
Preaching in the Will of God

Titus 1:1-2:15

Pastor Russ Kennedy

Why this subject now? It has been a number of years since we set forth our commitment to preaching.

We have done series on other ministries at the Chapel.

We have many new (and long-term) people who would be helped by understanding our commitments.

There is some misunderstanding about why we preach the way we do. These sometimes lead to being discontent, disconnected with the effect the preaching is not profitable.

Cultural expectations...

Personal affirmations...

Contemporary surroundings...

Conformity pressures...

The Chapel is committed to a Biblical philosophy of preaching

Every major ministry at the Chapel has a Ministry Organizing Document or MOD. It is embedded in our Ministry Organizing Document. Therefore, at the doctrinal and philosophical level:

- It has been affirmed by the Elders.
- It is not subject to major change except by unanimous agreement by the Elders;
- All future preaching pastor-elders will be required to affirm it.

We will highlight the primary mission, vision and strategy from the Pulpit Ministry Organizing Document on next Sunday evening.

One of the great challenges in doing a four-part series like this is that there is so much to say. IN the future I would like to do a Biblical Theology of Preaching looking at the whole arc of the Bible to see what it says about preaching and prophesying. So there will be much more about preaching that you may hear alluded to and sometimes even assumed.

One of the great privileges of serving as Pastor for Preaching here is to build on the legacy of expository preaching John Street left us. Since the beginning, the Chapel pulpit has been dedicated to expository preaching and teaching. We have deeply embedded expository preaching in the MOD, in our Elders and hopefully in you who faithfully attend to the preaching of the Word.

A Brief History

In August of 1998, the Elders called me to serve as an elder at the Chapel. Initially I served in Finance and Worship as well as other areas as able. In May of 1999, Pastor John announced his resignation from the Chapel to serve at Master's College and Seminary in California. Over the summer we prayed and discussed the future of the Chapel. We were committed to seeking to among ourselves first. In August, 1999, the Elders asked me to serve at Pastor-Teacher as the role was identified then.

This is now my 24th year serving as an elder at the Chapel. We were here from 1992-1994 after returning from Germany. We returned in 1998 after serving for four years in a church in Illinois. It has now been 21 years of preaching here at the Chapel. Overall, I have been preaching regularly for almost 30 years now. It has been a wonderful time for me. As the Lord gives strength and a sound mind, I hope to serve as long as the Elders approve.

My commitment to Biblical preaching is shown in several ways:

The expository preaching a text whether it is chosen as the next passage in book or the next topic in a theme.

My long-term involvement with Bible Exposition Workshops and the Bible Study Workshops. I have been involved for over 24 years.

My teaching and training in expositional ministry and preaching throughout the world. I have taught this in China, Mongolia, Namibia, Romania and in many places in the USA.

Over the last 20 years, we have preached on the whole testament except for Matthew (coming up next), Luke and Acts. We have preach Genesis, Exodus, 1-2 Samuel, most of the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (yes, in public, in church!!!), all the Major Prophets except Isaiah and most of the Minor Prophets. We are planning for Matthew and Isaiah in the coming year. Mindful of the exposition class in Adult Bible Education, we have either preached or taught every book in the Bible except Leviticus.

Our commitment to expository preaching is shaped by the will of God. As we will see over and over again, the reason for preaching the Word is because there are many struggles among Christian people in carnal cultures. This is no more evident than in Crete. Titus was left in Crete to finish establishing the gospel churches in a pagan culture. He must establish Biblical Elderships and Biblical preaching and teaching. This is my focus now. The three major aspects of what Paul was laying for Titus to do we are also, in our time, place and culture, attempting to do.

Paul speaks to the issue of truth in terms of giving heed to a series of commands. These commands shape how Titus and the churches in Crete will live out the truth. These commands are not distinct from the truth. They themselves are a part of the truth. We make a false distinction when we say, "Truth and Commands." Commands are truth. Commands believed are obeyed. How will a church be faithful to the Word? How will God's people, saved out of and yet still living in a very pagan culture, how will they live pleasing to God?

