

# Four Pillars of a Strong Church

## Pillar 3: “Passionate Proclamation”

### Part 1

I love this story about the famous and powerful preacher **Martyn** Lloyd-Jones. His daughter tells it like this. “A bomb exploded nearby during his prayer.” He was a preacher in London during the war. She says, “It was nearby, perhaps across the street.”

It hadn’t gone off literally in their own building, but the sound was tremendous. Windows rattled and plaster fell. What would he do? She said “her father paused for a moment and then continued to pray. And the man who gave the notices came up...

...gave the announcements as always, and dusted her father off, and then watched her father go back up and start preaching.” You see, nothing deterred this man from the sacred task of preaching and passionately proclaiming God’s Word. Here’s why. This is how he felt.

He said, “Preaching has been my life’s work...to me the work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.”

So I thought to myself, he must have been one of those men who felt the intensity and the tremendous weighty joy of the preaching task. And because of that, he was probably one of those men who begged God for the enablement to fulfill such a task and God blessed it.

J.I. Packer, the great theologian of our time said this about sitting under Lloyd Jones preaching. “I have never heard such preaching. It came to me with the force of electric shock, bringing to at least one of his listeners more of a sense of God than any other man he had known.”

That’s J.I. Packer talking and he is not the only one. Others have mentioned how they felt the tremendous presence of God in Lloyd Jones preaching. God make the rest of your preachers like that.

One person wrote, “What a gift the Doctor was. I think preachers need to hear his kind of preaching as a partial antidote to the relentless trivializing of preaching in our day.”

It was Lloyd-Jones himself who said, “That the greatest need in the Christian Church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the Church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.”

And he would also add to that that the greatest need is a return to expository preaching. Which is our third pillar of a healthy strong church. That of passionately proclaiming the entire counsel of God’s Words to us.

I say passionately because in my view, if you are not passionate about God, you have no business preaching His Word, and I say passionately proclaiming God’s Word because if you are not proclaiming what he has said, you have no business in the pulpit.

I know you might be tired of hearing me talk about expository preaching, but I am committed to submitting to every word that proceeds from the mouth of our God.

And by the way, the candidate who is coming is committed to expositional preaching, I say that based on his track record and he has a doctorate in expositional preaching so I think it’s a good idea that we are familiar with this philosophy and I think it’s right and biblical.

So...if you have been here for any length of time, you already know that it’s been the tradition here at this church, so I think it’s worth repeating the definition (what it is) for you since it is one of the pillars of a healthy church and it will continue to be a pillar for our church.

So for some of you, this is going to be a reminder sermon. Both Paul and Peter would often write to their Christian readers and say, “Now I remind you brothers about the gospel I preached.” Or “I want to remind you of my ways in Christ.” Or as Paul wrote to Timothy,

“Remind your church of these things.” What things? The grace of Jesus Christ toward them. The call to be a good soldier for Jesus. The call to remember the salvation which is in Jesus Christ and the eternal glory that comes with it.

Chapter 2 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy. Always remind them of these things. Such a big part of our faith is remembering what God has done and calls us to do.

**So what** I want to do today is remind ourselves of what expositional preaching is and then look at the mandate for it according to 2 Timothy chapters 3 and 4, which are very familiar to us,

...and then next week...I want to move from the giving end from that of preachers and teachers proclaiming the Word

...to the receiving end, which would be you folks in this context, and talk about how to be expositional listeners to preachers and teachers and to be eager and to expect to hear from God through the lips of His servants because that is the means that He uses for His Word to be proclaimed.

So the first question I asked myself in this sermon was this; playing off of how Lloyd Jones felt about preaching, “What would be the most important pillar that feeds all of the other pillars?” Kind of like the cornerstone, although corner pillar wouldn’t work.

They would all be corner pillars, but you know what I mean. 😊

Well, here’s my answer. I would argue that the most important pillar that a church must have in place is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and everything else will fall into place, the pillar of prayer, the pillar of praise, and the pillar of people...

...for we wouldn’t know how to do any of those things effectively if it were not for the Word of God creating those things in us and telling us how to do it.

That was one of God's intentions for giving us His living and Breathing Word that can literally change people and build His church.

And if you do it in an expositional fashion through books of the bible, you will hit all of these things and more...from how to treat people to the types of programs that we should run to evangelism to how we do leadership, to touching on the gamut of human emotions...

...to marriage, to child rearing. There's so much in here...

...and it will all fall into place if we listen carefully, and follow Jesus, and obey the whole book that He has written for us.

