

## THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

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Session: October 21, 2011

...why Bruce asked me to do this. I just wanted to sit out there with everybody else. I'm not sure that I've done exactly what Bruce has in mind, but I've done what I've done, so let's get on with it.

I just sat back and began to think, what does the word biblical theology refer to? It seemed to me there are basically two kinds of biblical theology. First kind is academic biblical theology, and the second kind is the kind of biblical theology that you and I are called to do. It's every man's biblical theology. That's what I want to really talk about, but I will give you a quick zip through the academic biblical theology.

I'm talking about my first point: What is biblical theology? We're going to very briefly consider academic biblical theology. It's the kind of scholarly work that ends up in publications of books, some of which can be very helpful to all of us. Some of which. Depends on who's doing the writing and whether they're trying to be biblical and they're approaching it from an orthodox and biblical frame of reference.

So here I'll define it for you. It's an academic discipline that seeks to state clearly what the Bible or some portion of the Bible teaches. It stays with the terms that are in the Scripture. It indicates, it's based on a careful exegesis of the texts. It stays with the, it indicates the central theme or themes of the Bible, and tries to show how the other themes in the Bible relate to that central purpose and theme or themes. Keeps in mind that the teaching of the Bible took place over time, and that the later books depend on usually and take further the earlier books. And there is a center. The center, if it's done right, is always Jesus Christ.

It can be about some part of the Bible. For example, one can write, look at all the books that Paul has written, and then they produce a book on Pauline theology. Or John's writings and Johannine theology.

But it seems to me that academic biblical theology reaches its high point when it takes the whole Bible as the Word of God, seeking to deliver us the whole counsel of God around its center. Therein lies, of course, the difference in different books in academic biblical theology because they state the center differently. They try to draw that, however, from Scripture.

Here's an example. The center theme of Scripture is the sovereign glory of God in the salvation of fallen humanity in and through Jesus Christ. That's what it's fundamentally about [we could say], and therefore, all the other teachings are related to that central theme.

*Audience Member: Could you say that again, John?*

Sure. The sovereign glory of God and the salvation of fallen humanity in and through Jesus Christ. That's the biblical Christ—eternal, incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended, reigning over, in heaven, at the right hand of God, through the Holy Spirit coming again in glory, to consummate all things. That's the Christ. If they're and not talking about that Christ, throw the book away.

These books can be helpful if they're written from that perspective, as long as they're also writing in such a way that, to do what Bruce is constantly telling us, deal with what do I do with the truth that's being taught here. How does it really impact my life and how am I to respond to it?

As a systematic theologian, it's my field, we basically build on biblical theology. Any systematic

theology that isn't fundamentally biblical theology, it's not really worth reading, because they're putting everything in another perspective. So we kind of depend upon serious biblical exegesis, but we have to test it. You always have to test any book by your own reference back to Scripture.

Then, in systematic theology, we also deal with subjects that are not explicitly dealt with in the Bible itself. For instance, today, you have to deal, say with the relationship we were just talking about this morning, the relationship between Biblical revelation and say the natural sciences. How do they fit together? How do we understand that? I'd have to say the church has let us down on this in large measure because we haven't taught both the splendor and the limits of the natural scientific method.

It was in, what, it was 1896 that they wrote a book called *The War Between the Sciences and Christianity*. It was written by a guy who was president of Cornell at the time. That is a kind of a myth. There has been no historic battle between the two. Most of the great scientists were Christians, and natural science was born in a Christian culture and presupposes the assumptions about reality that come through the Gospel. It didn't happen in the orient. It didn't happen in Africa. It happened in Western culture shaped by the Gospel.

We could go on for some length and talk about this. The problem is we haven't taught each other about it, and we allow things to be said that shouldn't be said. Science done properly within its own limits is a tool of God, given to us, and it supports the faith, and faith supports it. So that kind of wrestling and statements talks about it [are done] by systematic theology.

