

Well, let's take our Bibles and turn to the book of Titus, the book of Titus. And one of the things we love to do here at Kindred is just pick a book in the Bible and begin to work through it pastorally and practically. And we started a couple of weeks ago, a sermon series on Titus. We've called it doing good. Because if you study that little book, three chapters, you're going to find that the idea of doing good works is just laced throughout the book.

Jesus died according to chapter two, verse 14, to create a people zealous for good works. Jesus died to create a transformed community of Christians who are transforming their community. And so, we started looking at this little book. We started looking at verses one to four last week under the subject, the work of the word, the work of the word, because Paul talks about preaching here. So, let's stand in honor of God's word and follow along. Titus one verses one through four. I'm reading from the New King James translation of Holy Scripture.

"Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledgement of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie, promised before time began. But has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior. To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior." So reads God's word. You may be seated.

I was reading about two psychiatric patients who'd become friends because they were sharing the same doctor. One particular day, they happened to bump into each other in the doctor's office and one asked the other, "Are you coming or going?" To which the other replied, "If I knew that, I wouldn't be here." Now some people don't know whether they're coming or going. Life to them is a muddle. It's a maze. They can't make head nor tail of why they're here and what they ought to be doing. Life for them is a round about with no exits. Round and round in a meaningless circle, they go.

But that's not true of the Apostle Paul, and it shouldn't be true of any follower of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul knew who he was in the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul knew why he was here within the will of God. And the Apostle Paul knew what he was to do while he was here for God's glory. And do you know what? We see that in Titus one verses one through four.

John MacArthur said of these verses that they are the clearest representation of Paul's mission and ministry anywhere in the New Testament. Paul here is describing who he is, why he's here, and what he's to do while he's here. Now it's a long, single and complicated sentence in the Greek.

The first three verses in your English Bible is one long, complicated sentence in the Greek New Testament, but the meaning is pretty clear. Paul's passion, Paul's purpose was this, he wanted God to use him to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ by means of preaching the gospel, a message that God had committed to him as an apostle. That's what he's introducing to us here.

The proclamation of the gospel made his life meaningful. And when people heard that gospel and received it, it made their lives meaningful too. Now before we go any further, remember we have called this series Doing Good. And I'm going to try as we work through each paragraph or each pericope, I'm going to try and connect that part of the letter to this overall thought of doing good. And here's the first thought, verses one through four remind us that doing good is the product of the work of the word.

See, it's through preaching that the elect put their faith in Jesus Christ. It's through preaching that people come to acknowledge the truth of Jesus Christ. It's through preaching that their lives begin to accord to godliness. It's through preaching that they have the hope of eternal life. Doing good is the product of the work of the word. So, let's look at our text, four things, we might only cover three but we'll see. There's the priority of preaching, the press of preaching, the power of preaching and the procession of preaching.

We looked at the priority of preaching. We noticed that there was only one activity that's underscored by Paul here. He says this, "It's through the preaching of the word made manifest, committed to me that the elect are saved and that lives are transformed. And I think he does that intentionally. He wants us to know among the many things he does, nothing is more of a priority to him than preaching. He wants to give himself to the work of the work of the word. Because faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God.

The Word of God is a lamp unto our feet and a lamp unto our path. The Word of God equips us onto every good work. Paul's writing to a young Christian leader who's now going to have to appoint other Christian leaders in all the churches that are in this little island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, and Paul wants them to know that they have to give themselves to preaching.

In fact, one of the qualifications of an elder as we'll see next week is verse nine of chapter one that he holds fast the faithful word as he has been taught. And as he holds fast to the word he's been taught, he's going to teach it faithfully to others that they might hold it fast.

So, we looked at the priority of preaching. Although this text has personal biography, it has theological substance, it has only got one apostolic activity, preaching. And while you look at the history of the church as recorded in the book of Acts, or you go to somewhere like the protestant reformation of the 16th century, it's all about what the word did.

Remember, we quoted Martin Luther last week that, as he drank Wittenberg beer and slept, the Word of God did it all, it weakened the papacy. It broke the hold that the Catholic Church had had on Europe, and the true gospel was heard for the first time in many centuries.

And I would go on to the press of preaching, the press of preaching. What do I mean by that, the press or the obligation or the burden? You can tell that Paul was a man sent by God, a man under orders to preach the word. He calls himself a bondservant of God. He calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. He says he preaches according to the commandment of God, verse three, and he felt an obligation to preach.

