

Preachers,
Wake Up!

Preachers, Wake Up!

A Call to Restore Biblical Preaching

J. J. Turner, Ph.D.

Publishing Designs, Inc.
Huntsville, Alabama

Publishing Designs, Inc.
P.O. Box 3241
Huntsville, Alabama 35810

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To Bill Stewart—

Thank you for being a friend and encourager.
I deeply appreciate your commitment
to the preaching of the gospel
and the training of preachers.
I remember your outstanding ability
as a freshman student in homiletics,
so many years ago.

Who Should Read This Book?

It would be too simplistic to say that everyone needs to read this book. This volume is designed to counter the erosion of biblical preaching, and to call for both pulpit and pew to reexamine the state of preaching in the church. It is a plea to restore biblical preaching.

I assume the whole church is interested in preaching. This is evidenced by the tremendous emphasis placed on having the position filled in every congregation. Churches want the best preachers they can get. But sadly, in many cases, well-trained and zealous men aren't available. This means that more and more churches are settling for anyone who can make his way to the pulpit and go through the motions of preaching. This practice is questionable, especially when the preacher isn't committed to restoring biblical preaching because he doesn't know how.

This book, therefore, is not just for preachers. It is for every Christian. After all, who endures more preaching than the person in the pew? Members need to know when they're being shortchanged. Every Christian needs to know what biblical preaching is, so they will never settle for less.

This book is also for the man who is wrestling with God's calling on his life. He needs to know that God is looking for dedication, not degrees; for obedience, not oratory greatness; for servants, not superstars. He needs men who will leave their fishing nets, tax tables, and medicine bags to follow Jesus in the ministry of preaching (cf. Mark 1:38).

This book is for the man who feels it's too late to return to the arena of foolishness. God needs men who will come from the backside of the mountain, like Moses, and accept the challenge of rekindling a passion to preach.

It's never too late to do good. This book seeks to reignite the flame.

This book is for the spouse of a preacher. It will give insight into why he can't do anything else but preach the Word

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of God. He has fire in his bones. His passion can only be satisfied one way—by preaching. He must study long and hard to have the right message for those who come to hear a word from God. He has a sacred trust he must honor.

This book is for the men who are preparing to preach the Word. There are days when you will wonder if it's worth it. The hard work, sacrifice, and frustrations send a message to retreat. The flesh wants to return to the comforts of Egypt, but the soul says the struggle in the wilderness of preparation is worth it. You must prepare yourself to lead God's people to the Promised Land.

This book is for the man who refuses to live another day as a just-get-by preacher and who refuses to give God less than his best. Preaching demands commitment from the heart and soul.

This book is for elders who have the task of selecting preachers to assist them in feeding the flock. Never hire an ice cube to set fire under the brethren. Never let a man walk into the pulpit who is not committed to biblical preaching. This book will help you recognize a biblical preacher with fire in his bones.

This book is for the man who wants to be on the cutting edge of using God's power in the preaching event. It contains how-to material for making good preaching better. Above all, it seeks to throw more fuel on the fire in the bones of God's man, so he will glow with the presence of the Lord in his preaching.

This book is for the man who wants to come face-to-face with himself on the deeper plains of spirituality. A willingness to expose self to the mirror of God's Word is the beginning of self-renewal. If we never accept a challenge or stretch ourselves out of our comfort zones, we will never grow or become better than we are at this moment. If we keep doing the same old things, we will continue to get the same old results.

If you are a Christian this book is for you! Let's all become souls aflame for preaching the Word of God to a lost and dying world, and to a church that needs resurrecting to her mission. Your spark will make a difference as it is fueled into a raging inferno in your bones.

It's time to wake up!

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Preface

Did you hear the one about the preacher who asked a listener in his audience to wake up the sleeping man sitting beside him? To which the man replied, “Preacher, you come down here and wake him up! You put him to sleep!” Sadly, this little story rings true in numerous congregations across the land. Sunday after Sunday people are given Sominex sermons and drift into la-la land. Preachers asleep in the pulpit put people to sleep in the pew.