In the book called *The Priority of Preaching*, the author says that "All our church activities, relationships, and meetings are governed, directed, led and controlled by scripture. That is our aim." But then he writes,

"Consecutive expository preaching ministry helps us move in the right direction for that aim."

To which I say Amen! That's why we need to preach the entire counsel of God. (Acts 20:27).

A church must be preaching and proclaiming the entire Word of God, explaining it and applying it if we are going to move in the right direction, continually being reformed and transformed by the Word of God in every area of the life of the church.

That simply...is the definition of expositional preaching and the need for it in the church today is great in my humble opinion and the more people that I talk with who have visited churches all over this country say that it is dying and I would go so far as to say that if this continues...

...Christianity will severely weaken, pillars will crumble, and our knowledge of our Lord and His gospel will grow anemic, false conversion will happen more and more and Christian growth will decline.

You see, what expositional preaching does is expose God's Word to us to which we need on-going exposure in order to know God better, for His Words to dwell in us richly (Col. 3:16) so that we can become more like him, and that our church becomes all that He wants her to become.

We are after all his bride, we ought to listen to our husband. No comment ladies. So...

...let me give you an official theologian's definition of expositional preaching,

"Expositional preaching takes a particular passage of Scripture, explains that passage, and then applies the meaning of the passage to the life of the congregation. A commitment to expositional preaching is a commitment to hear God's Word."

And you heard correctly. You need both, explanation and application. We don't only hear God, we do what God says. (James 1:22)

Here was Calvin's view, "Without explanation of a passage, it is not expository; without application, it is not preaching."

Preaching expositionally means both explaining the passage and then calling us to submit to the passage, and applying the meaning to our lives.

If you were here with us before this series, we went through the entire book of Mark, line by line, trying to accomplish explanation and application, that's an example of expositional preaching.

Our Sunday School classes offer studies through the books of the Bible, where we attempt to do the same thing and what I like about Sunday School is the fact that you can go deeper into the application piece of a book because you have more time.

But here is why I am a big fan of expositional preaching. And it's kind of funny, I'm preaching on the topic of expositional preaching, topics

are ok every once and a while, but here are a few reasons why we need a steady diet of expositional preaching.

1. **God** sets the agenda, not the preacher. Our Lord knows what we need to hear more than what we think we need to hear. And we need to hear everything that he has to say.
2. It's a lot harder to avoid the hard things if you preach through books of the Bible, along with that is the fact that it helps preachers to avoid the mistake of preaching only the things they like to preach on.
3. And I love the point that Mark Dever makes when he says that people will learn only as much as the pastor knows if all he does is preach topically, because a preacher has to study and be stretched himself when preaching expositionally through a book of the Bible.

So...with all of that said...definition...and background work, now what we need to do is ask the question, where does God tell us to do this? Where does the mandate for expositional preaching and on-going proclamation come from?

Well...it's all over the Bible but we are going to focus on **2 Timothy** 3 verse 16 through Chapter 4 verse 4. Please turn there in you haven't done so already. You will find it on page 1179 if you want to follow along in the pew Bible in front of you.

We know this passage very well. We quote some of it all the time. Paul tells Timothy in verses 16 and 17 that,

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The first question that I want to ask is this. Do we really believe this?

Do we believe what Martin Luther once said, “When the Scripture speaks, God speaks.” That when the words of Scripture are coming out of someone’s mouth, it is literally God speaking through them.

That when Pastor Mark or Pastor Dick is giving a call to worship from the Scripture that God is talking to us through them. That when the Bible is opened, God is talking. This is where it all starts.

This is the first conviction that we as believers and as a church must have, that the Bible is literally God breathing his words through the pens of men on paper and talking to us.

Live words coming from a living God. That’s why we want everything that we do around here to be saturated and dripping, soaking wet with the Bible.

**Peter** writes, <sup>20</sup>Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So the first article of the Bible Fellowship Church says,

“The Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the inspired, infallible Word of God, a divine revelation, the original writings of which were verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are the supreme and final authority of faith and conduct.”

**So point** number 1 in proclamation includes this. We must believe that **GOD HAS SPOKEN AND STILL SPEAKS THROUGH HIS WORD!**

Al Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, says this unfortunately about the Bible and the state of preaching today.

“In far too many churches, the Bible is nearly silent. The public reading of Scripture has been dropped from many services, and the sermon has been sidelined, reduced to a brief devotional appended to the music.”