He'll say elsewhere in Corinthians, "Necessity has been laid upon me. Woe if I don't preach." We started to look at that. We looked at the press of servant hood, the press of servant hood. Paul was a sent servant. He was a slave of Jesus Christ. He was an apostle of the master. Sent as a servant to serve God, serve the church and serve the lost through preaching. And then we've kind of digressed, didn't we? If he is sent, we ask ourselves, how does a man know he's called by God? And we give several checkpoints that a man's got to go through if he's truly called of God. That's where we left off. So, let's pick up where we left off.

But not only do we have the press of servant hood, we have the press of Scripture. What do I mean by that? Another component in Paul's preaching, another element in Paul's exposition is this, he believed that his preaching was rooted in Revelation. Because, here he talks about a promise that God made, a God who cannot lie, a promise that God made before time began. But in due season, due time, verse three, that promise has been manifested by His word, which Paul preaches. And he feels the press of that. He feels the duty to be faithful to the text, because one he's a servant, an apostle. And number two, God has spoken. And because God has spoken, Paul can speak what God has spoken and that gives him authority. That brings urgency.

See, standing behind Paul's speech is God's speech. Very important you get that. Every preacher's got to buy into that. That's what stands behind him. This sense of what he's about to say from the text of God's word is God's word. Paul believed that preaching was God's Word in human words, not human words in human words. Paul had something to say and he said it, because the creator had communicated to the creation. Isn't that what Hebrews says, God has spoken? What a thought. And you know what? That idea is kind of cast around this idea of what has been promised.

Eternal Life has been promised. It was a promise that God made to Himself before time began. And then, at the right time, He's manifested that promise in the word. The living word, Jesus Christ and the story of the living word has been written down into the written word, and that word ought to be preached.

I want you to see a couple of things about this promise. It's an eternal promise. It was a promise that God made to himself before time began. I believe it's a promise between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is taking us into a conversation that took place within the Trinity, within the secret counsels of God before time began, before the sun ever was created and rose upon the earth. And God promised to redeem a people, and the Son promised to die for that people, and the Holy Spirit promised to bring that about in time through his regenerating work.

The promise is the promise that God is going to elect a people, save a people, redeem a people. The Son will do that and He will offer that people up to the Father as an act of worship, and the Father will give that people back to the Son as an act of thankfulness and honoring of His beloved. That's the promise that was made. That's why Jesus is the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

God intends to save a people. That's the promise. He intends to give them eternal life. That's why Paul is a bondservant of God an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect. This isn't only an eternal promise, this is a trustworthy promise. This is a promise that God made and He is a God who cannot lie. It says in Numbers 23 verse 19, "God is not a man that He should lie."

Have you ever been lied to? It's a terrible thing to be really lied to. It's a horrible thing to go through to see a spouse not keep their promise to stay together until death does them part. To love their spouse in sickness and in health. It's a terrible thing to be lied to, and to see a marriage dissolve because someone's unfaithful.

It's a terrible thing to be lied to by a friend. That hurt the Psalmist in Psalm 55. He said, "You know what? If it was an enemy that hurt me, but it was a friend." And that was an open wound, and he was bleeding emotionally because being lied to, being betrayed, being let down is a hard thing.

But I want to tell you based on the character of God, God will never lie to you. He's not a man that He should lie. God is unchangeable, therefore His promises remain the same. You have an eternal promise that was made before time began and now is made manifest in time. You've got a trustworthy promise and you've got a revealed promise.

God decided to go public with this promise of saving a people, of redeeming a people for His son's glory through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. And you know what? We read in chapter two verse 11, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Read in chapter three verse four. "But when the kindness and love of God our savior toward man appeared.

That promise, that plan to save a people for the glory of Jesus Christ. That plan is coming to fruition within history. It's being made known, and now has been made manifest in the coming of Jesus Christ, and his story has been written down and it's to be communicated among the nations. So what's the point? Here's the point. This is the foundation, and focus and force of Paul's preaching.

It's his utter joy, it's his witty responsibility to manifest in his preaching what God has manifested gloriously in Jesus Christ, the grace of God has appeared. God now is setting about saving the people He has promised his Son, and Paul's involved in preaching that word about the manifestation of God's love. And as a bondservant and as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he's doing it for the faith of God's elect.