There are many imperatives for preaching and proclaiming. We are committed to expositional preaching. However, I want to focus on the larger context in which preach. Some of the expectations and misunderstandings of the Chapel Pulpit comes because it is thought of as a ministry on its own. We don't think of it that way at all. We preach here within a larger ministry context required when new churches are planted and established churches live.

The Word must be Preached (1:1-4)

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, **2** in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began **3** and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

As Modeled by Paul

Paul's life and ministry are centered around the faith, the truth that God's chosen people need. He lives for the sake of the truth and for the sake of the people. Paul preaches and teaches so that God's chosen people will know the truth. He lived to both ponder and to proclaim. Paul is clear that all truth relates to godliness. There is a connection between every facet of God's revealed truth and the life lived out.

As Entrusted to Paul

Paul was entrusted with the truth, with the gospel. It is an all-encompassing gospel. It is that good news that when believed gives hope. The truth entrusted to Paul in the past gives us an eschatological hope. This is about our eternal life which have now as a present possession. It is the life of God through the Spirit which becomes our present possession through regeneration. The life of God in our souls is eternal. It connects us to God and to His dwelling place. It connects us to one another and all believers. It is the presence of the future new creation in the present. Then it will reach its final fulfillment.

This full body of truth must be preached; it must be proclaimed. Paul was not only a faithful steward of the truth he had; he was also faithful in the preaching of the truth entrusted to him. This is our conviction. We believe that we are also commanded and compelled to preach that truth which now resides in the Bible. There is no room for compromise. Obedience is required whether people feel they need it or not.

Godly Elders must be Ordained (1:5-9)

5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— **6** if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are [believers] faithful and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. **7** For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, **8** but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. **9** He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

The truth must be exhibited in the standards for church elders. They must be people who have translated the Bible into the language of living.

The Requirement to Have Them (1:5)

In order for a church to be fully functional as a church, they are required to have a plurality of leaders. The gatherings of people in Crete would be relatively young. Yet, Titus is expected to find at least more than one (elders) in every city. The idea of the solo pastor serving alone is not modeled anywhere in Acts and is never done in the Pauline epistles.

The Qualifications for Them (1:6-8)

Note, the purpose of this sermon is to highlight the centrality and importance of preaching to the church. Therefore, I am not going to expound on these qualifications. You can look at the sermon on Titus from January and February for a detailed exposition.

The Bible highlights the qualifications for the Elders, the Pastors of the church. Most of these qualifications are simply what is expected of all godly men. Among the church's godly men, we look for those who are able to teach and who have a desire to shepherd people as elders. We spend time to disciple men giving them things to read, opportunities to preach, to shepherd, to serve. It is at some level a simple and yet rigorous process. Why? Because the Bible gives these qualifications and expects that the elders we call to serve will be these kinds of men.

The Demand of Them (1:9)

While verse 9 is a qualification for an elder, it is also one of the few qualifications on ability.

He must hold fast to the doctrine he has been taught.

He must teach sound doctrine exhibiting that he understands it.

He must respond and refute those who oppose sound doctrine.

For all of the elders, this will involve an obligation to teach. For many of the elders, it also involves the opportunity to preach.

Error must be Dealt With (1:10-16)

The truth must be such a priority that within a gathered church setting, false teaching is not to be tolerated.

¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

What is Titus' responsibility? What is the responsibility of the leadership of the church? How does a commitment to expositional preaching function within a Biblical congregation?

By Silencing the Errant Teachers (v.11)

One of the aims and effects of Biblical preaching is to silence those who believe and spread error.

This is aimed first at the false teachers affecting the church. The circumcision party was from another church, the church at Jerusalem. They were traveling around teaching and preaching trying to change the doctrine of believers and churches. Now error travels through conferences and the internet. Biblical preaching is designed to protect you from error and false doctrine.

This is also aimed at error coming into the church. False teachers are not to be allowed to speak. The church is not to be a place where error is allowed to have a voice. There is room for various opinions. We want you to grow and change in what you believe. In fact, I want the room filled with people who are teachable and are learning as you sit under Biblical preaching.

There are two primary reasons why error is to be silenced so that Biblical preaching will be heard and heeded.

