

**Preaching The Gospel: A Theological and Practical Guide  
For Our Sacred Assignment**

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**I. The Issue of the Gospel**

✳ “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved... For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

✳ “Growing numbers of people now serve as their own “Theologian-in-residence.” Americans are embracing an unpredictable and contradictory body of beliefs. Millions of people who consider themselves to be Christian now believe that the Bible is totally accurate in all of the lessons it teaches and at the same they believe Jesus Christ sinned. Millions also contend that they will experience eternal salvation because they confessed their sins and accepted Christ as their Savior, but they also believe that a person can do enough good works to earn eternal salvation.” (Barna Report: 1-12-09)

✳ **The Gospel: [a biblical overview]**

“The good news that God has provided salvation through Christ’s substitutionary death and bodily resurrection, and as a gracious gift, received by personal faith [and repentance] through the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:16-17; 3:22-36; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Eph 1:13). The gospel of salvation originates in God’s sovereign grace and is experienced only through personal faith in Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16; 20:31; Ac 16:31; Eph 2:8-10).

Scripture speaks of the gospel...

- of the kingdom (Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14);
- of Jesus Christ (Mk 1:1; Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:6, 7; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2; 2 Thess 1:8);
- of God (Mk 1:14; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Tim 1:11);
- of the grace of God (Ac 20:24);
- of Paul (i.e., the divine gospel revealed to Paul and preached by him; Rom 2:16; 16:25; 2 Tim 2:8; cf. Gal 1:11-12, 15-16);
- of your salvation (Eph 1:13);
- of peace (Eph 6:15); and
- eternal (Rev 14:6).

### **Divine Origin of the Gospel**

Because the message of the gospel is that a way has been opened between sinful human beings and God, the gospel could only be true if it is divine in origin (Rom 3:22-26; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Gal 1:11; 3:8). The gospel was introduced in God's initial messianic prophecy (Gen 3:15). The gospel truths are typified in Israel's sacrificial system (Heb 5:1-10; 9:1-10:14; cf. Lev 16-17). The OT presents the gospel as a primary blessing of the coming messianic times (e.g., Isa 40:1-5; 53; 55; 59:15b-21; Jer 33:14-16; Zech 9:11-12; Mal 4).

In the gospel, God offers the free gift of salvation, and anyone can receive it by trusting Christ (Jn 3:16; Eph 1:13-14; 2:8-9).

The work of proclaiming good news is a joyous task (Isa 52:7; 60:1-2). Christ commanded that His people share this blessing everywhere they go (e.g., Mt 28:19; cf.

24:14; 26:13; Mk 16:15; Ac 1:8; Rom 1:14-17; 10:11-17; 15:20-21; Gal 2:7; Rev 14:6).

Paul, who speaks of the concept most often, says that he has been “set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1; cf. 1 Cor 1:17; 9:16). He was eager to tell others the good news (Rom 1:15), especially those who had not heard it (Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 10:15-16). He wanted nothing to stand in the way of this proclamation (1 Cor 9:12, 18-23; Phil 1:12-13). All who work to share the gospel are partners with Christ in it (Phil 1:4-6).

### **The Gospel of Grace Through Faith**

The plan of salvation, which is received by grace through faith and based on Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice for sin, is so exact that any compromise of its message is a different, distorted gospel (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6-7), a lie worthy of damnation (2 Cor 11:8-9). Only the gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16-17; cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:16, 36).

Because the gospel is by grace, the only acceptable response is faith (Rom 4:16). The gospel expects the response of faith alone in Christ alone (Ac 16:31). Belief is not mere intellectual assent, but includes repentance and reliance on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Mk 1:15; Rom 10:9-10). It involves a death-like break with the past (Mk 8:35; Rom 5:10-11; 6:1-22; Gal 2:20) and a new foundation for spiritual victory (Rom 8; 1 Cor 15:1; cf. Eph 6:10-20).