Paul didn't conjure up this message. It doesn't find its origin in Paul's thinking, or man's mind. It comes from God's divine revelation. It comes from God's divine redemption plans. It's a reminder that preaching is rooted in Revelation. Here's what John Stott says. It's a very good thing. "God's speech makes our speech necessary. We are called to pass on the message we have heard to others, we must speak what God has spoken. Or in other words, we must preach."

Now, you may not be buying into it. And if you're here this morning with your family and you do want to be here, I've been there and you're fidgeting, you're looking at your watch. You can't wait for me to shut up because you've got better things to do. I get it. I lived that. But I just want to tell you why we've preached for 45 or 50 minutes. Why that's such an important part of our service. You may not buy into it, but at least, do us the courtesy of understanding why we do it, because we're convinced that God has spoken. And God has manifested his love toward us in Jesus Christ.

And the prophets promised it, and the apostles recorded it, and the story has been written down and here's our conviction this morning, that God has spoken and we can speak what God has spoken. And I can't think of anything more important. Close your magazines, shut your phone down, turn the television off, because God has spoken. The creator has communicated. We've got a manual on how to assemble and maintain a life that glorifies God, a life of meaningfulness, a life of purpose and abundance.

The Creator has communicated. And if that's true and we believe it to be true, there's nothing more important. Stop the presses. Listen up. Don't be deceived. Don't let the voice of God get drowned back by a cacophony of voices out there in the culture. It's a Christian's conviction that God has spoken.

You don't need to go on a journey inside yourself to hear his voice. You don't need to stand some night barking like a dog up into the evening sky. You don't need to go looking for dreams and visions, and the words of prophecy. God has spoken and he's written it down in a book that's living.

Just understand, God has spoken doesn't mean that God now has retracted back into silence. God has spoken and this is a living Word. He continues to speak, and he speaks through the gospel and he speaks through the Word of God. And that's what makes life worth living. That's what gives us our confidence that builds the foundation beneath our feet.

We're living life according to the manufacturers manual. Our marriages, our children, our pleasures, our leisure's, we're letting the Bible shape all of that. That's what gives our preaching authority, that's what gives our evangelism power and that's what gives our counseling impact.

Now, I could leave it there. That's what I call the press of Scripture. The fundamental point was, Paul preaches because he believes God has revealed his mind and heart in the Word of God. God has spoken so, Paul speaks what God has spoken. I could leave it there, but I've got two things that I think will be a blessing to you. It will be a real help to you. Number one, God always has a plan. And number two, God always is timely.

Let me say, first of all, God always has a plan. Did you notice here that this promise of eternal life for God's elect is a plan that God hatched within himself Father, Son and Holy Spirit? The father sends the son, the son comes and procures salvation for the elect by death upon a cross, and the Holy Spirit brings that to fruition as he regenerates people and brings them to Jesus Christ. That's the promise and that's the plan. And do you know? It was hatched before time began.

Jesus was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Now, we could leave it there as a theological truism or truth. Here's what you need to understand, the plan of redemption did not come into existence after the fall of man. It was hatched before man was created. That will give you something to chew on all of this week. That before man fell, there was a plan for the problem. There was a solution before there was a problem. And I thought about that theologically and what that means in doctrinal terms, that God had a people in mind before time, a people his son would save. And God is determined to save them within time.

But on a practical pastoral level, I'm encouraged by the thought that God had a solution before man became a problem. That's a good thing to know. God's never stumped, God's never swamped, God's never stymied. No one will ever say because no one has ever said to God Almighty, stalemate.

You don't get around God. God doesn't chase the circumstances, God's not waiting to see who's going to trust him, God's not left scratching his head, God's never found chasing circumstances. You'll never find a trinity working on an emergency plan. Do you know why? Because God never has any emergencies. That should get a big Amen.

Amen.

I don't know why you're sitting there looking at me like you are. God is in heaven, and He sits on the throne and He does whatever pleases Him. Now, you can conclude from and that sounds like God's a tyrant and a dictator, but that which pleases Him is always governed by love, and mercy and wisdom. We can trust the plan of God. It's fair. God is sovereign.

Adrian Rogers said, "The Trinity never meets in emergency session." Corrie Ten Boom once said, "There is no panic in heaven. God has no problems only plans." That's why you hear people kind of condense

that into that statement, there's no panic in heaven, only plans. That's a good thing to know. You need to tuck that away for a rainy day. You might need that right now.