Now that's enough of the academic stuff. Now I want to talk about biblical theology as every man's theology, biblical theology. What is that? You could state it simply, though its harder to do. Biblical theology in every man's sense is a work that is practiced by all to honor God for our soul's health and for our service to others.

*Audience Member:* Could you say that again, please.

To honor God for our soul's health and for our service to others. To state quite simply, its seeking to have a mind that's able to see everything biblically. You want a mind so shaped, I mean you could illustrate this. How do you decide what car you're going to buy? Is that totally unrelated to your faith? If I give you too many illustrations, we won't get to the topic.

Everything... we want a mind that allows us to see things as God would have us see them, to see everything in the light of Scripture, to have a biblical mind. The aim and the end of biblical theology in the sense that I'm going to talk about today doesn't end up in a book; it ends up in us. In our minds and in our hearts, and in our minds to our hearts, and from our hearts back again to our minds in application, to have a biblical mind. Obviously, to that, you have to have a biblical church, but we'll get to that in a little while.

Biblical theology is sort of, thinking about this morning, for all of us, is a lifelong endeavor. It involves serious ongoing time and effort on our part, those of us who belong to Christ. Since it requires time and effort, of which all of us haven't got a heck of a lot extra, I'm going to spend most of my time, really, on the second question, why do it. Here its, because I think the Lord is trying to challenge us, me too. Challenge us to be engaged in serious biblical theology ourselves.

We haven't been taught to do it in a serious and sustained way. Even the clergy...when we're ordained, for instance, as Anglicans, we promise to be in sustained serious biblical study for God's, for our own well being, for those around us. But few do it. How easy it is to be preoccupied with everything else. You know the parable about the falling in rocky soil, being pushed aside. How easy it is for this to be

pushed aside in our lives.

So here I want to look at some text with you about why do every man's biblical theology. Then we'll talk very briefly about some ideas as to how.

***Audience Member:** John, there's a prayer I always remember, it was in the [UNCLEAR], and it says to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest.*

It goes this way. Blessed Lord, who's caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we might in such wise fear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. What happens when you digest something? It becomes part of you. That we might ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given us in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters apart from the Bible, you will not hold that fast. Look at the Episcopal church. You just gotta roll down the road by the great flood of [secularity].

Let's take a look at, first of all, Romans 12:1-2. I'll read it and then we'll kind of comment on it. "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the," I would translate it better, "what is the good, perfect and acceptable will of God."

I want to say just a few things about this text. It's loaded. "I appeal to you brothers." This is an urgent appeal. This is not a suggestion. Here's the apostle speaking. He's speaking to us. And he's speaking urgently. Serious business. He's speaking to us as belonging to Christ, to one another in Christ. It's a work that we believers are called to do, and called to do corporately together, called to do personally, called to do our whole life long.

"Therefore by the mercies of God." This, Paul's apostolic appeal to us is urging to us, is pleading to us. Arises from God's great gift of his mercy to us, set forth in chapters 1-11, whereby these things [are true]. By this mercy, one, we're saved from the wrath of God. Two, we're bought with the price of his precious blood. Three, we're made Christ's own. Four, we're united to him by the word and Holy Spirit through our enabled response of faith. Five, we're joined to his family, having brothers, here this morning, because of Christ, because of his mercy, his church. Six, we are given eternal life in him. You can't have eternal life just for a short period of time. {LAUGHTER} Well that's a hell of a whole another subject. There's a whole big debate about this, but the guys that want to have eternal life for a short period of time are wrong. And five, we're called to serve him as Lord. To have the freedom and the blessedness of serving him as Lord, not serving all the cruddy idols that tend to pop in our culture and in our hearts.

Now in the gratitude that we must surely have, when we take this seriously, in the gratitude that we must surely have, and as is appropriate to our new relationship to the Lord, in Christ Jesus, the apostle makes this appeal to us. That's the weight of this appeal, comes out of that, and he's calling for the most profound surrender of ourselves—lock, stock and barrel.