At the moment of salvation through faith in Christ, numerous blessings are given:

- The believer enters God’s family by adoption (Jn 1:12-13; Gal 3:26; 4; Eph 1:5).
- God declares the believer to be righteous in His sight by virtue of the righteousness of Christ imputed or applied to the sinner’s account (Rom 1:17; 3:21-26; Eph 2:1-9; 1 Jn 2:1-2; cf. Zech 3:1-5). The sin of the believer, conversely, is laid upon Christ and paid

for in His death on the cross (Rom 5:7-9; Eph 1:7). Christ is the believer's priest before God (Heb 5:1-10; 9:13-10:18).

- The believer becomes “a new creature” in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).
- The believer is identified with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom 6:5-11; Gal 2:20).
- The believer is freed from the power of necessity of sin that comes with human depravity (Rom 6:7, 18:21; Gal 5:13-15).
- The believer receives eternal spiritual life (Rom 5:21; 6:23; 1 Cor 15; 1 Jn 5:11-13).
- The believer receives the indwelling Holy Spirit, a seal for the day of final redemption (Rom 8:1-17; Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 1:5-6).

### **The Christian's Response**

In thankfulness, Christians are to offer themselves as living sacrifices, turning from the world's way of life and their former patterns of sinfulness (Rom 6; 12:1-2). Christians are to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel they serve (Phil 1:27). They are to follow the example of those who have struggled that the gospel might be known (4:3). Through all of life's trials, they are to stand firmly in its hope (Col 1:23).” Henry Holloman, *Kregel Dictionary of the Bible and Theology (181-83)*.

#### **\* So What Exactly Is The Gospel?**

1. “The Gospel is “the good news of the Kingdom” (Matt 24:14). The Gospel must be understood within the grand narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation. God has invaded our sin darkened world – this is really good news! So the Gospel is the “Gospel of God” (Mark 1:14; Rom 1:1; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Thess 2:2, 8-9) because it is the bulletin that God has acted decisively in history, that he has not left us in darkness, and

that in so doing is glorifying Himself. Often the Gospel is called the “good news of the Kingdom” because it announces that God has arrived in the person of His Son, King Jesus (Mark 4:23; 9:35). The Gospel declares that Christ has begun to establish his Kingdom and will return to fully reign over his dominion. All Creation looks forward to that day (Rom 8:22-25).

2. The Gospel is the good news of victory – over Satan and death. Pictures of Times Square packed with thousands celebrating the end of WWII have become iconic of the giddy relief felt when dark days give way to victory. That is nothing compared to the worshipful celebration of the redeemed (Rev 5:11-14). By his death, burial, and resurrection, Christ made an open spectacle of our implacable enemies (Col 2:15). On our behalf He defeated death and the Devil (1 Cor 15:54-57; Heb 2:9-15) and established his supremacy over all things (Col 1:13-23).
3. The Gospel is the good news of forgiveness of sins. In his discussion of the Gospel in 1 Cor 15, Paul emphasizes that Christ died “for our sins.” The Gospel is the good news that at Calvary Jesus became our substitute and suffered the wrath of God on our behalf. The blood of Christ is both our propitiation and expiation. It both pleads on the behalf of and cleanses the one who trusts him as Lord and Savior.
4. The Gospel is the good news of reconciliation (Rom 5:6-11; 2 Cor 5:18-21). The Gospel announces that God has reconciled himself to us in Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the true “good news of peace” (Rom 5:1; Eph 6:15). In sum, the Gospel is the joyous news that God, by and through his Son, acted to redeem all things – including us – to Himself. This is the Gospel of Christ (1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; Gal 1:7; 1 Thess 3:2; Rom 15:16).

Ken Keathley, “Contours of a Great Commission Resurgence, Part 5: What is the Gospel? The Full Orchestra Rendition”

- \* “What’s the gospel? I’ll put it in a sentence. The Gospel is the news that Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, died for our sins and rose again, eternally triumphant over all his enemies, so that there is now no condemnation for those who believe, but only everlasting joy. That’s the gospel.” John Piper, “The Gospel in 6 Minutes” (9-12-07)