God is not only sovereign in my salvation, God is sovereign in my situation. He's working all things together for good. Read Corrie Ten Boom's life story. Our ladies did it a few years ago. You'll realize that her sister Betsy dies in a Nazi concentration camp, but Corrie gets released because of a clerical error. Error? Accident? No. Appointment.

God is working all things after the counsel of His own will. We believe in a God, we worship a God and we love a God who has redeemed us. A God who had a plan ever before there was a problem. Who had a solution ever before there was a sin.

Not only that, I still don't understand why that's not getting a lot of amens. God's timing is exquisite. God's timing is exquisite.

Amen.

Thank you. Go back to the text. Look at this, in the hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie promised before time began, but has in due time manifested his word through preaching. Notice that. There was a promise and a plan to save a people before time began. And now the plans being worked out in time, in due time. You could translate that at the right time, at the favorable moment, at the precise hour.

I like what Eugene Peterson says in the message, "When the time was right, God went public with the truth." It's a great statement. What was known alone to God in the secret counsels of the triune God Himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit has now gone public and the grace of God has appeared, and the love of God, and the kindness of God in Jesus Christ has been manifest.

Now that's echoed elsewhere, isn't it? What about Galatians four verse four? Speaking of Jesus coming, which Titus talks about, in the fullness of time, God sent forth his Son. In the fullness of time, at the right time, at the most opportune moment, Jesus comes. And that's true. In fact, if you go into the history of the times back then, Jesus comes just at the right time. And he dies for our sins, and then the third day he's raised again for us, and then he sends his apostles out into the world. It's the right time for the gospel to come.

One because of Jewish dispersion. They've had a dispersion of the Jews across the Roman Empire. You'll see in the book of Acts as the Apostles go out across the Roman Empire, they visit synagogues everywhere. And for the most part, it's a friendly reception. And you know what? Those synagogues become platforms for preaching the gospel. How interesting. Jewish dispersion, Christian expansion.

Number two, you have the universality of the Greek language. I mean if you've got the greatest news in the world to communicate, it's a great thing to be able to communicate it to the greater number of people through one language, the Greek language.

You can read about this and Google it, the Pax Romana. How the Romans, while in some ways brutal and cruel and subjugated many nations in other ways, they brought a certain element of civility, an order to the world. The roads were paved, their soldiers kept a certain element of peace and order, travel was

made easier. Sounds just about right for men to travel all across the world, to speak one single language about the most glorious news you're ever going to hear.

And then there's the decay of pagan religions. When Paul gets to Athens, man, they have so many gods, it'll make your head spin. He says, "I want to talk to you about the unknown God who's the true God whose made Himself known in Jesus Christ. Can I talk? I'll speak in Greek so that you can hear me about the one who's the word and the mind of God.

Oh, my friend, God's timely. He makes all things beautiful in his time. You need to know that today because you're probably looking at your watch, Lord, Lord, where are you? I've been standing here for quite a while. You still haven't come. That's hard.

Waiting is not easy. But remember, while you look at your watch, you need to sync that with the eternal plan of God and give him time, and give him your trust while you wait. My friend Jack Graham, from Preston Wood Baptist Church said in an event him and I preached at here in Los Angeles a couple of years ago. "With us, time is everything. With God, timing is everything." It's a good statement.

The Eternal God is ever punctual. In due time, manifested his word through preaching. In the fullness of time, he sent forth his Son. I read this to you a couple of weeks ago. I want to reread it because it ties into this. It was a letter we got from a radio listener to our KTT office.

He said this, "I didn't run across your ministry by happenstance. The Lord Yahweh led me to you. I asked nothing from you but to tell you God is timely. He's a timely God, and sent you into my life when I was dealing with suicidal ideas and asking God, help me. Then he sent you and your ministry. Thank you, for giving me the hope I needed to live in Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God."

The hour was late. The time was desperate in this man's life. Suicide seemed like the best path. He's hanging on by his fingernails. He sends a flare up to heaven, "Oh, God help me." I know we haven't heard how yet, I'm going to call him. But somehow, he started listening to the broadcast and God changed his life, and he wants us to know God is timely. Man, that was late for me but I thank God it wasn't too late. And now I'm saved. I'm satisfied in Jesus Christ.

Let's move on the press of stewardship, the press of stewardship, the press of servant hood, the press of Scripture, the press of stewardship. These are the things that are playing in the Paul's passion for preaching and making it a priority. This is another element, a deep sense of responsibility. Look down at verse three.