That leads us to this verse, "to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This is your spiritual service." Now notice, the apostle is comparing what he's calling from us, comparing and contrasting us, this sacrifice, with the Old Testament sacrifice of animals. It's a comparison. There are similarities and there are differences.

The similarities, of course, are several. First, the sacrifice is total in both cases. The animal dies, and we die to the self run life and surrender to the Lord. Death is involved in both. "Pick up your cross and

follow me,” says Jesus. To follow him is to die to a life in which we run in our own game.

Both sacrifices are bodily. Our sacrifice involves the actions we take in and through our bodies in the present world. But there’s a difference. For in surrendering our life to the Lord, the worship that we offer is, they translate it spiritual, our spiritual worship or service. The Greek word is [UNCLEAR], from the Greek *logikos*, meaning of the reason, pertaining to the reason, relating to the mind, from which we get in English our word logical. So this is our reasoning sacrifice. We know what we’re doing, and it involves our minds.

Now this reference to the mind as being centrally involved in this surrender that we’re being called to leads us to the next verse. This, of course, is what gets us into the heart of the matter. “Do not be conformed to this world (or this age—*aionas*), but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” The renewal of your mind. Biblical theology has to do with a renewing of our mind. “So that by testing, you may discern what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Transformed we need to be. But how? By the renewal of our minds. Renewal of our mind is part of this surrender to which the apostle is speaking of. To live differently, we must first come to think differently. To live differently, we must first come to think...it’s not just an emotional thing. We’re talking about a biblical mind, to see things differently. If you see things differently, and weigh things differently in the light of a biblical mindset, then you act differently.

Several things are important here. First, the apostle assumes we are already compromised. We’re already behind the eight ball. We’re already being squeezed into this age, and the way this age thinks. We’re in need of transformation. To be transformed is not really a matter of the will. “I will be different.” No, it’s not just a devotional thing. It’s a matter of the mind. As a man thinketh in his heart—thinketh in his heart—so he is. That is in Proverbs.

Since we have a mind already corrupted, and if we are to be who Christ calls us to be, and who we want to be, and who we need to be, we need to be doing biblical theology. Shaping our, drawing the Scriptures into our mind and casting out old ways of thought, bringing in new ways of thought, as the Lord enables.

Second note, he’s also speaking to us as believers, as saints, as converts. This work of biblical theology is not for our justification. It’s not what puts us right with God. It flows out of that, but it’s not to be justified. It’s not a good work we do in order to be justified. Our justification is full, final and complete from day one, that is, from the moment God moves in you and you respond through the Gospel and power the Holy Spirit to receive salvation in Christ Jesus and his work done for you.

This surrender that the Lord is calling us to is for the sake of our mind is part of our sanctification, part of the way God is changing us, conforming us, in our mind and in our behavior, conforming us to the likeness of Christ, and it’s a lifelong endeavor. It’s not a dash, it’s a marathon.

So when we [UNCLEAR] about how to do it, we’ve got to think well what can be sustained...how do we sustain this over a long period of time in the body of Christ? Key to this work of the Spirit in us, in the renewing of our minds is the word of God written—Scripture. These things, writes Paul, of the Scripture in another place, are written for our learning, hence the [college] got it right.

Wouldn’t it have been wonderful if you’d heard all this stuff when you were about 17, you know, and trying to figure out what to do in your life, instead of chasing some crazy will of the whist [UNCLEAR]. more of that later. {LAUGHTER}

But you rightly ask, “How is it that our minds are so corrupted?” The answer is that as sinners, we’re born with our faculties [UNCLEAR] corrupted, inwardly, and a serious, to a serious degree. In addition, we’re born in a fallen society. That leads to our second text. I want you to turn Romans 1:18-32.

*Audience Member:* [UNCLEAR] I’m sitting here thinking, why did this...[UNCLEAR]...I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. That’s certainly true.

*Audience Member:* [UNCLEAR]...

