

## THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Taught by Don Maurer

Session: September 16, 2011

*NOTE: All Scripture referenced in this document is copied from the NIV version (1984).*

**Don:** Let's come before the Lord right now in prayer. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we come this morning to worship you, to adore you. Lord, indeed, you are sovereign. Father, it's been said that history is His story. It's your story. Father, we thank you that you have taken us out of the miry clay, that you have indeed raised us from the dead, spiritually, that you have rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Father, we have many requests here; too many, Lord to name individually, but Father, we do bring all of these cares and concerns and people to you. We ask, Father, that you would help us to bring them to our memory as the week goes on, Lord, that we may pray diligently for all of these people who have been raised up to you. We ask, Heavenly Father, now that you would instruct us in your Word, that Father, what I would say would be completely from you, and Father, that if there's anything that I have said, which is not, that you would nullify it and only your truth would shine. For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bruce had asked me last week to kind of spin off a little bit of what he started last week about the importance of Scriptural, expository Scriptural preaching and teaching, so I thought I'd do that and take a little bit of a different turn, talking about the wonderful treasure that we have in the Word of God, and what it's useful for. I've entitled it on your handout, What's the Word For Anyway?

Let me just make a few brief introductory remarks. I couldn't help but reflect about, let me just say this, that I am coming, and some of you, maybe most of you, know this, I am coming from a slightly different perspective than Bruce in that I am part of a denomination. However, I'm sure that no matter which church you attend, you will find this hopefully profitable.

I couldn't help but reflect on our culture and the way it regards Scripture. There was something on the news, I think a survey in London, about what people couldn't live without. Well, sunshine was number one, the Internet was number two, and Facebook was number five. I wonder where Scripture came in on that. I don't think the Bible probably was mentioned.

I can't help but also reflect about the Bible in our culture and how it's regarded. I remember when I was little, and I used to watch *The Rifleman*. Maybe some of you young people wouldn't know what I'm talking about. Some of you older guys would know. Lucas McCain was my hero. I wanted to grow up to be like him and shoot all those bad guys. There was an episode, I have a buddy who was really into those old Westerns, and thanks to that wonderful technological thing called YouTube, you can watch the old episodes on there. So I watched one, and Lucas was telling his son, Mark, about the Book of Job. For a secular program, and only for about a minute's worth of telling the story, I think he did a pretty decent job, Job, whatever.

*Audience Member: Did you watch it? Was it in black and white?*

Yes. No. It was only in black. {LAUGHTER} I just couldn't help but contrast that with the way the culture, and even, I'm sorry to say, many segments of the church regard Scripture. Very lightly, at the best, and with contempt at the worst. So I'm hoping, today, to give us just an appreciation, again, of the marvelous treasure that God has given us. Isn't it something, that God, in his grace and mercy, with no deserve on our part, gives us this book? Written by over, I don't know my dates very well, probably about a 1,600 year period, with all kinds of different people—shepherds, farmers, teams, fishermen, theologians like the Apostle Paul, and all different kinds of literature, where we can just dip into it and

read it and it's our, it should be, our meat and our drink.

General revelation, that is, the revelation of God and creation, can tell us a lot of things—that God is all powerful and almighty, but the one thing that it can't do is that it cannot give us the knowledge that is necessary to know God intimately, and it cannot give us the knowledge of salvation. General revelation condemns us, according to Romans 1, but only the special revelation of God, holy, inerrant and infallible Word can give us the knowledge of God and the knowledge of salvation.

The Westminster Confession, also the 39 Articles, they also talk about Scripture and what the Bible is all about. I just want to read you a little segment here. The Westminster Confession says this—that the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, that is its effectiveness of it, the majesty of the style. Can you compare, for example, what could be compared to the Sermon on the Mount or the love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 or the majesty of Psalm 23 or all the Psalms? The consent of all the parts. Scripture is one message—66 books, but one message. The scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, and the many other incomparable excellencies and the entire perfection thereof are arguments whereby it, evidence itself to be the Word of God. Now I know this is the King's English, but I don't think that it's ever been expressed in a human document any better than that. Of course, we know that, for those outside of Christ, it takes the inward work of the Holy Spirit to illuminate people to the glorious Scripture.