So this promise that God has made to himself to save a people for the glory of His Son through His Son. That promise is now being made manifest in the Gospel, this word that Paul's preaching. And notice how he describes his stewardship, "Which was committed to me according to the commandment of God," verse three. That means entrusted.

God said, "Paul, I'm giving you the treasure of the gospel. Now, guard it, watch over it, live a life that honors it and preach it word for word. That's the press of stewardship. Every pastor feels that.

Preaching was not an occupation for Paul, it's not an occupation for me. It's a calling. And with the calling to the ministry, God gives every pastor, every preacher of the gospel, a sacred trust. Here's the

gospel. Now, don't miscommunicate it, don't corrupt it. Preach it word for word. I have spoken. You need to speak what I've spoken and only speak what I've spoken.

Amen.

Make it clear, make it cogent and make it compelling, but make sure it's true to the text. That's the challenge. It was a blessed bondage for the Apostle Paul. He was a man under orders. The exposition of Scripture was a divine injunction on his life. He was commanded and commissioned to do that. He was not to revise the word. He was to repeat the word.

The Ministry of the Herald is the ministry, not of innovation but propagation. The idea of preaching here is tied into the idea of the messenger who was given an authoritative message from an authoritative figure, and he must go to a certain people and with authority, simply communicate the authoritative message from the authoritative figure. Usually a king.

You're not to be clever with the King's message, you're not to corrupt it, you're not to manipulate it, you're not to try and persuade people beyond the message. The message is persuasion enough. It's comes from the King, and he stands behind his word. Here's the point. And then we'll move on. What's the implication more for me, but also for you as a congregation?

I think by implication, Paul says, " Hey, this gospel word is now manifested, and I'm preaching it, and I'm committed to preaching what's been committed to me. By implication, it brings us to the issue of expository preaching. Now, that's a word we use here at Kindred a lot. Maybe you're new and it's a new word to you. So let me explain it. The word expository preaching means, we expose you to the authorial intent of the text. What do I mean by that?

We allow the author of the text to speak to you. We try to get out of the way. So, we do word studies, we get into the history of the time, we connect that verse with other verses in that letter or in that book. We connect that book with other books, we connect those books with all the books of the Bible. We try to help you see, what is the message of the text? What was the author intending? We don't impose our thinking. We don't come with a message looking for a text. We allow the text to become the sermon. That's what expository preaching is.

That doesn't mean I have to march from Genesis through to Revelation in kind of some stodgy uninteresting manner. That's not expository preaching. But what it is, is whether I take a book, or a passage or even a text, that I allow the text to speak. It's not a style. It's a method. It's the only method for preaching God's word. Because, we have argued God has spoken. If God has spoken, we must speak what God has spoken, and the best way to do that is expository preaching. To just spend time understanding the text, let its meaning rise and then we'll make proper applications to our lives. You understand that. That's what God has called us to. That's what true preaching is. You shouldn't settle for anything less.

I like what Todd Wilson says in the book we recommended you last week. He says this, "Preaching must be biblical, because the whole point of preaching is to speak God's Word in human words. Not human words in human words. But because preaching is to be biblical, it must be expository. This doesn't mean the preacher must March dutifully through every book of the Bible in order, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, word by word in some tedious uninspiring manner. Rather, the point is that, the preacher must

seek to meet the message of the text, the message of his sermon. Too often, preachers get it backwards. They let what they want to say guide their selection of the exposition of Scripture, rather than let scripture itself be the guide."

Have you ever watched preachers on television raise their Bible and pledge people's trust in the Bible? Open it, read it and then make no reference to what they just read the rest of their sermon? That's not expository preaching. Expository preaching will always have you and me putting our finger back on the text and following along line by line and phrase by phrase, connecting the syntax and the meaning so that the word of God is not garbled.

If God has spoken for goodness sake people, we need to make sure we have heard him properly, which means good preaching. Just last year here in LA, I was on the platform with a very well known preacher. You would know him. You've read his books, I'm sure. And I was disappointed in him. He had 25 minutes and I had 25 minutes. And for 25 minutes, he kind of went all over the place and really no place.