Yes. Sure. It’s all...absolutely, no conflict at all. I want to comment kind of briefly on this long text, and we’ll rush through it some way. I’m going to make a lengthy introduction and then read the verse that I’ve been introducing. Paul is taking us through five stages of every culture in a fallen world—every culture. Subsequent to the fall, after the fall, every major civilization is involved in this movement downward. Paul mentions, it seems to me at least, five stages, so I’d like to go through that.

Let me read the beginning of it first, “<sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” The unrighteousness flows from the ungodliness. Turn away from God and there are consequences. Right? “<sup>18</sup>Who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup>For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup>For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

What Paul is saying is that all of this [UNCLEAR] things about God, just because we’re made in this world, things about the world that we observe, things in our heart, things about ourselves that we know. And out of that, deep within us, we know several things. One, that God is. Two, that he is the eternal creator of all that is, for everything in the universe bears the mark of dependency and is sustained from beyond itself. It comes into being, it goes out of being. It’s not its own explanation. And that’s true for us. Suppose mom and dad hadn’t met. Ooops! We’d be in real trouble. It’s all in the hands of God. We know this. Nothing comes from nothing. We know that. He’s the eternal creator of all that is. Third, that he is personal. But we’re personal. We’re made in his image. Water doesn’t run up hill. He’s greater than we. He’s more personal than we. He’s tri-personal, for that matter, but he’s personal. We know that, therefore, it’s bizarre if you try to conceive of God as a force, pure and simple, or as an animal, or whatever.

He is righteous. But we are made in his image, and right and wrong matters to us. Justice really matters when our own [UNCLEAR]. I really get serious. Go out and go to work one day and my boss says, “You know, you’ve worked hard for this month. I’ve decided not to pay you.” Ugh! I understand about justice and fairness all of a sudden. Even as a fallen sinner, I’m very aware about this. Rooted in the source of all of this passion, of right and wrong, God himself is righteous, and to whom we are accountable.

I was just talking beforehand, just thought about this morning, we were talking about the scientific problems that are arising in Darwinian hypothesis. Scientific problems now that are arising. This one scientist said, “Darwin must be true because the only other explanation for reality as we know it, is God, and I don’t want God loose in my life.” Down deep he knows God’s going to say something that he doesn’t want to hear. But I want it Lord. I want to do this.

I remember back when I was smoking cigarettes some years ago. I found that if I prayed to God, he'd take the urge away momentarily, so I quit praying. {LAUGHTER} Until he spoke to me deep. But there's an awful lot of that going on.

So Paul says, "We know this," and we know that we're guilty before him. We all have, in some level, a troubled conscience. I don't know about you, but I hope the final judgment is done privately. {LAUGHTER} I don't want my wife to know everything that goes on in my mind all these years, or you, for that matter. I trust the Lord. I'm not so sure about the rest of you. It's pretty awful at times. It's pretty ugly. Not to mention the incredible things we do corporately to one another. The time of my life, we've had more genocide, more incredible things [UNCLEAR] increasing our capacity to do damage to one another. I'm not saying all wars are wrong. Some I think you have [UNCLEAR]. What I am saying is signs of the fallenness of mankind and the suppression of the truth in unrighteousness.

So stage one is the suppression of the truth of God. Ungodliness. Denial of God's godliness. Holding it down in unrighteousness. Stage two is idolatry. "22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools." Every society, all of us, "became fools," 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." To that you can add other things [UNCLEAR]. In the fall, having dismissed God, we've exalted ourselves to the place of God, and knowing that we are dependent on a power greater than ourselves, and that we live in a dangerous world, and with other people who are dangerous, in a society of other fallen people, we seek some form of greater power that we can control and manipulate in order to preserve and bless our desires, our well-being, our goals.