What I want to do as our springboard, I want to read 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Here it is. I use the NIV. It's not my favorite translation, but I used it because I think it says it very, very well, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful," and I put profitable in parentheses, "for teaching," or doctrine, "rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Now I'll come back to that a little bit later, but I want to talk, first of all, in our lesson this morning, about what Scripture teaches about itself. Scripture has a lot to say about itself, and I know some people say, "Well, that's circular reasoning. You're using the Bible to defend the Bible." Well, I think that, though, who else are we going to turn to for God's wisdom. Only God can give us that wisdom, and so let's dig in.

Psalm 138:2a—you have it on your handout. Would someone read that for us.

***Audience Member:** I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.*

Okay. Alright. Thou hast magnified thy Word above all thy Name. Other translations say that God has magnified above all things His Name and His Word. I think that's significant. It shows God's own regard for his Word.

I think of 2 Peter 1:16-19. It's not on your handout. Peter is talking about the fact that we didn't follow cleverly devised myths or fables when we saw, or were talking about our experience with Jesus. He's saying, "You know, folks, this isn't a fairy tale. I'll send the rest of the guys... we didn't take and eat some wacky mushrooms one day, or we didn't smoke something. We really experienced this. We really experienced Jesus up on that Mount of Transfiguration. We saw Moses and Elijah, people that we only heard about. We experienced all of this." And he said, "And we heard that voice on the mountain that said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'" But when, verse 19, you know what he said? He says this, "And now we have the prophetic Word made even more sure." You know what

Peter's saying here? He's saying that this Word, this book that you have in your hands, is even more sure than that voice that we heard on that mountain, and that experience that we had. That is just absolutely precious.

I remember...what Luke 16 says, "Jesus," talking about the account of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man's in hell, "Oh, please send someone to my brothers to rescue them from this place of torment," and does Abraham say, "Well they have Moses and the prophets, the Old Testament Scripture, but the [UNCLEAR] says, "Oh no! No! Father Abraham. If someone goes from the dead to them, they will repent. They'll listen." "No. If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, if they don't believe this Word, of Scripture, they're not going to believe even if someone rises from the dead and they see it." They say seeing is believing, but that's not necessarily true, is it?

We had to remember...we often talk about how terrible it is to take the Lord's name in vain. What we usually think of when we think of taking the Lord's name in vain is swearing—cussing, cursing—that kind of thing. But you know, we can take the name of the Lord in vain in many ways. One of the ways that we do it is by not believing his Word, or not holding his Word in the esteem that it deserves to be held. I'm not talking about worshipping the book itself, like it were an idol or something, but if God holds above everything his name and his Word, don't you think that we ought to do that, too?

Psalms 19:7-11—very good passage. Could someone read that for us please.

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

Thank you, Bill. I'll just comment on a couple of these. Notice what it says, "The law," and I think by extension, the Word of the Lord, all of it, "is perfect, converting the soul." What is it that the Lord uses in the conversion of a person? It's not an experience. It's not some vision or something. It's the preaching of the Word. The Word of the Lord is perfect.

Now today, a lot of people put their belief and trust in science. Science says it. Science says the world is billions of years old and evolution is true, so it must be true. Science says it. People put their trust in science rather than in this perfect Word. But scientists make mistakes, don't they? I remember whenever I was going, "Coffee is no good for you. You shouldn't drink coffee. It can stunt your growth. It can cause cancer. All that caffeine racing around in your blood stream...not good for you," and now what are they saying? Coffee's good for you. You should have a couple of cups a day. Its has lots of antioxidants, and tea does, too, and everything like that. Or butter. Oh no, margarine. You must eat margarine, they were telling us. Butter is all fatty and yucky, and now margarine is not good for you. You know, the scientists are not perfect, but this Word is.

