

# The Purpose and Plan for the Church Pt. 10

## Acts 2:40-47 Acts 2:40–47

- And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”
- 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.
- 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
- 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
- 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,
- 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.
- 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,
- 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

### Introduction:

In his landmark work on exegetical theology, Walter Kaiser “the preeminent Old Testament Scholar” pointedly analyzed the anemic state of the church due to the inadequate feeding of the flock:

“The Church and the Scripture stand or fall together. Either the Church will be nourished and strengthened by the bold proclamation of her Biblical texts or her health will be severely impaired.

“the famine of the Word continues in massive proportions in most places in North America

It is no secret that Christ's Church is not at all in good health in many places of the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed, as the current line has it, "junk food"; all kinds of artificial preservatives and all sorts of unnatural substitutes have been served up to her. As a result, theological and Biblical malnutrition has afflicted the very generation that has taken such giant steps to make sure its physical health is not damaged by using foods or products that are carcinogenic or otherwise harmful to their physical bodies. Simultaneously a worldwide spiritual famine resulting from the absence of any genuine publication of the Word of God (Amos 8:11) continues to run wild and almost unabated in most quarters of the Church.

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward An Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), pp. 7-8.

Steven Lawson writes, “a dearth of biblical preaching has left the evangelical movement weak, starving for spiritual truth ...” John MacArthur agrees saying that the evidence for this famine is “overwhelming. ... Numerous churches,” he continues, “including some of the largest and best-known ones – have relegated the pulpit ministry to second-class status. ... Where preaching is still featured, it is rarely biblical preaching.”

As the pulpit goes, so goes the church; so the feeble state of the church can be traced to a famine of the Word of the Lord from contemporary pulpits. In their

“new way of doing church,” Lawson notes, “exposition is being replaced by entertainment, preaching by performances, doctrine with drama, and theology with theatrics.” The irony is that the preaching of the cross, which the apostle Paul wrote is supposed to be foolishness to the world (1 Cor 1:18), has become foolishness to the contemporary church as well.

Pastors have turned to other means of communication, and the result has been a famine of the Word in our land.

Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated, “The most urgent need in the Christian church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and most urgent need in the church, it is the greatest need of the world also.” The only way that the church is going to be restored is if pastors repent and return to an unwavering commitment to feeding the people the Word of God through persistent biblical preaching and teaching. This was the priority of early church (Acts 2:42), where the apostles doctrine is purposefully listed first in the passage. Jesus launched his public ministry with preaching (Mark 1:14, 38, Luke 4:18). Moved with compassion, Jesus taught the multitude (Mark 6:34). After His resurrection, He continued to teach and preach (Luke 24:27, 44-45, Acts 1:1-9). Jesus commanded that His disciples would continue teaching (Matt 28:19-20), and that his followers would be primarily identified, not as “fellowshippers,” not as “breakers-of-bread,” not even as “prayers,” but as “disciples,” or learners. The apostles continued

after the practice they learned from Jesus by preaching and teaching (Acts 2:42, 3:11-26, 4:1-2, 8-12, 19-20, 31,33, 5:20-21, 29-32, 42; 6:2-10; 7:1-53). Preaching and doctrinal devotion was the first duty with which Paul charged Timothy (1 Tim 1:3 – see also 1 Tim 4:6, 11, 13-16; 5:17; 6:17, 20 and 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:2, 14-15, 24; 4:2).

Biblical preaching must occupy the leading place of influence in the church – it always has, and must continue, or else the church will continue to waste away. Jonathan Edwards declared, “the primary importance of the pastor is to be an expository preacher.” But tragically, most of what passes itself off as preaching today falls far short of the standards set by the early church and Jesus Himself. If the church is going to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, if people are going to be brought to saving faith in Christ, and subsequent growth in Christ, they need the pure milk and strong meat of the Word of God – pastors much preach the message of Scripture, focused on Christ, and full of doctrinal instruction and sound theology.

Where are such pulpits today? The early church intensely hungered for them as the fruit of their genuine conversion. Panting after the Word of God is the usual and certain response of anyone truly born again, just as a baby desires his mother’s milk – he cannot get enough of it. Yet today professing

Christians stagger like drunken men from coast to coast looking for “a Word from the Lord,” in every place except where it should be found. Thankfully we can state with assurance that the Word of God is still preached from pulpits in this nation, and hearts that hunger and thirst for such preaching can still find it. Though we may very well be in the midst of judgment through famine, Christ, who is our good shepherd, has not starved His church in this nation. The question is: are you starving yourself by neglecting and abstaining from the full-course meals offered from biblical preaching?

## **Review**

**I. Christ is Lord of His Church**

**II. Christ Builds His Church**

**III. Christ Plans His Church**

**IV. Christ Gives Purpose to His Church**

Lesson:

## **I. Christ is Lord of His Church**

## **II. Christ Builds His Church**

## **III. Christ Plans His Church**

**A. Separated**

**B. Saved**

**C. Steadfast**

**D. Teaching**

**E. Fellowshiping**

**F. Celebrating Lords supper/ baptism**

**G. Praying**

**H. Giving**

**I. Praising**

**J. Fearing**

## **IV. Christ Gives Purpose to His Church**

## **A. Edification**

## **B. Evangelism**

### **A. Edification**

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

#### **Eph 4:11–16**

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

- I. The Preachers
- II. The Perfecting
- III. The Purpose
- IV. The Protection
- V. The Participation

## I. The Preachers

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

The subject **He** is emphatic in the Greek to denote that Christ Himself gives the gifted people. Five kinds of gifted people are listed in the predicate accusative, so the NIV correctly translates, **gave some to be**. The first two, **apostles** and **prophets**, were already mentioned in 2:20 and 3:5 as the foundational gifts to the church. The apostles include the Twelve, who had the office of apostleship by virtue of being with Christ (Acts 1:21–22) and having been appointed by Him (which would also include Paul; 1 Cor. 15:8–9; Gal. 1:1; 2:6–9). But “apostles” also included others who were recognized as apostles, such as James (1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14; 1 Cor. 9:6), Andronicus and Junias (Rom. 16:7), possibly Silas and Timothy (1 Thes. 1:1; 2:7), and Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, 9). This latter group had the gift of

apostleship but not the apostolic “office” as did the Twelve and Paul. Apostles, then, were those who carried the gospel message with God’s authority. “Apostle” means “one sent as an authoritative delegate.”