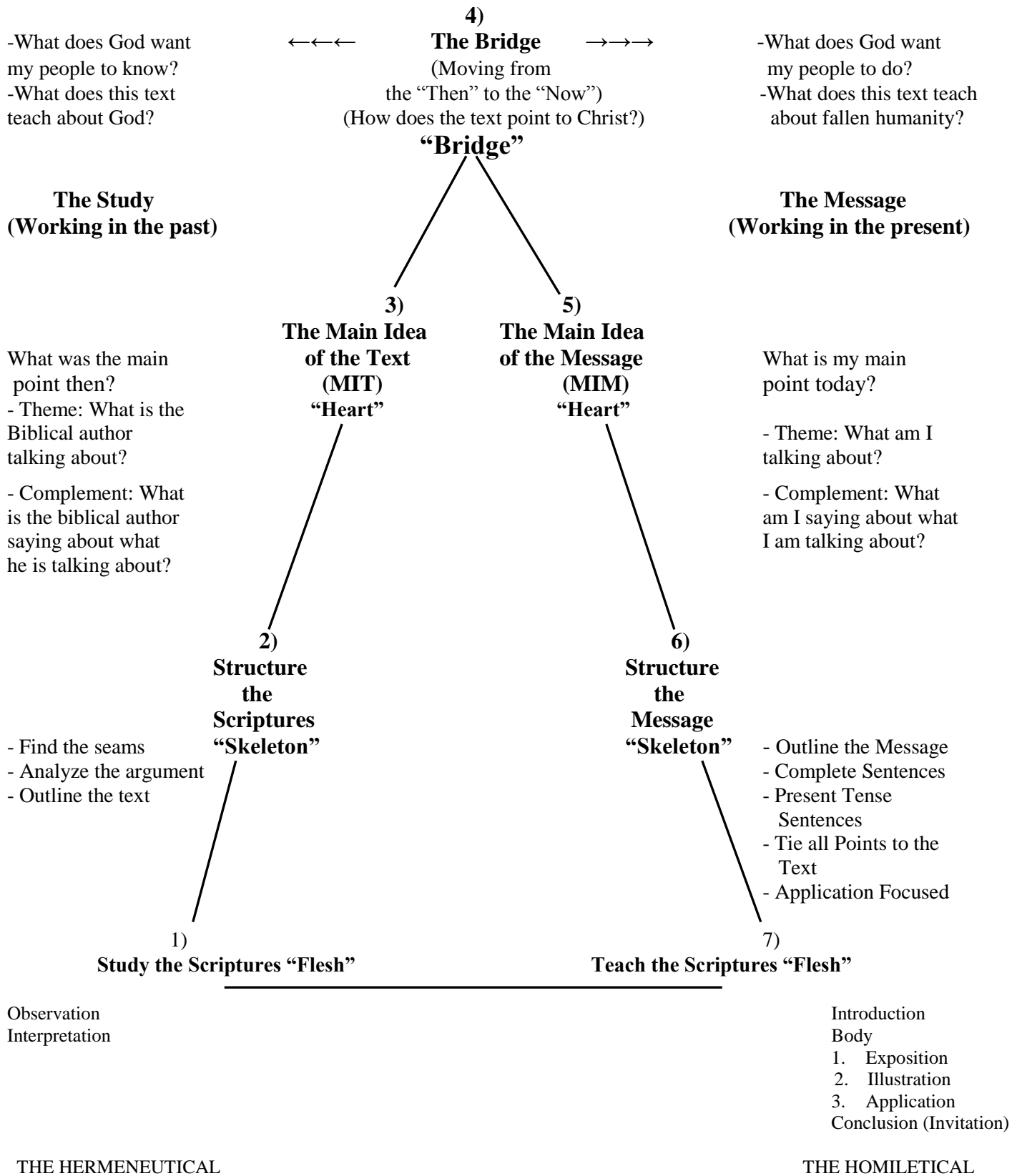
## **II. A Definition and Model for Faithful Gospel Proclamation**

“Expository preaching is text driven preaching that honors the truth of Scripture as it was given by the Holy Spirit. Discovering the God-inspired meaning through historical-grammatical-theological investigation and interpretation, the preacher, by means of engaging and compelling proclamation, explains, illustrates and applies the meaning of the biblical text in submission to and in the power of the Holy Spirit, preaching Christ for a verdict of changed lives.” (Daniel L. Akin)

“... preaching must be *Christ centered*, must interpret biblical texts in their *redemptive-historical contexts*, must aim for *change*, must proclaim the *doctrinal center* of the Reformation (grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, God’s glory alone) with passion and personal application, and must speak in a language that connects with the *unchurched* in our culture, shattering their stereotypes of Christianity and bringing them face to face with Christ, who meets sinners’ real needs—felt and unfelt.