Preaching in the twenty-first century is in trouble; not from biblical authorization but from the poor quality that’s being passed off as preaching. It has become a true proverb: “People are cold in the pew because there is an ice cube in the pulpit.”

Preaching has always been trouble. Paul wrote,

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:18–21).

The biblical admonition to “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:1–7) has been lost today in the maze of postmodern homiletics and diets of watered-down, so-called sermons.

We have abandoned the prophetic voice of the preacher in exchange for the storyteller. The Bible has become a book to launch from and not a book to dig deep into. Homiletics has gone through as many changes in the last twenty years as the Chrysler assembly line, and the changes just keep on coming.

It’s time for preachers to wake up! This Sunday, and every Sunday, they have about thirty minutes to raise the dead (Ephesians 2:12–13). It will not be done with pea shooters filled with nice platitudes, and words designed to tickle itching ears. It will take God’s dynamite—the gospel of the cross—preached with power and conviction (Romans 1:14–16). Last-minute downloaded Internet sermons must be exchanged for a season locked in God’s Word with the midnight oil digging out

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eternal truths for hearers. When the preacher speaks, the message will ring with a “thus says the Lord.”

The church commissioned to bring God glory (Ephesians 3:21) is drifting in a sea of indifference, bargain-basement religion, and theological gumbo. Members are abandoning the battleship for the cruise ship. Relativism has stormed her decks and she is without a true rudder and clarion voice crying for all men to repent (Acts 17:30–31). She has been changed by society instead of changing society. Pluralism denies the oneness created by obedience to the gospel (Ephesians 4:1–6).

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There has been a “dumbing down” of the church. She is fitted into the template of Hosea's day: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6–8). Social studies have replaced the study of sin. Pop psychology has replaced broken hearts and repentance.

Where are the Stephens, Pauls, and Peters who'll dare tell it like it is? Boldness has been replaced by political correctness and “don't rock the boat” attitudes. How drastically different from first-century preachers of whom it was said:

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

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The Great Commission has been reduced to the “Great Suggestion” or “Great Omission” (cf. Matthew 28:18–20). The command to preach the gospel to every creature has been exchanged for “tickling the ears” of the rent and salary payers. A job is more important than the joy from preaching the Word; pleasing is preferred to pain from suffering for the gospel's sake.

Preachers, wake up! All is not lost. Preaching is in need of fresh air and a blood transfusion that can come only from a return to God and His Word. This book is written to help sound the alarm for that return. It's a wake-up call for preachers.

Preachers, Wake Up! is the third book in a series of wake-up calls for church leaders. The two previous volumes are *Shepherds, Wake Up!* and *Deacons, Wake Up!*

Preface

After more than forty years of preaching and thirty years of training preachers, I know that not all preachers need a wake-up call. In fact, some are working so hard they need to be encouraged to take a break (cf. Mark 6:31) or a nap to rest their tired bodies. This book is an attempt to encourage all of us to refocus our energies and attention on the great need to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:1–7); to make good preaching even better. Every generation of preachers must restore biblical preaching, preaching that imitates Jesus, Paul, and Peter.

The state of preaching will not change until those who do it change their thinking about preaching. The Bible calls this repentance. This book is not another homiletic thesis exploring the mechanics of sermon preparation but an attempt to rekindle, or set for the first time, fire in the bones of every preacher for preaching the Word with power, zeal, and conviction (cf. Jeremiah 20:9). It is a wake-up call to restore biblical preaching.

Temperature Check

It is time to take your temperature. Please prayerfully answer the following self-examination.

1. Where would you identify your present state of passion for preaching? (circle one):

Red Hot 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Ice Cold

2. How do you think others view your preaching?

excellent good average fair poor bad

3. What is the average amount of time you spend preparing your sermons?

_____ hours _____ minutes

4. What books have you recently read on preaching?

5. When was the last time you studied sermon preparation and delivery in a class setting or in private study?

6. What is your greatest strength as a preacher?

7. What is your greatest weakness as a preacher?

8. To what extent do you believe you can improve?

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- a great amount
- a little
- somewhat
- very little

9. What is your greatest need as a preacher?
10. How often do you evaluate your sermons by listening to recordings of them?