So friends hear this, if the Bible is silent, God is silent. He won't be speaking in our churches in any other way. We want no part of that. We have a rich tradition here of God always talking and may that never change.

**Point** number 2 is this, this book is powerfully sufficient to make you and me the people that he wants us to be. Sometimes I think we can fall into this trap of improving on God's word. That somehow it needs our help.

So we come up with our own motivational speeches, or techniques, or behavioral modifications, or ten step programs that will change our lives forever...we think. Now I am not talking about those things that are drawn from the word of God.

But Paul said to Timothy that this book will profit us. It will teach us, it will reprove us, correct us, and train us to be godly people.

Whether it's about church life, or as a husband or wife, or parent, or child to parent, or employee or employer, or relationship with the opposite sex...how to treat my neighbor...what I should watch on the TV and how much I should watch...and on and on...that's a lot of stuff.

That just about covers my whole life, I don't know about you, maybe I live a boring life but I have no problem filling about every minute of my day right now with just those things. Listen...

I would never be able to do what I do here in this church or in my home in a godly way if it were not for the Lord of this book living this book through me. Never. I would not be able to love if it were not for him, nor would I know what love really looked like if I didn't read it in this book.

I wouldn't know how to discipline my children in love. I wouldn't know what servant leadership looked like. I wouldn't know how to govern Christ's church if it were not for this book.

And on top of all of that, I wouldn't be able to accomplish any of it if I were not saved from my sin, which this book tells me about. So...can you imagine not having this book? Neither could God for His people.

Timothy, you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, from childhood Paul writes, which are able to make you **wise** for **salvation** through faith in Christ Jesus. So second point:

This book is the most powerful book on the planet that transforms us into Christ likeness...

<sup>12</sup> **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.

There is no other book that can do that. Sometimes I wonder if we Christians really believe this.

You all know how powerful words can be, right. How many of you can remember times of encouraging words or words that tore you down. I was reminded of this by a dear friend this past week, how powerful words can be.

And those are words from mere human beings that can be really powerful, but shouldn't this book have more soul piercing power and transforming power than human words? Because these are words that are supernatural, forever, spoken by the one who is perfect and lives forever.

And His words contain real power.

**And** His Words are powerfully sufficient for our lives.

<sup>3</sup> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the

divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

So...

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And one of those good works is that of being a proclaimer, and Timothy, if you are going to be a proclaimer, I have a serious charge that you must look me in the eye and make sure you hear what I am about to say.

**Chapter** 4 verses 1 and 2. Timothy...

<sup>1</sup>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: <sup>2</sup>Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

In other words, “Timothy, you and I live under the gaze of God and of Jesus Christ, and he will hold us accountable for the work that we have done in His name and he will judge us accordingly. Hear this Timothy!

Your main concern as a pastor must be to **PREACH THE WORD!** And this is not a suggestion Timothy, it’s a command. Christ commands us to do this and to take it seriously.

You need to do the same thing that I told Titus.

“In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.” (Titus 2:7-8) **PREACH THE WORD WITH SERIOUSNESS AND SOUNDNESS YOUNG TIMOTHY!** This work is a matter of life and death.

What did Lloyd-Jones say, it's the greatest calling on the planet. And I hope and pray that in all of my days as a pastor, that I continue to call out for seriousness of preaching and against the trivializing of it.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, Paul told him to “devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”

“Practice these things, immerse yourself in them,” Paul says, “so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.” Why Timothy? “Because by so doing, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

**Preaching** and teaching is a matter of life and death.

This is the minister's primary duty. In the book of Acts, chapter 6 we are told that there was neglect in handing out the food to all of the people. But here was the disciple's response,

“It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.” And then they chose seven men full of the Holy Spirit because this was important ministry too, to serve tables. But in no way were they going to set aside their primary task of preaching God's word.

I'm reminded of a quote that I just read where the author says, “Meanwhile, pressures on pastors to market and manage church growth as entrepreneurs and CEOs produce pragmatism in the pulpit that is revealed in sermons ungrounded in biblical interpretation.”

God, spare us from that. May our first priority be the study and preaching and teaching of the word and may we do it all the time.

In our passage for today Paul tells Timothy to always be prepared to preach, in season when it's easy, comfortable, and popular, and out of season when it's hard and not popular. When you feel like it and when you don't feel like it.

And be prepared Timothy to correct error, to rebuke sin (things that are looked down today in our tolerant age) and to encourage faithfulness because that's what the Scripture does, it possesses all of those characteristics and so you must preach all of it

...because the Lord knows that there will always be someone sitting in your pews that fall into one of those categories.