They are disturbing the grace and peace of families. They are upsetting families. They are causing division within families. They are causing division among families. This is more than being upset. This means to turn over, to wreck to ruin. Many false teachers are spiritually harming families. So, silence them.

They are doing this for what it gets them, a following and money. They are using the teaching they do to build a following and to build their finances. They are corrupt. They are preying on the people they are deceiving. So, silence them.

By Reproving the Ensnared Listeners (v.12-14)

Paul offers a blistering denunciation of the Cretan culture. Shocking stuff from Paul. He describes a whole culture and then confirms it from their own writings. Paul has read about them. Paul has been there and seen it. His scathing analysis, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Liars, lazy and gluttons... but evil beasts? This is the culture in which Titus is to plant churches of relatively new believers. So, how is Titus to respond?

This testimony is true. **Therefore** rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.

The believers in Crete are to be rebuked sharply. This is the command. It is because their culture is the way it is. People are being saved out of a corrupt, debased culture. There may be many wonderful things in their culture... and there were. But there were dominant sins in the culture that were the corporate expression of dominant sins in people. New believers will struggle with those kinds of personal and cultural sins.

Establishing a Biblical church means that the leadership must be poised and able to correct sin, even the prevailing cultural sins believers are saved out of. This begins first and foremost with the public preaching of the Word. Since preaching is to have a prophetic voice it will call out the way the culture is affecting the people in the church. Why? It is the only way people will be sound in faith and life. Again, in Paul's view, the faith includes commands. The faith is both the truths and the commands, the indicatives and the imperatives. Efforts to teach, preach and rebuke sharply will be in the realm of all of the New Covenant faith - its truth statements and its commands.

There are two specific failures that Titus is to address among the believers and in the churches (v.14). It is important that besides the general addressing of cultural sins, our ministry in both preaching and discipleship addresses very specific people and problems.

They were to stop giving time and attention to Jewish myths. What is Paul talking about? He is talking about the false doctrine being taught by the Jewish itinerant preachers from Jerusalem. The idea that Christians are under the Mosaic Law and must be circumcised is a myth, a lie. There were complicated systems of argument to prove this lie back then just as there are now.

They were to stop obeying the commands, the legal system of sanctification the false teachers were purveying. Using the Old Testament, these false teachers were creating a system of extra-Biblical law that they were trying to force on the Christians. They were using the authority of the church at Jerusalem to bring these Gentile believers under the yoke of the Law.

So, what does this mean for you here in our generation in our church? It means stop trying to live by the third use of the Mosaic Law. Keeping the Sabbath is now, for us, not required. You are not under any of the Mosaic Law. You are not bound to its civil requirements. You must not try to instill its Levitical commands. At best, it describes some aspects of wisdom. But the will of God for Christians is in the New Covenant. Period.

By Exposing the False Teachers (v.15-16)

All error comes through people who preach, teach, write books, blogs and purvey their false doctrine on the internet and at conferences. So, Paul in his writing and we in our preaching will have something to say about false teachers. One caution: we are not saying that everyone teaching an error is therefore not a true Christian. There are many true believers, recognized pastors and teachers who teach what is simply not true. It would be fairly easy to list them here but for now, I won't. But many false teachers are simply not true believers. Paul is addressing and our public preaching will generally expose, this category.

¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

I want to simply reiterate here what I said in preaching from Titus recently.

Their Conscience is Impure (v.15)

Paul states a basic principle. In this sentence. A person's basic nature elevates or contaminates whatever they do. He intends for Titus and for us to apply it. He is to apply it first to the false teachers. The legalistic demands of the false teachers expose their weak and defiled consciences. Everything appears to be sin and evil. In a corrupt culture this would even be amplified. Their defiled thinking and consciences reflect that they are in fact, unbelieving

Their Confession is Invalid (v.16a)

The indictment against them is clear. They are like the people Paul refers to in 2 Timothy 3:5 who "5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people." They affirm they know God when their deeds (false teaching, ruining families, selling ministry, no integrity in their speech) deny the God knows them.