weekly monthly rarely never other

11. Rank the following areas by how much you need growth in the area (1–10).

<input type="checkbox"/> delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> body language
<input type="checkbox"/> enthusiasm	<input type="checkbox"/> gestures
<input type="checkbox"/> diction	<input type="checkbox"/> pronunciation
<input type="checkbox"/> content	<input type="checkbox"/> exegesis
<input type="checkbox"/> grammar	<input type="checkbox"/> variety
<input type="checkbox"/> vocal tone	<input type="checkbox"/> outlining
<input type="checkbox"/> Bible knowledge	

12. In twenty-five words or less, write what you think about preaching.
13. Write your evaluation of your temperature check.

Introduction

Don't Let the Fire Go Out

Every Sunday morning around eleven o'clock at the First Street Church, Any Town, U.S.A., the congregation releases her captive, bored, and weary saints. They have once again done their duty. Another church service has been checked off. One by one, members file out, expressing thoughtless remarks to the preacher about how much they enjoyed his sermon. Next week, almost no one will remember what was said in the preaching event, not even the preacher.

Within the bones of most Christians, a small flame flickers. Most don't know their souls are struggling to survive, gasping for spiritual oxygen to stay alive. Some have come to the spiritual filling station for high octane fuel from God's Word. After all, that is one of the reasons for attending the assembly: "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). That's why Christians don't want to miss the assembly (Hebrews 10:25). The man up front in the pulpit must be the stirrer-upper. What a challenge for any preacher, but especially the one who has let his fire go out.

Instead of high octane, though, they are given a few drops of kerosene to run their spiritual turbojets for the rest of the week. During the week their turbojets struggle to climb faith's hills with power; they attempt to move mountains with spoons and soar with eagles on wings of turkeys.

After a quick lunch at McFasts, the spiritual warriors limp home once again to occupy seats in front of the TV, to become mindless spectators of a make-believe world, or to watch men wrestle for a ball in the mud. High drama for soldiers of Christ. Out of a selection of 200-plus channels, surely there must be something more exciting than the preaching event they have endured that morning. In about five hours, the faithful of those churches who still have Sunday night services will have to grapple with the questions: Do we have to go back and listen

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to Brother Boring again? For about half of those members, the answer is easy: No!

There is no great consolation in pointing out that such brethren have a bad attitude or that they are not spiritual. Both sides of the preaching event must shoulder some blame for what has happened. In this study we're concerned with the pulpit side of the event—the preacher and his preaching—to give a wake-up call encouraging him to return to dynamic, exciting, Bible-based preaching.

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Unless you have been in a coma for years, or have been on a visit to another planet, or it's your first day as a preacher, you know preaching has fallen on tough times. Fewer people want to hear what you have to say; fewer people want to do what you say; and fewer seem to care at all what you say. Sound somewhat discouraging? After more than forty years of preaching, I say yes, it's very discouraging. That is why preachers must return to their first love and start doing it well, with fire in their bones.

A cloud of staleness hovers over the pews of the land. People who have had a good night's sleep suddenly find themselves fighting to stay awake during the preaching event. They are constantly comparing the preacher to pitchmen and entertainers on television. Hearers are frustrated because they can't use their channel selectors to see if something better is playing on another station. To get something from a sermon you have to listen and concentrate. Pew sitters have been trained to do just the opposite: mindless watching TV with the power to change channels if they don't feel entertained. Neither speaker nor hearer realizes what's happening in the "sacred hour."

Whom shall we blame? I say the preacher. Why? He's the professional communicator in the event. He must know the challenges he faces in a world of changing communication techniques. But the matter goes much deeper. It goes to the preacher's heart and soul—the fire in the bones.

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The fall-out among preachers is staggering, and the wrong enemy is being blamed for their exodus. The trained and tal-

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ented are looking for motels along boulevards or an MLM plan that will set them free. Those who are hanging on are wondering if they'll make it until "retirement" time. No, preaching isn't for the faint of heart!

Preachers spend hours preparing messages of life to deliver to people—people, for the most part, who won't give a second thought to applying what is taught to their lives. Again, we face a potential trap. The issue is not so much one of content, which is very important, but one of heart—passion for preaching the Word—which comes through loudly and clearly either by its presence or absence in a delivery. People know.