He spoke in terms of being a prophet. There was no exposition. He didn't stay in any particular text, but he did make reference to a devotion he had had that morning from Jeremiah 22 and 23 about the need to stand in the counsel of the Lord. And then he got down on his knees in front of 600 pastors and myself concluded for several minutes. Dramatically on his knees, he held his hands to heaven and pleaded, "Oh, God, we want to stand in your counsel. Oh, God, we want to stand in your counsel."

And I didn't do it, and maybe I shouldn't have done it. I didn't do it. Maybe I should have done it and didn't do it. But in my heart, I said, "Stand up, open the Bible, preach it and we'll stand in the counsel of the Lord." What are you waiting on? God has spoken. God's not going to speak beyond what he has spoken.

So if you're waiting to hear from God, open your Bible, interpret it correctly, expose it thoroughly, and you'll hear from God and you'll know how to live your life.

Amen.

Let's move on to our last thought because we're not going to cover the four . The last point would have been the procession of preaching, it would have been verse four, which is about Titus, my true son in our common faith. The procession of preaching. Paul's kind of imagining a long line from Moses writing the Pentateuch, David writing the Psalms, the chronicler telling us of the kings, the prophets telling us of the one to come. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John telling us of the gospel, the apostles telling us what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John told us and a little bit more. Because it says in Jude three, "We have a common salvation and a faith once delivered to the saints.

And Paul saying, "Titus, you and I have a common faith. We've got the same theology." Now, I want you to stand in this procession of preachers and be faithful to the faith once delivered to the saint. Don't stand out of the line, don't try and be novel, don't try and be original, don't try and be innovative. Be more concerned about being faithful to the message that's always being preached.

Be historic, not innovative. Make sure you line up with God's faithful men across the years. I want that. I want to stand in the line. I'm not looking to be novel or creative. I don't have anything to say that hasn't

already been said. I just might say it in a different way and with some freshness. But we've only got one faith, one baptism and one Lord. It's all common.

So, just be careful. Young people, be careful about churches and preachers who talk about creativity, and novelty and innovation. If that just means freshness, I'm all for that. But somehow if that means something different in how they preach and what they preach, run as fast as your feet will take you.

But here's the last thought for 10 minutes, the power of preaching. Paul in this text, will go on to talk about the effects of preaching. He'll talk about a chain reaction. The saving faith of those who belong to God will lead to a knowledge of the truth, which will lead to godliness which will rest on eternal hope in Jesus Christ. So quickly, let me unpack the power of preaching. What preaching will do in people's lives.

Number one, it will produce faith. It produces faith. Look at the opening verse. Paul as a bondservant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect. Now my Bible says, according to the faith of God's elect. Most translations have, for the faith of God's elect, and I think that's a better translation. Or to bring about the faith of God's elect.

How are the elect saved? They're saved by the indiscriminate preaching of the gospel. And as the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God, he opens hearts and minds and brings people to faith in Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The preaching of the word, the sharing of the gospel, either from a preacher or from you properly communicated. If it's received, will produce faith in the elect, those who were chosen before the foundation of the world.

This is the language of the text, by the way. Not my language. In case you think I'm asserting in this idea of election, it's here. Paul seems to be unembarrassed about it. You want to know who I am? You want to know what I do? Well, I'm a servant sent by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel. And when I preach the gospel, faith is produced in the elect. In fact, he'll talk about that in 2 Timothy two verse 10. He says, "I suffer for the elect's sake."

Sometimes I have been run out of town and I go back into the town. Sometimes it's hard to preach in the face of opposition. Do you know why I did? Because I believe God's going to save the elect. That's what gives me my confidence in evangelism. I stand my ground. I preach the word, and you know what it produces? Faith.

And I want you to notice that Paul isn't embarrassed, and he's quick to point out, that the choice for Christ is a choice that God made first for the person who makes the choice for Christ. The elect, those whom God has chosen. God's elect. Notice that. God's elect.

He possesses the elect, he selected the elect. That's taught, isn't it? In Ephesians one verses four to five. It's taught in 2 Thessalonians two verse 13. You've probably heard it explained like this, God chooses people to salvation because he looks down the tunnel of time, he foresees that they're going to believe. He foresees that they're going to choose his son. But the implication of that theology, I'm sorry, because I used to believe it, but I don't believe it anymore. Because the implication of that is, God chooses you because you chose him.

So, you elected yourself and then God elected you on the basis of your choice. That seems to turn the text on its head. That seems to rob God of His sovereignty. That seems to make a nonsense of grace.