Now I just want to ask you a question just to ponder. If this Word is perfect, then isn't it sufficient? If this word is perfect, then why do we want to have sermons about movie reviews or other things that don't have anything to do with Scripture. If Scripture is perfect, is it perfect to help people in difficulties with relationships? Difficulties at work? Difficulties in marriage? What people call addictions? Or do we need psychology or psychiatry? Just putting it on the table there. I'm not trying to offend anyone or step on toes, but I'm just asking us to ponder that. That Word of God is perfect.

It says that the testimony of the Lord is sure. There is nothing certain in this world, is there? With 9/11

fresh on our minds...ten years ago, none of those people who woke up that Tuesday morning thought that what was going to happen was going to happen. Sudden unemployment. Sudden disease. Some of you have shared that this morning. Just anything that happens to us. We don't know what a day brings. But you know what? The Lord does. He has earmarked all of it, He not only knows, but he is in control of it, and there is nothing more sure in this world, in this universe, than the testimony of the Word of God. When God says it, you can take it to the bank. When God says that your sins are forgiven for his name's sake, believe it! When God says that you are complete in Christ, believe it. It's settled.

It says it makes wise the simple. Now I hate to tell you this, but simple there does not mean humble; it means stupid. {LAUGHTER} I remember whenever I was little and I was reading some fairy tales and stuff. The word simpleton—we don't use that; it's not politically correct anymore to say that. We call somebody a simple...people used to call people simpletons. It makes wise the simple. We all need to be instructed. We're all dumb up here sometimes as regarding spiritual things. The unbeliever, the Bible calls a fool. But we need this sure Word of God.

Its statutes of the Lord are right, judging the heart. Judging the heart. Convicting us of our sin. Convicting us. It rejoices the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. More to be desired are they than gold. Now if there's anything that this world, be it Wall Street or anything, covets is gold and money and prestige. But the Word of God is more to be desired than all of those things. What's that old gospel hymn? I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold. I'd rather have Jesus than riches untold. Amen, and amen. Yeah. It's more to be desired than anything.

I can't help but think of all, of course, now that football season has started, all the Steeler coverage. Of course, you have 24-hour sports stations, but you know, two or three of hours of warm-up before the game begins. Talking about every possible play, everything that could go wrong, everything that could go right. And then, afterward, you have two or three hours of post-game analysis. I think, okay, what can you say that hasn't already been said? {LAUGHTER} But, do we have that kind of esteem for this Word of God? Do we desire it more than gold? More than food? Why do people fast? Because it's a time to reflect and study and be with the Lord and his Word.

Hebrews 4:12, could someone read that for us please.

***Audience Member:** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Okay. Again, personal conviction. I don't know about you, but I know, myself, when I read something in Scripture, and something particularly after a sin that I've committed that day, something I might have said that I shouldn't have said to someone or whatever, "Oh my! Lord, did I really do that? Did I really say that? Is that something...? Or thoughts. Often times, the sins in our lives aren't the action, but those thoughts, those filthy thoughts that are just not worthy of the Lord. Bruce Bickel says that when a thought like that comes in, "Oh Lord, please take that away from me. I don't want to think that." Well see, that's the power of the Word of God isn't it? What other book? What other writing can do that? There's lots of great books out there, but only the Word of God can do what Hebrews 4:12 says, piercing even between the, division of soul and spirit. That's a metaphor there. Piercing the heart, like it did in the day of Pentecost when Peter preached the Word, and "Oh! What shall we do?" and 3,000 people were saved that day.

Let's go to what Jesus teaches about Scripture. Obviously, Jesus' teaching is of paramount importance. He's our Lord. He's the Lord of the church, and so what he has to say, we must pay very great attention

to. First of all, Matthew 4:1-11—I don't have it written down, but it's the temptation, the wilderness temptation. I'm sure most of you, if not all of you, know this, that the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, 40 days, to be tempted by the devil. Of course, the devil, in his craftiness and cruelty, presented Jesus with temptations, "Come on Jesus. You're hungry. You haven't eaten for 40 days. Makes these stones...you can do everything...make those stones become bread. Jesus, jump off that temple. You've been wanting people to recognize you and notice you for a long time, Lord, if you pull a trick that, an Evel Knievel stunt, why people will notice you, they'll flock to, everything will be fine. And Jesus, look, here's all the kingdoms of the world—India, Paris, Taj Mahal, all of the great, the Queen of...everything you can imagine. Jesus, you don't have to go to that cross. You don't have to suffer all of that. Just genuflect...just make a little peace sign or something, just acknowledge me and it will all be yours." And what's Jesus' response?