Most religion, most human religion, religions of the world, and a good bit of nominal Christianity, is an attempt to get God to do what we want done for us. To give us security and the things that we want in life. Often it includes the desire to control others. I think Islam is a wonderful example of control. And not infrequently, we, in our religions, set the level of performance low enough that we can take pride in our accomplishments. Everybody can be a world class high jumper if you set the bar at two feet. Look at the standards of the religion. Jesus sets it outside [UNCLEAR], except by his grace. Pharisaic Judaism is a good example which Jesus [UNCLEAR] here. They didn't want to hear about grace. They were getting it done. But we heard this morning, our friend [UNCLEAR] need all of this. They're getting it done. Where I live, at Sherwood Oaks, when people retire, they're beginning to get the picture.

Romans 1:24-25, "24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen." Well it really doesn't require much comment. Our [UNCLEAR] gives us permission to let loose within us, in our lives, our passions, and even socializing in a group, and even, in fact, through political correctness and other approvals, our society, and begin to create a social mindset through which we look and see that.

Racism is really terror, but there were some awfully lovely little old ladies in the south that felt everything was just fine. They loved their servants. They couldn't see that this was demeaning to them. Even some of the servants couldn't see that it was demeaning. It became a mindset. It wasn't just a kind of moral insensitivity, it's the way they saw things, that institutionalize, the societies itself.

Today, for instance, you know, sex outside of marriage is kind of now the thing. I mean, nobody... we're watching it on TV as if it's a casual thing, not to get too upset about it. My gosh, when I was a kid, you know, holding hands and smooching, we thought was pretty wild. What a shift.

Then we get to stage four—unbridled natural lusts, immorality now becoming accepted in, and in a still somewhat restrained manner.

*Audience Member: What was number three?*

Number three was...stage three is immorality coming from idolatry. Four is, I'm sorry, that's three. Four is unbridled and unnatural lusts. Romans 1:26-27, <sup>26</sup>"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup>and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error." I don't think I need to comment much because society gone wild. Spring break for the western culture.

*Audience Member: Occupy Wall Street.*

Occupy Wall Street. You name it. Out of control. Very little restraint. Mine now, no longer capable. That leads to the final stage. Romans 1:28-32, <sup>28</sup>"And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them." That's the apostate mind. That's the fifth stage.

Now in such a society on its downward spiral such as this, you and I were born. Our understanding, our mindset, our world view, our values and our desires have been not only corrupted from within, putting ourselves at the center, but also shaped by this kind of downward shift, moving, a culture. Now consider for just a minute where you think we in the USA are in this progression. {LAUGHTER} Factor in the high level of divorce, the large number of families with single parents, usually mothers with absent fathers, widespread abortions—50 million. Fifty million. This is a holocaust of the unborn that's ever been known in society in history. Fifty million since Roe v. Wade. The regularized, the sex outside of the care, commitment, the agape, of marriage.

*Audience Member: Redefined marriage.*

Of one man and one woman for life, till death do us part. That begins to bite at you when your wife is sick, and you're the primary health giver. You stick there because you promised her and you love her, but you promised her you would be till death do you part. If you don't have the Word of God, where you going to go at a time like that?

*Audience Member: I wonder eventually if its going to be considered a hate crime to preach Romans 1 from the pulpit.*

It is considered a hate crime in Canada right now.

*Audience Member: So I hear.*

Yes. That's another thing I wanted to mention. The increasing fact that Christianity is being put down in the media. Who wrote The Dusk of Death?

*Audience Member: Guinness.*

Os Guinness. He says in the media today, it's ABC—anything but Christianity.

**Audience Member:** *The question you just asked about where we're at in our country. It was Dr. Ravi Zacharias. I heard him say that ever great civilization that's ever lived, when they fell, it wasn't just for sin itself, it was from the [UNCLEAR] of shame. I think we're at that [UNCLEAR].*

Yeah, if your mind is so shaped that you can't see it, then how can you be ashamed, except down deep inside. We all know that we want others to treat you in a certain way. Know what it is to be abused, to be [UNCLEAR], to be dismissed, to be put down. We know this. We really know how [UNCLEAR]. You can't make it go away. What is it? The guy's written a book, Budziszewski, I think, What We Cannot Not Know.

