sufficient Word is found in our love of God and our delight in His presence. Among the chief requirements of “equipped for every good work” is not self pleasure but delighting in the awesome and intimate presence of God.

Know the Pleasures into which You Are Calling Sinners

2 Timothy 3.16-17 gives the pastor confidence to preach the Word faithfully. How may we best sum up the impetus of preaching? Baxter will say it is found in bringing people to delight in God.

By this time you may see, that holy delight adjoined to love, is the principle part of our religion, and they mistake it which place it in any thing else. And therefore how inexcusable are all the ungodly enemies or neglecters of a holy life. If it had been a life of grief and toil, they had had some pretence; but to fly from pleasure and refuse delight, and such delight, is inexcusable.

able. ... You dare not say but this is better: you cannot have your houses and lands forever, nor your lust and luxury forever; but you may have God forever. ... Call a slug-gard from his bed, or a glutton from his feast, to receive a kingdom, and he will grudge, if he observe only what you would take from him, and not what you give him in its stead. What earthly pleasures end in misery, then who would not wish they had preferred the holy, durable delights? (Chapter 3, Directive XX, page 142)

Imagine! Week after week in the pulpit we take God's precious Word, His breathed out Word, and we lift the people's hearts to grander and more glorious delights than can be pursued in this fleeting life. We call people to a Saviour and a Friend, One who was sent by the Father to give life, now and everlasting, so they may have the forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is humbling that we have been called in holy service to the essential and honoured task of handling God's Word.

Paul David Tripp in his book *Instruments in a Redeemer's Hand* writes along these lines:

People struggling with a life in a fallen world often want explanations when what they really need is imagination. They want strategies, techniques, and principles because they simply want things to be better. But God offers much more. People need to look at their families, neighbors, friends, cities, jobs,

history, and churches, and see the kingdom. They need imagination – the ability to see what is real but unseen. This is what Paul fixed his gaze on (2 Cor 4). They need to look at a city and see the glorious company of redeemed being gathered, amidst a brutal spiritual battle, to live in union with God. They need to look at their children and see a Redeemer pursuing their hearts for his own. They need to scan history and see God accomplish his purpose. People need to see the shining hope of human existence:

people can know, love, and serve God. They can commune with him forever and form a community of love that is possible no other way. All of this is possible because the King has placed his love and grace on them. (8)

Know the Power of God's Word.

When we preach, carried by the Holy Spirit, do we really believe God's Word is powerful? We read in Isaiah 55.11-11:

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so my word goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I have sent it.

Recently in a message we tackled John 4 when the Samaritans confessed that Je-

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sus is the “Saviour of the world.” In the application, I asked the people if they really believed that statement. We hear great things God is doing in foreign countries but we hear again and again that God is not working in North America – and so it becomes a quasi-excuse to give up. But, as I was reminded by God’s Word, if he is the Saviour of the World and if Canada is in the world, then he is working and saving. His Word is powerful enough to affect change in our culture and so we preach expectantly.

Again, Tripp writes after quoting Isaiah 55:

God’s Word changes people this dramatically. The rain that soaks the parched land always has an effect. It bathes soil, which feeds roots, which nourishes plants, which produce flowers. So it is with the Word of God. It changes what it touches, producing beauty and fruitfulness in people’s lives (23).

Does the Word of God live in our pulpits?

Know God’s People Were and Are Flawed

We read how Noah indulged in too much wine, Abraham lied, David, well David did many things, Solomon had a few too many marriages, and on and on. This may almost seem sadistic but it is not meant to be. It is however, a good reminder for us that a competent pastor is not a perfect pastor but one who needs the Word for his own heart – one which teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains him in righteousness. A humble heart is a wise heart which walks meekly before God and His sheep.

Know We Will Hear God’s Word in Glory

A day is coming when Jesus will raise his voice with a loud cry and return with the sound of trumpets and we will be with the Lord forever. As with Adam in the Garden, we will be found conversing with God, learning more of grace and mercy. It will be a glorious day when he returns. But until that time, it is a joy to proclaim the glorious truths we find in His Word.

He who testifies to these things says,

‘Yes, I am coming soon.’

Amen, come Lord Jesus.

(Revelation 21.20)