*Audience Member: Get behind me.*

Yeah. Okay. That's part of his response. But what is his main response in all three of those temptations.

*Audience Member: It is written.*

It is written. That's right. He could have said, "Satan, I'm God. Get out of here!" But he didn't. He said, "It is written." Doesn't that show the regard that Jesus had for Scripture? If Jesus had that regard for Scripture, then how much more should we, in our time of weakness, in our time of temptation, when things are just...people, you've shared this this morning in your prayer requests about how desperate things are sometimes, and cancer and divorce and lawsuits, just everything, and yet we have this Word. We have the Lord Jesus Christ to come to in times of trial, in times of temptation. And when we're tempted or when we're discouraged, "It is written. Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world." It is written. Nothing can separate us. Neither height nor depth nor life nor death nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present or things to come—nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We need to remember that.

Jesus said in John 10:35, "The Scripture cannot be broken." It is something that is sure. It is something that is lasting. Now I know, of course, we don't have things in the New Testament that we have in the Old. We don't have the dietary regulations. We don't sacrifice animals and everything like that. But what is written for our benefit is sure and eternal. The Scripture cannot be broken. He also said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by your truth," praying to the Father and the high priestly prayer, "Thy Word" is truth. Now those four little words are very, very significant. What do you hear? What do you hear today at work? Or on TV? In society in general? What do you hear regarding truth?

*Audience Member: Tolerance.*

Tolerance. Right. There is no truth. Everybody for himself. Tolerance. We have to just respect everybody and you cannot say that anybody is wrong about anything. The only thing that is absolute is that there are no absolutes. The only thing that is true is that there's no truth. If that's not a contradiction, I don't know what is.

We live in an age of relativism, where the very notion of truth is challenged and ridiculed, and sad to say, even in the church. I was reading an article in USA Today the other day. It concerned a new study by Barna, the man that does a lot of religious surveys. This is very, very ironic. Many, many claim faith in Christ, but on the other hand, while that is true, there's a rising lack of church commitment and attendance. It used to be 24% in 1991, now it's up to 37%. In the article, someone described her religion as "Sheila-ism," in other words, I take a little bit from here, a little bit from there, and just accommodate it to my own preferences and lifestyle and everything like that. Her religion was basically love yourself

and don't hurt anybody else.

With see this today in many people who claim to be Christians. There's been an upsurge, for example. Now people don't see that "gay marriage" is so wrong anymore, and I can't help but believe that a lot of people in churches feel that way.

There's a growing belief in many circles of Christianity, so called, the belief that all roads lead to heaven, and it doesn't really matter if you believe in Jesus or not. If you're a nice person, and if you are sincere in what you believe, then you're in.

How can you explain the best-selling book of Rob Bell called "Love Wins," where it says that there is no hell and tries to use Scripture to defend that premise? Christopher Hitchens, the rabid atheist. He says, "Well, 9/11 was evil." Well, okay, that's fine, but what basis does he have saying it? What I'm saying is that if we don't have a standard for truth, if we don't have the Word of God, which is truth itself, then we have no basis for saying any of these things. We have no basis for objective truth. It's why the world and the church, in many instances, is in that state that it's in; the state of confusion. Thy Word is truth. That's what Jesus had to say about the Word of God. Now here's the solution.

Why teach and preach the Scripture? Let's go back to that passage with read in 2 Timothy 3. What's Scripture profitable for? Useful for? Number one, it's useful for doctrine. Now that's a dirty word in many parts of the church today, not only in the culture but I'm sad to say in some parts of the church. I don't want to offend anybody or step on toes, but many people say, "Well, doctrine divides. I don't want boring doctrine. I want something practical," like Sig said before, "18 steps to a happy marriage," or "how can I be a better business man," or "how can I be kinder to people." Understand what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that those things are necessarily wrong, but doctrine is very, very important. Doctrine is the foundation. How can you be practical unless you build on those things with ideas. Ideas have consequences. Teaching has consequences. Doctrine, the word means teaching. The word means teaching.