Pulpits are filled with bodies that have lost heart, eyes that no longer see possibilities, and spirits made cold by ice cubes in the pews. Pulpits and pews have the same book, but they are on different pages, each blaming the other.

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I know what you're thinking. Not all preachers are like the ones I'm describing. You are absolutely right. But even if there were only one like any of those I've mentioned, that's one too many, and he needs to be lovingly revived and retrained for ministry.

Preachers tend to resent any reflection of their vocation. I know, because I've been preaching for more than forty years. Some of my most heated discussions with my wife have occurred on Sunday afternoons while driving home from a session of persecuting the saints in the preaching event. She loves me enough to tell me the truth: "Your preaching is slipping" (and scores of other truths I need to hear about my preaching).

Since I've got my pride left over as baggage from my sojourn in the flesh, I'm quick to tell her why she doesn't know what she's talking about. But 99.9 percent of the time, she does. So I repent (i.e. "change my mind") and vow to myself to do better, which I do for a while, and then the challenge pops up again.

I need this book as much as any reader does. Its message is one that points a finger at you while at the same time points three back at me. It doesn't matter that my last sermon was a success or that in the good old days I preached like the apostle

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Paul. Today is the day of challenge. Will I put my heart and soul into my next message? Will I speak like the prophets of old?

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There aren't many heritages older than preaching. It was begun on earth by men called by God to speak His messages. My personal opinion is that God was the first Preacher. Why? He taught Adam and Eve His positive divine laws. In fact, His "preaching" underscores all the preaching in the Bible. To preach is to act and to speak like God. Take a few seconds and let that thought sink in.

Because preaching is ordained by God and practiced by God, it must of necessity occupy a high and noble place in His priorities in the universe. God pays attention to preaching! He knows how it ought to be.

Godly preaching, at best, has never been popular for very long at a time, especially among the masses. Sinners don't want to be exposed to the truth, and they certainly don't want to be told what to do. Pleasure is more popular than repentance. A personal cause is more exciting than confession of wrongs; men tend to love darkness more than light.

It takes a special breed to tell the truth when it will cost sleepless nights and frustration of the soul. Most hides aren't tough enough to withstand the cuts of sarcasm and the spears of spurn created by preaching the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). In an age of bloated intellectualism, academia, and narcissistic pursuits, no one in his right mind, we're being told, wants to be engaged in the foolishness of preaching. Herein lies the paradox. A new mind, which is molded after the mind of Christ, is the only mind-set able to withstand the rejection and pressure created by preaching.

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Many churches have gone through, or are in the midst of going through a Rip van Winkle experience. While they have been asleep, a number of changes have occurred. These changes have even slipped by the clarion voice and eyes of the preacher.

The healing balm has been stolen from Gilead. It has been replaced with remedies that aren't curative; in fact, in many

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cases the patient has gotten worse. Sin has been excused as an unfortunate consequence stemming from abuses received in the past. Parents, friends, siblings and others are the cause of our misconduct.

Church has become big business and can't be run by amateurs. Churchanity has replaced Christianity. The bottom line is success measured by numbers and the whims of the members. Churches are looking for managers and program directors instead of men grounded in the Word of God.

It's later than it has ever been in the Lord's church. We need a wake-up call from proclaimers of the Word. In the words of Paul, "It is high time to awake out of sleep" (Romans 13:11). Only a restoration of biblical preaching can properly sound the alarm. Only the Word of God can awaken us to a life of righteousness and ministry.

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In many congregations the patient has been misdiagnosed. At first he was thought to have an economic problem. But owning and having hasn't healed the heart. In many cases it has only made things worse.

Some have insisted that his disease was caused by low self-esteem. A sure cure will result from listening to messages about success and self-worth. Wrong!

We've never had more money; neither have we ever been so poor, spiritually speaking. We've never had a higher level of education, but our biblical ignorance has never been higher (Hosea 4:6–8). We've never had more to eat, but never have our hearts been hungrier. We've never had more messages that bombard our awareness on a daily basis; neither have we ever had so many unanswered questions on our hearts.