Their Conduct is Outrageous (v.16b)

The evidence against them is compelling. They are detestable, disobedient and disqualified. Have we become so... sensitive, PC... that language like this just sounds wrong? Remember, in Paul's world he is not talking just about the equivalent of Muslims, Mormons, Buddhists, Jehovah's Witnesses. He is talking about people from the church in Jerusalem who claim to be Christian but whose conduct belies that. Yes, these are strong words indeed. It shows that truth is to affect our emotions. You hear Paul's sense of outrage.

Biblical Discipleship must be Implemented (2:1-10)

Christian's stability, purity and maturity are the primary aims of ministry in the church. This is accomplished as each person and all members translate doctrine into duty, learning into living. This is done somewhat in the preaching but is dependent on personal discipleship. The truth must be communicated in practical terms by personal example and discipleship. Discipleship is

not merely a way of doing ministry in the church. Functionally, a church without discipleship is disobeying the Commission God gave us. This requires small group and one-on-one.

The primary purpose of discipleship is to make the connection between soundness of doctrine and purity of living. Any attempt to break the connection destroys the vitality of both. Failure to make the connection in face-to-face one anothering will cripple the growth of Christian people.

2 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us. ⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Grounded in Sound Doctrine (2:1)

Discipleship without sound preaching and teaching will struggle. All that we do in all of our discipleship ministries is to align with, build on, and flesh out what is being preached. Expository preaching forms the foundation on which discipleship rests. It is through one anothering, through small group, Flock meetings and one-on-one discipleship that what is being preached is connected to the particulars of life.

Please understand this. I want to linger here on this for a moment. The pulpit philosophy of this church is designed with discipleship in mind. Discipleship is the context in which we preach. This is why our preaching hovers closely over the text and makes the same applications to you that would have been made to the original audience.

Our preaching is largely about *what*: what the text says, what you are to believe, what commands are embedded or alluded to. It is less about *how*: how to implement the truths and commands being preached. Discipleship in ministries, in Bible Education, in Flock meetings and in one anothering is to take the *what* and turn it into the *how*. Why? Because each Christian is at a different place spiritually. Each Christian has a unique background, experience, knowledge, struggles, sins, relationships and so on.

Too much preaching today is a little truth, a single idea, one command and then all the “how to’s” of living that out. This is not what we do. This is not what will do. We preach to lay a foundation of personal and corporate discipleship.

Now, this means something very, very important. If all you do is come to the public preaching of the Word, you will struggle in your ability to work out what you hear practically. We have not and will not make preaching all you need for your Christian life. Now, we believe preaching and teaching are necessary – you cannot believe or obey what you do not know. But all the detailed application of the truth being taught here is to be worked out in relationships through one anothering, through discipleship.

Worked out in Personal Discipleship (2:2-10)

In addition to “the sound doctrine”, Titus is to teach “the things which fit it”, or are ‘in accord with’ it, that is, the practical duties which arise from it. For there is an indissoluble connection between Christian doctrine and Christian duty, between theology and ethics. Moreover, Paul immediately does what he has told Titus to do. First he outlines some detailed ethical instructions which Titus is to pass on to different groups in the Cretan churches (2-10), and secondly he unfolds the sound doctrines which undergird these duties, in particular the two comings of Christ (11-14).

All of the kinds of people who make up the home-circle should conduct themselves in such a manner that by their life they may beautify, adorn, ornament the doctrine of God, their Savior. The salvation our Savior brings is one that produces a godly people who live and behave in certain ways. Our Savior transforms our **persons** and our **behavior**. One of the functions of preaching is enable and encourage able, older people in the Lord to disciple the younger.

We can observe some general principles that help us think about discipleship as a church.

The Importance of Discipleship

Notice that the emphasis on discipleship; on those experienced in Christian living mentoring those who are younger in the faith. Practical godly living is transmitted through discipleship as much as it is taught in gatherings.

The Focus of Discipleship

The emphasis is on gender and station of life ministry. We often think of discipleship in theological, doctrinal, teaching terms. But the emphasis in the Bible is on turning truth into living. It consistently calls for intentional abandonment of the world’s way of living and embracing a new kind of life.

The Qualifications to Disciple

The people involved in doing the discipling are to be of a certain maturity in character and in conduct. They have been taught the Word. They have lived the Word. They know what and how to help others.