Well of course doctrine divides. That's the nature of teaching. There's truth and there's error, which is another thing that's not politically correct in our day and age. For example, people will say, I've heard, and R. C. Sproul has said this before, and I've heard some people say it, too, "Well, I'm not interested in doctrine. I just want to know Jesus." Well, you see, whenever we talk about Jesus, we're involving doctrine aren't we, because after all, who is Jesus? Is he the spirit brother of Lucifer, as the Mormons teach? Is he a created being as the Jehovah's Witnesses teach? And the Aereans of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century? Or is he God of Very God? The God man. That's doctrine. It's Scripture is profitable for doctrine. If sound doctrine were preached in the majority of our pulpits today, we wouldn't have the confusion that we have today.

Not only is Scripture profitable for doctrine, but it's profitable for rebuke and correction. I need that. I don't like it. I had to admit it. But I need it. And Scripture, and the preaching of that Scripture, is very good in doing that. I don't always feel good on Sunday mornings after my pastor preaches the Word of God because there's always something in there that says, "Yes, I was wrong about that," or there's something that I should be applying to my life that I'm not. All by the Holy Spirit; we realize that. All by the power of the spirit, yes, but I need to be rebuked and corrected, even though I may not like it. What does Hebrews 12 say?" The Lord loves those, disciplines those whom he loves, and scourges every son whom he receives, and that is painful at the moment, but afterward, what does the Scripture say? That it yields the peaceful proof of righteousness for those who've been trained by it. And it's for our good.

And that, of course, brings us to the next thing, that's it profitable for training in righteousness. Many of

you here either participate in athletics, or did, when you were growing up, and oh, all the training involved, all the rigor, when you'd rather do something else, when you'd rather go outside and play or whatever. But the rigor that's involved is necessary for training. When I was taking organ lessons when I was growing up, I had to practice. Oh I hated those scales. I hated all of that stuff, but it was worth it when I was able to play something at a concert or whatever, and even today, and Bill over here can testify that I still don't like to practice, but it's necessary and it's good.

We're talking about something here of infinitely more significance than a sports contest or playing the piano or organ. We're talking about training in righteousness for the life to come. What does Paul say in 1 Timothy? Yeah, bodily exercise is of some value. I wish it said no value. I don't like exercise. But anyways, it says some value. But godliness is of great value for this life and the life to come. Yeah. That's right. So godliness is great gain. So training in righteousness. That's what Scripture, that's what this word is about. That's what this word is for, and we need to take it to heart.

**Audience Member:** *Hey Don!*

Yes.

**Audience Member:** *When Jesus said, or not Jesus, when John said in his epistle, or his gospel, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, did Jesus ever refer to himself as the Word? I'm wondering how do the disciples get that concept. I can't think of any offhand where Christ identified himself as the Word or the Living Word or the... Do you know where that came from?*

I'm trying to think off the top of my head, Sig. I think that that word is the...and Ted, you can help me in this, but the word is logos, and I think that that is a Greek concept. It was a word that was used in Greek culture, and I think John, the Apostle John, in writing his gospel, applied that to Christ. Ted do you have anything...maybe you can...

**Ted:** *I can't think of any reference [UNCLEAR]...[OVERLAPPING]...*

**Audience Member:** *You see me, you see the Father.*

**Audience Member:** *The word is truth. Jesus says I am the light, the truth.*

**Ted:** Yeah, well...

Right.

**Ted:** *That's... but Jesus never...I don't know if Jesus said I'm the Word of God.*

**Audience Member:** *He never said explicitly, but in John 15, he's telling the disciples if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask what you will and it will be given to you. You talk about his words living in them.*

**Ted:** *I guess Jesus is really a body of the word.*

**Audience Member:** Yeah I hadn't said that.

Right. What were you going to say Bill?