We are groping in a world of darkness, trying to illuminate the way with light powered by batteries that can't do much more than keep a bunny running. We are staggering on the edge of darkness (cf. 1 John 5:19).

If God is depending on some preachers I know, He is in trouble. They have resigned their commissions while still earning their salaries. They are creating an artificial itch to go with the snake oil they are peddling.

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If God strapped some preachers to a spiritual lie detector and examined the true desires of their hearts, I wonder what the results would be. I'm sure some would be glad the results couldn't be used in court against them. If it was against the law to preach the gospel, too many of our pulpits would have nothing to worry about. They are gospel-less.

A fire gone out is difficult to rekindle. A new fire must be ignited. Do you at least have a pilot light burning in your heart for preaching the Word? God wants to reset your spiritual thermostat to 105 degrees. This will produce a fever in your bones, and you can't ignore a high fever (cf. Jeremiah 20:9). It'll move you to action. And the good news about this holy fever is that it never has to wane; it will only grow hotter.

For Thought and Discussion

1. Why has preaching fallen on hard times?
2. Why are so many preachers quitting preaching?
3. Why do preachers need a wakeup call?
4. How do changes impact preaching?
5. What one intentional thing will you do with this lesson?

CHAPTER

1

Restoring Biblical Preaching

The simple truth is that if biblical preaching were easy, more men would be doing it. Contrary to the thinking of some, preaching is hard work because it empties the mind, heart, soul, and body of its energy. After a session of preaching the Word with power, zeal, and conviction, a preacher is near exhaustion. No other work requires the giving of so much emotional and physical energy. God always tells it like it is. He has made it clear in His Word that preaching requires all we are, or ever hope to be. He uses many metaphors to describe His servants who labor in the Word. Here are a few.

Preachers are soldiers of Christ, sent on a mission of warfare in a hostile world. One of the world's greatest preachers said,

You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier (2 Timothy 2:2-3).

A soldier who has a split allegiance won't be effective in a battle. Preaching must be the central thing in a man's heart. He cannot, must not, and will not, stop preaching the Word. His one desire is to please his Commander and Chief, Jesus Christ, who was also a preacher (Mark 1:38). Soldiering by its very nature demands hardship and discomfort. Things aren't the way they were back home. Only the trained fighters survive the onslaughts of the evil one. Only watchmen for God sound the alarm, as well as march into battle.

Toward the end of his life the great preacher from Tarsus wrote:

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For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:6–8).

Prior to these valedictory remarks, Paul had charged Timothy to preach the Word (4:1–6). That meant God's Word as recorded in the Bible, not human opinions or speculations. Imagine for a moment that we have, stretched out on a table before us, a dead spiritual man. He needs to be brought back to life. How may he be resurrected to walk in newness of life? Let's imagine that assembled before us is an audience of varied professionals, all claiming to have the power to raise the dead spiritual man. One by one these men come and stand over the dead man, speaking "words of power" from their belief systems.

The first is a philosopher. He speaks long, complicated words about the search and meaning of truth. He quotes from Plato, Socrates, and other Greeks. He even uses logical equations. The dead man doesn't rise! He remains "dead in trespasses and sins," separated from God (cf. Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 59:1–3).

Next, an educator comes and speaks facts from his vast field of knowledge. He believes by educating the man, he will rise to a new life. Not so! Spiritual death still holds the sinner as the educator walks away.

A man of psychology comes and stands over the dead man. He attempts to take the dead man back into his past to discover how it has influenced his present condition; he can even blame his parents. Through hours of therapy the counselor promises a new life for the dead man. Low self-esteem is the only sin problem the man has, according to the doctor of psychology. Wrong! Psychology can't raise the spiritually dead man to a new life in Jesus Christ.

The next man is a stockbroker. He preaches that the dead man's problem is that he doesn't have enough financial resources to enjoy the good life. He presents several business

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opportunities designed to raise the dead man to a new standard of life. Independence is what the dead man needs. The dead man, spiritually speaking, doesn't even move a finger. He's still lost!