**Audience Member:** *This morning, Chuck Colson on 101.5 reported the government is now trying to tell the churches who their pastor can be.*

**Audience Member:** *What?*

There has been some...yeah, I heard about that. Who knows where this is...we're under attack.

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR] hear it...what was said?*

**Audience Member:** *The government is now attempting to tell the church who the pastor should be. Chuck Colson said that this morning.*

It was in paper the other day. [UNCLEAR] if you can tell them who the pastor would be, you can certainly tell them what they can preach and teach. Because Christianity is fundamentally revolutionary to this downward spiral

**Audience Member:** *There are 30-some pastors who are sending their messages to the IRS and challenging them to come after them. Those 33 now are over 100 pastors. It was started by a black minister in Virginia. Some of the churches are standing up and challenging and they're not sitting down and being fearful.*

I think we're beginning to wake up.

**Audience Member:** *I think we are seeing the Scripture played out, is what we're seeing.*

Yes, we are. Right.

**Audience Member:** *[UNCLEAR]...you know, I'm looking at 2 Timothy 3 as you're talking about this where it says, "in the last days, we're living in perilous times. Men will be lovers of pleasure more than they are lovers of God." Those of us who are counted as God's own are going to be called to stand.*

Amen.

**Audience Member:** *And as we're called to stand, we've got to recognize we can't just have a form of godliness, as Bruce teaches, we've got to have that aggressive response to everything that goes on against Christianity.*

And to do that, you have to have a biblical mind.

**Audience Member:** *Amen.*



The renewing of your mind.

*Ted: When we get into this kind of topic, everybody gets worked up because they say the problem is out there. It's all those ungodly people out there. The problem is, brothers, we're in the state we are today because we have been shallow, ephemeral and—not effeminate, ephemeral—and vacuous in our understanding of the faith. We are responsible for the situation that's in our country. I don't want to hear anymore about the big bad government or the big bad homosexuals. We met...what does Pogo say? "We met the enemy and he is us." I mean, that is the problem.*

The apostle Paul is saying we need transformation. The focus is on our particular spot, and for the transformation, we need the renewing of our mind, a biblical theology.

Let me just tell you one story. When I was in seminary...so every society goes in the less and less...salt, light and yeast will come into that society through the Gospel, through Christians who have a renewed mind that are able to stand. And that's what we're called to be—salt, light and yeast. Right? Otherwise, it's naturally going down.

*Audience Member: I just think another consequence, or another part of stage five or step five is no consequences.*

Yeah. That's right. No matter what you do, nobody pays anything.

*Audience Member: That's right. There's no price to be paid.*

All free. A free ride. Yeah. I was in seminary. In those days, there were no ladies in seminary. This guy named John Bailey, who was a famous Scottish theologian, came to address our class. He said, "Well lads," he said, "you live in a cut flower civilization, and you'll do your ministry as the leaves begin to fall." Think of that. You cut the flowers. You bring them in. They look absolutely wonderful for quite a while. But they're dead, cut off at the root. Pretty soon, all the petals and all the leaves scrunch up and the petals drop, then you throw out the flowers. And certainly, that's what I've lived through, and it's what you've lived through, in our western culture. And that happens, it's inevitable, unless the church, shaped by the Word of God, stands as salt, light and yeast. That happened once in our culture. I mean, we had the bouquet for a while. Did we not? We grew up in a...never perfect, by any means. Never perfect. But profoundly shaped by the Christian Gospel and the Bible. But we turned away from the Word, and there's hope once you do that.

A Gallup poll once, I remember reading that it takes 20% of a culture to lift it up, to make a deep cultural impact. At that time, we had, I think it was something like 49% of our culture claiming to be evangelical Christians. Man we should, this culture should be really rising. But then he said, another poll showed that only 10% of the 49% lived anywhere differently than the rest of their socioeconomic group. So what we really had was 4.9% that were salt, light and yeast. So we're 16.1% down. Paul is saying, for the sake of your culture, not just for your own sake, to honor the Lord, and for your own soul's health, and for the sake of the well-being of the countries you love in this world, you, my brothers and stress, I, we, need to have a renewal of our mind.