**Bill:** *Let me read Hebrews 1:1-2--In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many*

*times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

Right, and there some commentators...we were talking about Hebrews 4, there are some commentators who do believe that verse 12 is not referring to Scripture as such, but to Christ. Probably a minority, but nevertheless...and they would probably get that from what it says in the opening chapters of John. So I probably didn't help you, Sig, very well, but that's what I believe, and if I can think of anything else, I certainly communicate it to you.

**Rich:** *Jesus did say before Abraham was born, I AM. That's pretty comprehensive.*

Oh yeah. Oh yes. Yeah, good point there, Rich. He's claiming nothing less than deity, and so he is the Word, he is the Living Word. No doubt about it.

**Ted:** *Don, it was, I just think this is all about who Jesus is, I mean, he becomes the embodiment of everything, I mean, the Jews used to prove the Torah in the synagogue and kiss the cover of the Torah.*

Like Muslims do today with the Koran.

**Audience Member:** *Yeah. But Jesus becomes that Word itself. He also becomes the gate. He becomes the way. He becomes the Bread of Life [UNCLEAR] the Water. This is a...I was talking to my daughter's new boyfriend, and he is a person who was raised in one kind of faith, and he thinks that Jesus is about, following Jesus is about following his words, and I said it's more than that; it's about him.*

Exactly.

**Ted:** *It's about...it's just not what he teaches, it's about him himself, and he looked at me in a very strange way. I said, "You don't understand that, do you?" He says, "No, I don't," and I said, "Well, maybe you will," and I just left it [UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah. How are we doing on time?

**Audience Member:** *Three minutes.*

**Sig:** *Now you mentioned those references, the one that comes to my mind that I hadn't thought of was when Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures as if the power was in them, but the power of God is in me."*

Yeah! Yeah! Amen!

**Sig:** *Maybe that's more of a connection [UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah, that's a good point Sig, and Ted, I thought what you said was really good, too, and that USA Today article, you know people said, well, they had no use for church, they had no use for the Bible, but they said, "Well, I follow the teachings of Jesus. I follow the ethics of Jesus." No, you don't follow the ethics of Jesus because you don't understand that it's about following him. It's about him. All Scripture is about Christ.

**Tom:** *In Revelation 19, it also gives a depiction of Christ coming back mounted on a white horse and it says that, where is it, "He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood and the name by which He is called is the*



*Word of God.”*

Ta da! There you go, Sig. There you go. Great Tom. Thank you.

**Audience Member:** *Where is that, Tom?*

**Tom:** *Revelation 19:13.*

Tremendous, Tom, and I wish...I didn't think of that. Very, very good. Let me just make some concluding remarks here. We have 1 Timothy 4:13—could someone read that for us

**Audience Member:** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

The public reading of Scripture, exhortation, teaching, must be done.

**Audience Member:** 2 Timothy 2:15—Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Yeah. And Bruce does, as anyone, be diligent. It requires hard work to be a teacher of the Word and a preacher of the Word.

Last but not least, 2 Timothy 4:1-2

**Audience Member:** In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

This is almost the language of an oath, isn't? I charge you before no one less than God and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a serious, serious thing, and I shudder to think of pastors who distort the Word of God or twist it or don't teach or regard it lightly, what will happen to them and the account that they're going to, we're all going to have to give, and particularly people like me who teach.

Notice, Paul says preach the Word, in season and out of season, when it's popular, when it fashionable and when it's not. Preach the whole council of God, like Paul talked about with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, the whole council of God is to be preached. The Old Testament as well as the New. What we like to hear and what we don't like to hear—everything. That's what preaching the Word is all about.

I hope that you profited from this morning's teaching. It's a vital mark of a healthy church to have the Word preached and taught, and Bruce will resume next week. Let's pray. Father, in heaven, we thank you for your Word. Your Word says that it is a light unto our path and a lamp unto our feet, and Father, we ask your forgiveness, at least I do, Father, for how many times I take it so lightly, and take it so for granted and not as the treasure that it is. Father, I pray now that you would bless all of us today in whatever we are doing, Lord, at work or otherwise, Lord, that your Name would be glorified in our lives, that, as Bruce has said so many times, that we would take what we have learned and apply it in whatever circumstance you have us in. In Jesus Name we pray, and all the Brave Men said...Amen!