And do it with great patience Timothy, because it's going to be long...hard work, and sometimes it will go well, and sometimes it will not go well.

But be patient, change is slow.

This is probably the best advice for a newly hired, fired up, wanting to change the world pastor. Change is slow, but keep at it, instructing carefully and patiently.

This is the idea of preaching through the Scriptures over and over again, patiently and carefully reminding the people of these things as we said earlier and change will happen.

Al Mohler says, "Read. Explain. Repeat." That's how you preach. I remember hearing another preacher say the same thing when he was preaching on this same verse. He said, "Do the same things over and over and over again with great patience. That's your job pastor."

Listen, it can be argued that the greatest revivals and the greatest reformations came out of the consistent preaching and teaching of God's Word. This is when God is unleashed and moves like a lion.

And brothers and sisters, I want you to hear this; the passionate proclaiming authoritative preaching ministry was not an afterthought, or something invented by the church, it was ordained by God for his people.

It is not an option. Don't let anyone ever try to convince you otherwise. Just bring up 2 Timothy chapter 4.

**But we** shouldn't be surprised at opposition, right? Verses 3 and 4.

<sup>3</sup>For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Our day is not unlike Timothy's day. Again, my heart is burdened when more and more of you come through the line and tell me that there are a lot of churches out there that are not preaching through the Scriptures. And I never asked which ones, but it grieves my heart.

Maybe I should ask and join others in calling out for a revival of expositional preaching.

Because there are so many Christian movements in our day that downplay sound doctrine in order to gain as much approval and followers as they can.

Let's just be nice to one another no matter what kind of doctrine you espouse. Generous Orthodoxy in all things. Now being nice, loving, forgiving, and gracious is living out Christ's doctrine, but if someone is espousing wrong doctrine, we are to correct it.

**Paul** told Timothy that "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome (don't always be looking for a theological fight) but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth." (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

But he also told Timothy elsewhere to "Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with

godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.” 1 Tim. 6:2b-4.

And that my friends leads to unhealthiness and a cracked almost ready to crumble pillar. We need to teach and urge the sound words of Jesus Christ and correct any kind of teaching that does not accord itself with godliness if we are to become the church Jesus Christ desires.

I hope you are grasping the importance of preaching and teaching in the local church?

Al Mohler again (did you think he is a little concerned about this), “Contemporary preaching suffers from a loss of confidence in the power of the Word...from an infatuation with technology...from an embarrassment from the biblical text...from an evacuation of biblical content...from a focus on felt needs...from an absence of gospel...”

Another person says that many of the sermons today are nothing but “lifestyle tips.”

Lifestyle tips. 160 ways to improve your life. An absence of gospel. People are shying away from calling human beings sinners in need of a Savior. People don’t want to hear that they need to change, that they live before a Holy God and will be judged by Him someday.

That brings me to my last couple of points, that in our proclamation of the Word of God, that we must never **separate** the Word of God from the God who wrote the word. Sometimes we do that. We teach principles or how to’s or even draw out application from the Bible...

...but we leave out the author of the Bible who saved us and who empowers us to live out those biblical principles and how to’s and application. For without him, we can’t do any of it.

That’s why Paul would say, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone

mature in Christ.” Christ has to be in you for His words to be in you so that you can mature and do the application.

And I would die proclaiming this Paul says,

“For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” So should every pastor be.

**So point** number 1, God still speaks today through His written Word.

Point number 2, it is powerfully sufficient for life and godliness.

Brothers and sisters, I’ve heard it said that we have a lot of fat headed know a lot of Bible people in our day. I am not entirely convinced of that. We have a lot of access to Bible knowledge, but I am not so sure how much of that word dwells richly in here and is lived out. How I respond to life is directly related to how much of Him and His Word that I know and dwells within me.

Point number 3, since it is powerful and sufficient, we need to preach all of the Bible with urgency as a matter of life and death.

And lastly, Christ must always be exalted and the gospel proclaimed, preaching all of the Scripture with it’s warnings, and teaching power, and with all of it’s wisdom so that we will be presented to Him mature.

And for the preacher and teacher, to which many of these words are directed, we **must die** doing this, toiling and struggling with all of his energy which is our power source and even when the bombs go off, we dust ourselves off, and we get back at it.

I’m reminded of the statement that behind every fruitful church are dying pastors and teachers. Praise God for that here...

So pillar number 3 never crumbles....and pillar number 1, 2, and 4 will thrive as a result.