The approach, [is a] blend of the Reformed heritage of preaching, evangelism, and pastoral care, with a concern to en flesh the biblical aspects of our heritage in the midst of contemporary post-Christian and postmodern culture.” (Dennis Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 54).

# HOW TO STUDY AND PREACH THE BIBLE





✱ **Five Crucial Questions For Every Sermon to Raise and Answer**

- 1) *What does God want my people to know?* Every exposition of Scripture will have a knowledge element. There will be biblical and theological content. There will be gospel content. Biblical and theologically illiteracy is rampant in our churches. It is a malady that afflicts far too many congregations. A faithful expositor will always strive to teach his people the “stuff of Scripture.”
- 2) *What does God want my people to do?* Doing follows knowing. Having immersed our people in God’s word as to what does it say/mean, We must craft an action plan that paves a clearly marked road for obedience. If we answer the knowledge question but fail to follow up with an outlet for concrete and specific action, our people will become confused and frustrated. They may not see the relevance and practical nature of the Bible for how they should think and act today. Our goal is to make disciples of Jesus who will think and act in a “Christian worldviewish” kind of way. People who do not think like Jesus will not act like Jesus, and people who do not act like Jesus are not really thinking like Jesus.
- 3) *What does this text teach about God and His character and ways?* This question is related to question number one but is more direct and specific. It is intentionally theological and God focused. It may actually be the first question you should ask. This question looks for the “vision of God” in the text. It probes the text to discover what it teaches about God’s person, character and attributes. It seeks to discover what we learn about God’s purposes and ways. We are trying to learn more about the God who has made us and redeemed us, the God who tells us to call Him Father.

4) *What does this text teach about fallen humanity?* This question naturally follows number three, and it should always follow number three. It will keep us from being man-centered or anthropocentric in our preaching. Bryan Chappell has a wonderful word in this context. He speaks of the “Fallen Condition Focus” (FCF). He defines this concept as “the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God’s people to glorify and enjoy him.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, what does this text reveal and teach about human persons made in God’s image who now bear the curse of sin and a depraved nature? Here is wisdom and balance. We are made in God’s image. That is good. We are sinners by nature and choice. That is bad.

5) *How does this text point to Christ?* This is central in the sermon construction process and therefore we locate it “under the bridge” to support the entire structure. Jesus is the hero of the Bible. The Old Testament anticipated Him and the New Testament explains Him. This is not a novel idea. The church fathers were thoroughly Christocentric in their preaching. After all, they got it from the apostles, and they got from Jesus. Jesus teaches us in Luke 24 that all of Scripture is about Him, all of it. In John 5:39 He says the scriptures testify of Me. Therefore we dare not treat the Old Testament, for example, like a Jewish rabbi. We are gospel preachers. We are Jesus heralds and ambassadors. We preach Christ and His gospel in all of Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Chappell, *Christ-centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 50.

## **“From Spiritual Death to Spiritual Life”**

### **Ephesians 2:1-10**

- I. Men must be confronted with their sin and spiritual deadness. 2:1-3**
- 1) Without Jesus we are spiritually dead. 2:1
  - 2) Without Jesus we are powerfully controlled. 2:2-3
    - We are controlled by the world. 2:2
    - We are controlled by Satan. 2:2
    - We are controlled by the flesh (sin nature). 2:3
  - 3) Without Jesus we are eternally condemned. 2:3
- II. Men must be shown that their only hope is in Jesus. 2:4-7**
- 1) God gives us life in Jesus. 2:4-5
  - 2) God resurrects us thru Jesus. 2:6
  - 3) God exalts us with Jesus. 2:7
- III. Men must be taught that salvation is all of grace through faith. 2:8-9**
- 1) God extends the grace (divine sovereignty). 2:8-9
  - 2) Man exercises the faith (human responsibility). 2:8-9
- IV. Men must be challenged to live out their new life in Jesus. 2:10**
- 1) God continues to work in us.
  - 2) God purposes to work thru us.