

Basics of Faithful Bible Teaching

Intro.

- Is it always necessary to proclaim the gospel when you preach from the Bible?

Read Colossians 1:21-2:5

Looking at 1:21-23:

- What is the gospel? What is the key event? What has been accomplished and how?
- Does Paul want the Colossians to move on from the gospel to other things or stick with the gospel?
- What temptations are there for us in our context to move on from or add to the gospel?
- How does Paul relate to the gospel he preaches? (end of verse 23) What might that servant attitude mean in practice?

Looking at 1:24-29:

- What is Paul's relationship with the Church?
- Who is Paul's master? And what is his master's commission?
- What exactly is the content of Paul's preaching? What are the words and phrases he uses to describe his preaching ministry?
- And what is the aim of Paul's preaching? (v28)
- What would Paul preach to a Christian congregation week after week in order to build them up?
- Is this proclamation work an easy thing for Paul?
- How does all this compare with preaching in our context?

Looking at 2:1-5:

- What is Paul aiming at? Where does he want to see the Colossians? What is his goal?
- Why is a focus on Christ so important? Why is He enough?
- What do you notice about the corporate (*pamoja*) nature of this spiritual growth? What does this tell us about the church?
- How does all this compare with the preaching in our context?

1. A servant of the Gospel of Christ crucified

Paul is a servant of the gospel – v23 – it is not his to use or change

The **gospel** is what he is preaching – v23

We must not assume the gospel. Preach it

To unbelievers and believers – v23 “not moving on” – we don't move on from the gospel
v27 – the riches of the glory of the mystery is Christ in you Gentiles

v28 – Him we proclaim – **that is how people are brought to maturity** – by preaching Christ

Why? v2-3 – all the treasures are in Christ

We must preach Christ

Not always what people will want but it is always what people need

Doesn't just mean 'Jesus died for you' – there are a 1000 ways to preach the gospel

2. Presenting the Word of God in its fullness

Servant of the church – v25 – but the church is not his boss

God is his boss - Has a commission from God to make the Word fully known

The authority is the Word and the aim of the preacher is to become invisible, to point away from himself to the Word

How? – **We let the Bible speak for itself** – preach through single passages and books – Preach the message given by the text (versus the preacher’s topic with verses from all over)

What advantages of that? What disadvantages of doing that?

[Some might include:

- Objective vs. subjective
- We get the context
- Listening humbly (Isa.66:2; 64:8) - We do not ‘use’ the Bible or ‘do something with’ the Bible - it is not a stepping stone or a spring board
- Word sets the agenda not the pastors pet topics (hobby horse) – becomes fresh, exciting, cutting – imagine preaching through 1 Corinthians
- Have to face the hard topics
- Let the text change us and our theological framework / worldview (Rom. 12:2) – if we just pour in our framework into a passage it will either dangerous or lack cutting edge or be boring!
- Pure – no artificial additives and no watering down – the pure Word is the power for new life and growth (1 Peter 1:23-2:3)
- Not “What is my message this week? Lord give me a message?” - look at the text!]

- Is there a tension between preaching Christ and expository preaching / faithfully handling the Scriptures?

- v25 (Word) → v26 (mystery) → v27 (Christ)
- So should not be a tension – The Word is all about Christ from first to last so if I handle it faithfully I *will* preach Him (John 5:39-40; 2 Cor. 4:1-6; 1 Peter 1:10-12; Luke 24:25-27,44-47; 2 Tim. 3:15)

3. And God speaks

Which do we think is more spiritual? A prepared exposition or a spontaneous ‘rhema’ word?

Which is more powerful and exciting? What the Bible says or what a new prophet says now?

v25 – the WORD of GOD – God speaking! – the Bible is not a dead letter but living and active

v27 – God making known mystery of Christ in you – should be very exciting - but we tend to want other mysteries, something other than Christ, a Word for us not a revelation of God

Read: Hebrews 3:7-4:12; 12:5-11; Rev. 2-3

The more you let the Word speak the more God speaks

Acts 10:44; ‘While Peter was still saying these things (rhema), the Holy Spirit fell on those who heard the word (logos).’ - the Rhema Word is the preaching of the Logos Word and the power is in the Logos

v6 – most exciting thing of all - as Christ is proclaimed (v28) he is offered to be received

Wesley: “I offered them Christ”

It will be very hard work – v29

Notice – I toil but it’s his energy and his work

So false choice – I work/prepare or God work’s/Spirit speaks

2 Tim. 2:7 – noses in the text, knees on the floor

It is to be done in the context of love

A servant of the church – v25

Struggling for you – v1

Rejoicing in them – v5

What is the Context?

We mentioned that, in making the Word fully known, **context** is crucial.

Context is a fancy word simply meaning looking at what comes before and what comes after.

We naturally read a whole -letter or email and we understand each sentence as part of the whole.

A text without a context is a pretext to say whatever you want.

No context and a text can mean anything, the more context the more clear and fixed becomes its meaning.

Do we believe that the Bible means one thing or different things to different people?