Let's turn 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Well we're about out of time. I'll just read it. We've only got a few minutes here. I'm sorry. I let myself get off text. Once you get off text and start telling stories, it takes longer. He's talking to Timothy—young pastor, somewhat shy, not as [UNCLEAR] a leader as he ought to be, could be. He says, <sup>14</sup>"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is

breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

What this brings before us is the third reason why we are called to the renewal of our mind, and that is God has provided for us in Holy Scripture, his own Word, as the instrument through which the spirit works, as we cooperate in the renewing of our mind, four things, he says about this. The Bible is a commended book. We get the Bible from people who love it. A healthy church commends the Bible. A healthy church is built on the Bible. If you're in a church that isn't urging you, teaching you, preaching and helping you and me become renewed in our minds, then you're either sent there by God for the explicit purpose of changing that, or you're in the wrong place.

And notice, he says, how “from childhood on.” There's nothing greater you can do for your kids than give them a love for Scripture. Getting them to Harvard is peanuts next to getting them to love the Scripture as the Word of God. We need our own minds renewed so we know what to do good for our own kids. Right?

My dad worked hard. He didn't get the chance to go to college. He thought the best thing in the world he could do for me, next to knowing God and Jesus Christ, was to get a college education. To him, it was next to knowing God. What a blessing that was in my life. It took a little while for me to get the picture. It was in my 20's. Thanks be to God.

So it's a commended book. A treasured book. A loved book. Don't you love to hear the Bible expounded? I could sit all day at Bruce's feet or any good expositor/preacher. Drink it in. Our mind needs it. And I love it. Knowing from whom you taught it. Think of the people you admire. They're all people who have been rooted deep and shaped by the Word of God. Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, my parents, John Stott, Phillip Edgcumbe Hughes. You have your own list. These are people who stood up for Christ, stood out for Christ, because their minds had been shaped by the Word of God.

Second, the Bible has a purpose. [UNCLEAR] to lead us to faith in Christ Jesus and to the full range of salvation, which is not just justification, but also sanctification and ultimately glorification. The Bible is given for that. I gotta stop. Move quick. The suitability of the Bible is that it's God's own Word in the words of men. He breathed it out. It's a metaphor. If I'm going to talk to you, I take a breath, and I breathe out a word. The word goes through the air, it goes into your ear and into your mind and into your heart. The Bible is on the way to your ear, heart and mind. That's what it's there for. But we do need to read it.

I remember when I first went to seminary. I had so much to do, I thought maybe if I just put it under my pillow, I could sleep on it, it would kind of come through. {LAUGHTER} The reason that the Bible is what it is, is because it is the Word of God written. By chosen, by God's choice, inspired by his Spirit, through those whom he chose to speak to his people, for his people the world around.

Lastly, it gives you, it's practical, profitable, for teaching. Teaching you the truth. To rebuke. Warning you. For correction. Showing you the right way. And for training. A long you could train by [UNCLEAR] seeing things in the light of the truth that you've got, day by day.

Why do biblical theology? Because we need to have our minds renewed. Because if we have to transform and [UNCLEAR]. Because the world needs us to be salt, light and yeast, and not least because God has made provision for us.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. That is your spiritual service.” It's hard to find a proper translation that gets it all

said. “And do not be conformed to this age, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, by the grace of God through the Scripture,” in the body of Christ, in a church. It is a very [UNCLEAR] biblical theology.

Let’s pray. Lord, each of us has got to figure out the best way to do this. There are certain things we could say, but where you wish us to go, you will show us how. Having given us the Scripture, we know that it’s going to involve us giving time to the study of Scripture. So we ask for the grace, having the grace to give us the Scripture, we ask for the grace, not only to come here, which is, of course, wonderful, what Bruce teaches us, a biblical mind, but also for our own work, our own [UNCLEAR] deep within our hearts and minds, help us, Lord, through your mercy and grace. Amen!