Grace is indiscriminate and undeserved. It's not given because you're clever enough to put your faith in Jesus Christ, you're not. You're dead. The very faith that you put in Jesus Christ has to be given to you as a gift from God as he awakens you from the deadness of your sin.

Amen.

And that's what good preaching does. It awakens faith in God's elect. Although I would qualify this because it tends to disturb people. I'm with Spurgeon. I'm not encouraging you to spend your time now discovering whether you're one of the elect. That's a waste of time. The Bible never encourages you to do that. Do you want to know if you're elect? Put your faith in Jesus Christ and you'll be one of the elect. The elect to put their faith Jesus Christ.

And as God works in your heart this morning and awakens your conscience, and drives you and draws you to Jesus Christ, run as fast as your soul can run into the hands of the master, because God loves you and his son died for you. It only produces fear that promotes knowledge.

Look at this. I'm a bondservant, an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect to bring about faith in God's elect and the acknowledgement of the truth. Definite article. The truth, the true gospel, the body of saving knowledge as expressed in the Word of God. Faith must have content. Faith must have content.

As you present the gospel, you've got to present content. You've got to tell a person who Jesus is, what Jesus did and what they must do to know him. There must be content. This isn't just the heart. This is the mind. Christian faith is a belief, not only in someone but something about that someone. They need to know that Jesus is God. They need to know that he's God in human flesh. What a mystery, the god man, the word incarnate.

They need to know that he was born of a virgin. He was not tainted by Adam's sin. He was sinless and holy and undefiled. That he lived a life of obedience to the law, a life we could never live. And that his act of obedience is credited to us as we put our faith in him. That he died on the cross as a substitute, to die in our place for our sin and his blood became the payment that would have swaged the wrath of God. And after his death, God declared him to be the Son of God by raising him from the dead, and Jesus conquered death and hell in the grave.

That's the basic gospel. You've got to communicate that cogently, clearly, convincingly. And then a person's got to get their head around that, bring their heart to it, and then they will be for it and they're saved. They've got to confess with their mouth and believe in their heart that Jesus was raised from the dead. There's one element they must believe. There's content to our faith. They must acknowledge the truth. That's why preaching must have content. It must be doctrinal, theological. Not airy and not light.

Knowledge is the key to life and knowledge is the key to eternal life. R Kent Hughes who was here several months ago said, "We cannot be profoundly impacted by that which we do not know." People need to know the gospel and you need to make the gospel known. Get to Brads class on evangelism. Ignorance is deadly. Ignorance is damning. There's no bliss in ignorance of the gospel. Only damnation.

I've told you the story. I like it of the little fella who said to his mum an hour or two before dinner, "You know, Mommy. I've got a bit of a tummy ache." And she says, "Well, son. I think I know why your

stomach hurts, because there's nothing in. It's empty. And in an hour or two here, we'll be having our dinner and you'll feel better." They come to dinner and the pastor actually happened to be invited to dinner that night. He sits down. The mother asks him, "Well, Pastor, how are you doing?" He says, "Well, you know what? I'm doing okay, but throughout the day I've had a bit of a headache."

And the fella says, "Pastor, Mum would tell you that's because your heads empty. And once you get something in it, you'll feel a lot better." Can I tell you this morning. It's a wonderful feeling and it's a wonderful thing to have your head filled with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And for those of us that have put our trust in Jesus Christ and acknowledge the truth, it's a wonderful feeling. It produces faith it promotes knowledge to the preaching of God's word. It produces change. It produces change. Keep reading the text. Paul, a sent servant preaching the gospel brings about faith in the elect. That faith is content and acknowledges the truth. And once that knowledge is applied to one's life in saving faith, it accords with godliness. It brings about godliness, a life begins to take on the shape of that which is godly.

Christ died for the ungodly. But once the Spirit of God begins to live in the ungodly, they begin to become godly. Because, if any man's in Christ, he's a new creature. The old things pass away and all things become new. Titus will kind of reiterate what James argues that living faith produces change in a life. Dead faith is faith without works, faith without change, faith without godliness, faith without holiness. That's dead, that's spurious, that's devilish, that's not true.

But once Jesus gets into a life, that's put faith in him and acknowledged the truth and applied the content of the gospel to their lives, the Spirit of God produces change. And good works and good deeds result. We'll see this before we're done with this book that, people who are saved will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. They'll beautify the gospel with a beautiful life that begins increasingly to resemble the beauty of Jesus Christ.