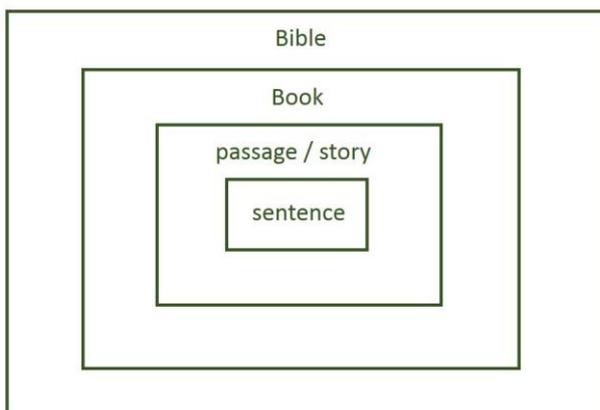
There may be different levels of meaning and different applications but the meaning of the text itself is fixed, it is not subjective or changeable over time.

Often we think it is fluid and subjective because of lack of context. Context fixes the meaning.

- Heb. 11:1 – in the context of the chapter we see it is not faith in whatever I want – rather faith in *God's promises* of future kingdom and the return of Christ, which we might well die not having seen (v13-16)

95% of false teaching would be stopped by simply looking at the context of the verses used.

When we get to the Bible there are different levels of context:



Bible level

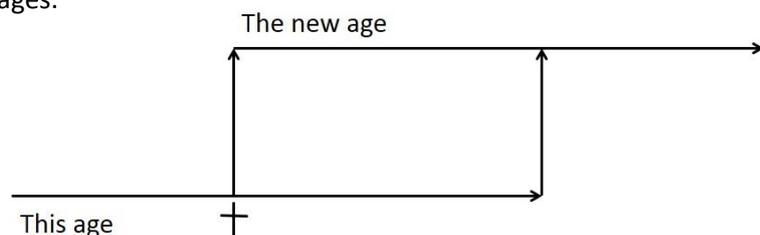
First we need to see the letters as part of a Bible overview – put them in the big story of the whole Bible – the story of salvation, creation → new creation.

If we don't do that we'll forget the big problem the Bible is talking about (and the letters are talking about) and we'll start looking in the letters for tips and principles to apply to what we think is our big problem.

What is the Bible all about? (2 Tim. 3:15)

And that's what the letters are all about – JESUS, JESUS, JESUS, CROSS, CROSS, CROSS

In particular – the NT letters all come in that part of the Bible after Jesus' ascension and before his return. This is the overlap of the ages.



This is such an important thing for us to get our heads around because it underlies all the New Testament letters – it's the basic dynamic that drives them. Christ has come, the great salvation, the great victory has happened at the Cross, the New Age the Prophets spoke of has started in one sense - we have been freed from bondage to hell and the devil and condemnation – we are seated with Christ on high – we've been adopted by the Father – we have every spiritual blessing. But we're still here – we're still in our decaying bodies, we still get sick, we still sin, other people sin, there's persecution, disasters and accidents, and Jesus is not physically here with everything submitting to him, this is not The New Creation is it?!?!

Then one day there will be the consummation of our salvation – when Jesus returns and this age finishes and there is no more pain or crying or suffering and we see Jesus as he is and we are made like him with new glorious bodies to enjoy Him forever.

For Now - The Kingdom of God, The New Age – is Now and Not Yet

In particular, look to see if there is Bible background to the book or letter you are focussed on (don't need to worry about reading lots of history books on ancient Greece – all the background we need is in the Bible itself).

Often, with the NT letters, there will be specific (and very exciting!) background to the letter you are reading – e.g.:

Acts 16 → Philipians

Acts 17 → 1 Thessalonians

Acts 18 → 1 Corinthians

Acts 19 → Ephesians

If not then there will be plenty of background information about the situation of the letter in the letter itself.

Book level

Now let's do something really radical... and **read through the whole of Colossians in one go**. [Make sure you've chosen someone in advance to do this, a good reader who has ideally prepared.]

After all the letter asks to read (Col. 4:16) and what do we normally do with letters? Read all through!

- Try to imagine you're hearing this for the first time, as a Philippian
- Experience it, see how it makes you feel
- Pick up where Paul is as he's writing
- Listen for the big themes in what he's saying

What was the impact of listening to the whole letter? How did it make you feel?

Passage Level

Within the letter there will be the opening, the greeting, the introduction, the body etc. And within the body there will be distinct units.

Look for the logic / flow of each passage and how it contributes to the argument of the whole letter. E.g. Colossians 1:21-23 – past, present, future

Sentence Level

In Paul's letters his sentences can be very long and involved with lots of sub-clauses.

It can be helpful to write out the sentences again with different thoughts on different lines, putting similar things right underneath each other and underlining the key logic words.

It doesn't really matter how you do it. Whether you use arrows or different colours or whatever but the key thing is to see the bits of a sentence and how they connect together – what is the logic of the argument? This can be quite hard work but the fire is in the logic. Just one "but" can make the difference between heaven and hell. Noticing one "therefore" can make the difference between moralism and gospel preaching.

Let's look at this whole issue of CONTEXT in practice:

Romans 8:37

- How is this verse normally used?
- What is the context of this verse in the passage, the letter and the Bible?
- How does the context control the meaning?

Plenary: What did you find?

Looking ahead:

MTC2 – Big Idea

MTC 3 – Application