A politician is the next one to come, promising hope of life for the dead man—a new deal. He shares many great programs from Washington. By now, however, we all know that the dead can't raise the dead.

Day after day we watch as people attempt to raise the spiritually dead man. Finally, a small, frail, stooped man emerges from the back of the crowd. He isn't very pleasant to look at, and his speech leaves a lot to be desired. In a hoarse, weak voice he says: “God loves you . . . I am not ashamed on the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . . As it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:14–17).

The spiritually dead man hears the good news, the gospel, and is moved to convictions. He embraces faith and forgiveness offered by God through the gospel, is baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), and is raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1–9).

Nothing under heaven has the power to save a lost sinner but the gospel of Jesus Christ, so why would a preacher preach anything else? The gospel must be preached. It is the basis of all biblical preaching to a lost world and a reminder message for the church (1 Corinthians 15:1–7).

Restoration of Biblical Preaching

We must restore biblical preaching! This is the core wake-up call for preachers. We have no choice if we intend to please God and change the destiny of men and churches. I am using these words, *restoration of biblical preaching*, in the following ways:

Restoration: The action of restoring to its original state or use something that has been neglected, damaged, or abused.

Biblical: That which pertains to the Bible and is contained in the Bible, as well as that which keeps with the nature of the Bible.

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Preaching: To give a sermon; to speak a lesson from the Word of God; to instruct the lost and saved in Bible principles, and to expound upon God's will.

Obviously, these aren't deep theological definitions of these words but, rather, working definitions that should be understandable to all who read this book.

Why Do We Need to Restore Biblical Preaching?

In order to hear a wake-up call to restore biblical preaching, we must have a clear understanding of why it must be restored. Here are some major reasons we must work on restoring biblical preaching:

- It is the command of God (2 Timothy 4:1–6).
- It is the core of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15–16).
- It imitates Jesus (Mark 1:38).
- It is the only preaching that can save souls (Romans 1:14–16).
- It is the only preaching that can edify the church (Ephesians 4:11–16).
- It plants the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11).
- It guards against error.
- It prevents the “woes” of God from being pronounced upon us (1 Corinthians 9:16).
- It has contact with the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 4:11–13).
- It glorifies God (Ephesians 3:21).
- It has been neglected in our day.
- It is the preaching for which people are hungering (Matthew 5:6).
- It is the only preaching that restores New Testament Christianity.
- It is the only preaching that meets the needs of mankind (2 Peter 1:3).
- It is the preaching that God uses as the standard of judgment (John 12:48; Romans 2:16).
- It is the only preaching that contains God's power (Romans 1:14–16).

Around these reasons we may build a powerful and scriptural case for restoring biblical preaching. It is my plea that

these serve as wake-up calls for preachers and members of the body of Christ to join hands and build a mighty preaching force for the Prince of preachers, Jesus Christ.

What Is Biblical Preaching?

An aged Christian, when asked what he thought about what makes a good sermon, said, “I ain’t sure about all the fancy words to describe it, but I knows it when I hears it.” When the Word of God is being preached in its power and simplicity, you know it. It rings with a “thus saith the Lord.”

Obviously, before you can practice biblical preaching or restore biblical preaching, you must know what it is. A careful look at the Scriptures reveals that biblical preaching involves many things.

- *Biblical preaching is exegetical.* It comes from, and centers around a Bible text and explains what is in the passage. We see this exemplified in Philip’s preaching to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–40. When Philip asked him if he understood the portion of Isaiah he was reading, the eunuch replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” After being invited to join him in the chariot, Philip “opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him” (cf. Acts 8:31, 35). The result was the baptism of the eunuch (Acts 8:38–40).
- *Biblical preaching involves the world’s greatest partnership.* Here is how the apostle Paul affirmed this truth: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he that waters, but God who gives the increase . . . For we are God’s fellow workers” (1 Corinthians 3:3–9). When we preach the Word we are working with God. What a wonderful truth. No other partnership has greater blessings than this one. Biblical preaching is God’s redemptive avenue to reach the lost and edify the church. The preacher is God’s voice on earth.
- *Biblical preaching demands a preaching of the whole counsel of God.* In his farewell speech to the elders of the

Preachers, Wake Up

Ephesian church, Paul affirmed that he had covered all God wanted him to preach: “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). When you preach biblically, you cover every subject from A to Z (2 Timothy 4:1–6).