It was Augustine the great church father, the Bishop of Hippo. I think this story was told by a Spurgeon who was walking down the road one day and an old flame of his, because before he became a Christian, he was a playboy, lived a profligate life. An old flame of his, let's be honest, an old prostitute of his, shouted, "Augustine, Augustine. It is I." And he's embarrassed. That's all gone. He doesn't live like that anymore. He doesn't sleep around. People who are Christians don't sleep around with partners or prostitutes.

And Augustine tries to avoid that but he can't. She kind of stalks him down the street until he has to stop. He turns to her and here's what he famously says, "But it is not I. It is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I'm changed, and I don't look down on you. I want you to come up to where I am and trust the Lord Jesus." It provides hope. We'll sign off here. It provides hope.

Go back to the text. Look at the chain reaction, the effects of God's word. It produces faith in God's elect, those whom God has chosen, sovereignty and graciously, to become the bride of his son, a promise that God made to his son in eternity past. And the acknowledgement of truth brings that about, which accords with godliness in hope of eternal life which God who cannot lie, promised before time

began. Oh, that's wonderful isn't it? As we close and the team begins to come up, never ending life. I like the sound of that, don't you?

I like the sound of that, hope through eternal life. Now when we talk about eternal life, let me just qualify it quickly. We tend to fall into the trap. That means, if we trust Jesus, we're going to live forever. No. We were going to live forever whether we trusted Jesus or not.

You're either going to be in hell forever or in heaven forever. With God or without God, in His presence or banished from his presence. No, eternal life really means we're going to enjoy unending life in the quality of life in Jesus. That the peace will never stop, that the joy will overflow. That God will keep loving us, and loving us and loving us. He always has, he always will.

He set his love on us in eternity past. We had nothing to do with it. He decided to save us. We don't deserve it. We weren't clever enough to choose him, but he did. Set his love on us and he's brought us to faith in Jesus Christ. God has loved us. Always has and always will. That's the hope of eternal life. Never ending, never stopping. And it's sure because, it's promised by a God who can't lie. This isn't the hope of, well, I hope I get the job I applied for.

This isn't the hope of, You know what? I hope it's sunny tomorrow for the picnic, or the day at the beach. It's not the hope we're talking about. We're talking about a hope that's guaranteed by the character of God, immutable, unchangeable. You can take that to the bank, my friend. You can preach in the confidence of that. You can stand in the face of intractable evil as Titus would have to do in that. You can look into the future, and it may seem dim and it may seem dark, but you'll look beyond it because you are one who is indeed born unto a living hope.

I'll finish with this story. Spurgeon, it is said that one morning, he got up into his pulpit in London and he never opened his Bible. Just set it down on his pulpit, because usually, he gets up, opens his Bible and asks the people to follow. But that morning he didn't. Here's what he said, "Some have found fault with me contending that I'm old fashioned, that I'm always quoting the Bible. I don't say enough about science and modern thought.

Well, there's a poor widow here and she's lost her only son. I've got a question for science. Will she see him again? Where is he? Is death the end? Is death the final arbitrator of life? The woman's anxious. I want to ask the scientists here this morning, what is your answer? And he pauses for dramatic effect. He waits quite a while and then he says this, "Nothing to say." Let's open our Bibles and hear from the living God. Who has made a promise in Jesus Christ of eternal life and unending hope.

You won't find that in science, my friend. You won't find that in other world religions. You'll only find it in Jesus Christ. And we urge you to put your trust in Him today like that man in the story. God's a timely God. He'll meet you today where you are, he'll bring salvation. He'll present you the hope of Jesus Christ. And as he reaches down, you reach up and you'll be saved forever. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for our time this morning. And as we've just taken an hour together and expounded the word, we're dealing with stuff that began before time. We're talking about a promise that was hatched in the mind of an eternal God, was spoken to between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. And that plan has now gone public in the Gospel. That promise of the Old Testament has been fulfilled.

We thank you for our Lord Jesus. We thank you for what he did on our behalf. We thank you, he's paid for our sin. That he's conquered the grave, he's offered us life. And I pray today, Lord, you'll save and save many, and save abundantly and save gloriously.

For those of us that are saved, may our lives accord to godliness and may we live in the abundant hope of the gospel. And may this pulpit forever be founded upon preaching the priority of preaching, and the press of preaching and the power of preaching for Jesus' sake. Amen.