The Process of Discipleship

Discipleship involves both teaching and training. It is telling and showing how to do something. Therefore, it will have both an explain and an exemplify component.

The Purpose in Discipleship

Biblical discipleship glorifies God. But in this text, Biblical discipleship is also aimed at producing the kind of character and conduct that exemplifies and enhances the gospel. Weak, ignorant, sinning Christians hinder the gospel and give people reason to despise and disparage the Scriptures.

The Instruction for Discipleship

What Titus is to do is to organize the discipleship in a way to promotes good and wise Christians. This is not exhaustive. This is an example of what was what needed, particularly in their culture. It also seems to be addressing the particular failings and tendencies of each group.

Christians will develop specific areas of character so that they will be able to disciple or train others. Titus is to look for a certain kind of people to teach and train to becoming the discipling core of each church.

Christians will cultivate specific areas of obedience so that they bring no dishonor on the Word. Paul is still thinking in categories of behavior. This is what those discipling are to work on but with their own specifics.

The Product of Discipleship

Here is the aim, the trajectory for discipleship in the context of preaching and sound doctrine. This purpose statement is the bookend to verse 1. We are to preach and disciple even with masters and slaves, “**so that in every respect they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.**” A sanctified life, which brings into clear perspective all the fruits of transforming grace—obedience, cheerfulness, integrity, etc.—sparkling like so many precious jewels, is an ornament to “the doctrine of *God our Savior*”. The truth preached and taught is beautified with the godly life lived.

Dependence on Grace must be Cultivated (2:11-14)

The truth enables and informs grace living. True grace molds truth into holy living. Demanding truth and obedience is not legalism; it is grace. Grace is not here to set us free to sin, but to set us free from sin.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

As the Power by which we are Saved (2:11)

Grace has appeared in this age. This is salvation for all kinds of people. Grace brings salvation for people from all different kinds of culture, ethnic groups, seasons of life, languages, tribes, even Americans. Preaching must bring the Word of God into the world and time and age and people in which it is being preached. It is through Christ preached and the Word proclaimed that the grace of God comes to all the peoples.

By the Training through which we are Transformed (2:12)

Grace not only saves us but also grace transforms us. Grace does it by enabling our active obedience. According to Paul here, it trains us to renounce sin and to live godly lives. How does grace train us to do that? Through the preaching of God’s Word in the context of Biblical discipleship.

Understand what Paul is saying here. The preaching and discipling of the church is not to be New Testament legalism. It is not supposed to give you lists and checkboxes and rules and laws. It is to empower and enable a grace-based life, not a Law based holiness. This is so hard sometimes for people to understand. Just tell me what to do. Yes, when the Bible does which is often ignored or denied. No when Bible doesn’t which is often expected and demanded.

For the Hope to which we are Waiting (2:13)

Grace enabling preaching is focused on Christ. It is to raise confidence and assurance in Jesus. It is to sustain Christians through great suffering and hardship until the day Jesus comes.

From the Redeemer through whom We were Purchased (2:14)

Biblical preaching will bring the gospel to bear on our lives. It will help us to believe the gospel in a life transforming way. This is the point of this verse. Grace preaching does not lead

us deeper in legalism. Grace preaching leads us deep and deeper in the gospel, the cross of Christ.

Preaching with Authority must not be Disregarded (2:15)

¹⁵ Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

The truth gives authority to the elders. Their authority is in terms of the truth. In fact, without a common body of belief in a gathered church, there can be no authority.

There is a command to declare, to preach. We are to announce what this text, and by extension, what the Bible says.

There is a command to exhort and to rebuke. Our preaching is to urge faith and obedience and to rebuke and correct when people don't believe and don't live it out. We are to do this with authority. Now I know that right now many people in the church are struggling with submission. But understand this, when the Bible is being preached, you are to submit. You are to have a poise to hear and to heed.

Reflect and Respond

We are committed to expository preaching.

From and following the text in its context with a New Covenant trajectory...

By gifted, able and qualified men...

With all the Biblical means given, to expose error and confront false teachers...

In a context of discipleship where general application is worked personally and practically...

Depending wholly on and aiming to cultivate the grace of God.