- *Biblical preaching lifts up Christ as the drawing power.* This is in harmony with what the Master taught: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32). This is why Paul said, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2; cf. 15:1–7). There are all kinds of nominal drawing powers marching through pulpits. None of them, not even all of them together, can draw a man to salvation. Jesus claimed this right for Himself (John 12:32; cf. Matthew 1:21; 26:28).
- *Biblical preaching is bold proclamation of the Word of God, even when such proclamation is not popular.* God hasn’t called His mouths to be timid or shy. The writer of Proverbs reminds us that the “righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1; cf. 2 Timothy 1:9). Boldness was one of the obvious traits of first-century preachers (Acts 4:11–13).

In the first group of preachers trained and commissioned by Christ, one particular characteristic stood out when they came to town—their boldness in face of all opposition. These preachers had caught the spirit of boldness of their leader, Jesus Christ. When you’re preaching the Word of God, and not human opinions, you can be bold. We have a bold message—one way (John 14:6). We have a bold God; we have a bold Savior; we have a bold mission. Therefore, let’s wake up! Let’s get sold on being bold.

- *Biblical preaching is speaking the truth in love* (Ephesians 4:15). One person said, “When you tell me I am lost, at least you could have a tear in your eye.” There is no place for being un-Christlike in sharing the Word of God. People don’t care how much we know, until they know how much

Restoring Biblical Preaching

we care. While we must preach with passion, we must also demonstrate compassion.

- *Biblical preaching stems from a heart committed to glorifying God.* All facets of biblical preaching relate to this objective of preaching. There can be no higher purpose for preaching than to bring honor and glory to God (Ephesians 3:21). When a preacher opens his mouth to proclaim words of life, he does so, not for personal glory, but for the glory of God.

Many other characteristics exemplify biblical preaching. I have another dozen on a list before me but I won't use them. The seven I have used serve as a core for the rest that will be covered in one way or another in this book.

Let's Take a Trip

Continue with me on an exciting exploration of our heritage. Regardless of where your thermostat is presently set, if you will open your heart to the message of this book, you will have a brighter fire burning in your bones for the Master's preaching assignment. This is your wake-up call. Heed it!

Great examples ought to inspire us to action. We have the best! In this study we're going to explore some of the great spokesmen—prophets and preachers—presented in the Bible. Men like Amos, Jeremiah, and Jonah will increase the heat in our souls for preaching the Word.

Preachers, wake up!

For Thought and Discussion

1. How difficult is preaching? Why?
2. How does 2 Timothy 4:1–7 relate to preaching today?
3. Why do we need to restore biblical preaching today?
4. How biblical is your preaching?
5. What one intentional thing will you practice from this chapter?

CHAPTER

2

Who Owns the Preaching Business?

Preaching! Have you ever wondered who dreamed up the idea of preaching? This is a silly question for the learned theologian as well as for the nominal Bible student. All of us know preaching was God's idea, don't we? If we do, then the real question is this: Do we always act as if preaching originated with God? Some preachers act as though preaching originated with them; they're the franchise owners or managers of the business.

A preacher was asked by his elders if a young student from a Christian college could preach while he was home for the holidays. The preacher replied, "You know how I feel about my pulpit. I had rather he didn't. Maybe he could speak to the teens in Bible class."

"My pulpit!" How can a man of God have the nerve to make such a statement? Whether by intent or by a lack of thoughtfulness, it is contrary to what God says about preaching.

Preaching is for exalting God, not the preacher. The pulpit belongs to God, and the man standing in it does so because he has received a calling from God. Everything in the preaching event belongs to God: the message, the preacher, the hearers, the power, the glory, and the results.

God's glory is on display when the Word is preached. His wisdom is seen in preaching. He is robbed when substitutes are presented in the guise of biblical preaching. Only an arrogant man would dare place his agenda above God's command and demands relative to preaching.