New Testament prophets were gifts to the church to provide edification, exhortation, and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3). They probably revealed God’s will to the church when the biblical canon was incomplete. Since the apostles and prophets were foundational, they did not exist after the first generation of believers.

**Evangelists** were those engaged in spreading the gospel, similar to present-day missionaries. **Pastors and teachers** are listed together because they are governed by one article (“the” occurs before “pastors” but not before “teachers”) and because the word “and” (*kai*) differs from the other “and’s” (*de*) in the verse. This may imply that these are two kinds of gifted people whose ministries are among settled congregations (rather than itinerant ministries like those of the apostles and evangelists). More likely, they refer to two characteristics of the same person who is pastoring believers (by comforting and guiding) while at the same time instructing them in God’s ways (overseers or elders are to be able to teach; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9).

Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 635). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists**

**de: but, and, now, (a connective or adversative particle)**

**Original Word:** ὃς

**Part of Speech:** Conjunction

**Transliteration:** de

**Phonetic Spelling:** (deh)

**Short Definition:** but, on the other hand, and

**Definition:** a weak adversative particle, generally placed second in its clause; but, on the other hand, and.

### **HELPS Word-studies**

**1161** *dé* (a conjunction) – *moreover, indeed now . . . , on top of this . . . , next . . .*

## **the shepherds and teachers,**

**Original Word:** ΚΑΙ

**Part of Speech:** Conjunction

**Transliteration:** kai

**Phonetic Spelling:** (kahee)

**Short Definition:** and, even, also, namely

**Definition:** and, even, also, namely.

### **HELPS Word-studies**

**2532** *kaí* (the most common NT conjunction, used over 9,000 times) – *and (also), very often, moreover, even, indeed* (the *context* determines the exact sense).

[After **2532** (*kaí*), the most common word in the Greek NT is the definite article ("the"). **2532** (*kaí*) is never *adversative*, i.e. it never means "however" ("but") – unlike the principal conjunction (*waw*) in OT Hebrew (G. Archer).]

The 1st and single priority of the Pastor/Teacher is to teach the Word of God.

He is to be an accurate communicator of the Word of God.

He is to be a faithful expositor of the meaning the text of Scripture

He is to be a Theologian, saturated with the Word of God.

So many things can distract a pastor, that are good but are not the priority

Things like

1. Helping the poor
2. Visiting the sick
3. Evangelizing the Lost
4. Being a community leader
5. Leading the PTA
6. Getting involved in Politics

All good but not the priority. The most important place a pastor can be is in his Study. Preparing to teach the Word of God to the people of God so the people of God can do the Work of God.

“In his day, the prophet Amos warned of an approaching famine, a deadly drought that would cover the land. But not an absence of mere food or water, for this scarcity would be far more fatal. It would be a famine for hearing God’s Word (Amos 8:11). Surely, the church today finds itself in such similar days of shortage. Tragically, exposition is being replaced with entertainment, doctrine with drama, theology with theatrics, and preaching with performances. What is so desperately needed today is for pastors to return to their highest calling—the divine summons to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1–2).” Steve Lawson

Every Great move of God started with preacher in his study learning the Word of God and then teaching it to the Church.

“Every season of reformation and every hour of spiritual awakening has been ushered in by a recovery of biblical preaching. This cause and effect is timeless and inseparable. J.H. Merle D’Aubigné, noted Reformation historian, writes, “The only true reformation is that which emanates from the Word of God.” That is to say, as the pulpit goes, so goes the church.

Such was the case in the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other reformers were raised up by God to lead this era. At the forefront, it was their recovery of expository preaching that helped launch this religious movement that turned Europe and, eventually, Western civilization upside down. With sola Scriptura as their battle cry, a new generation of biblical preachers restored the pulpit to its former glory and revived apostolic Christianity.

The same was true in the golden era of the puritans in the seventeenth century. A recovery of biblical preaching spread like wildfire through the dry religion of Scotland and England. A resurgence of authentic Christianity came as an army of biblical expositors—John Owen, Jeremiah Burroughs, Samuel Rutherford, and others—marched upon the British Empire with an open Bible and uplifted voice. In its wake, the monarchy was shaken and history was altered.

The eighteenth century witnessed exactly the same. The Bible-saturated preaching of Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and the Tennents thundered through the early colonies. The Atlantic seaboard was electrified with the proclamation of the gospel, and New England was taken by storm. The Word was preached, souls were saved, and the kingdom expanded.

The fact is, the restoration of biblical preaching has always been the leading factor in any revival of genuine Christianity.

Philip Schaff writes, “Every true progress in church history is conditioned by a new and deeper study of the Scriptures.”

That is to say, every great revival in the church has been ushered in by a return to expository preaching.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, preacher of Westminster Chapel London, stated, “The most urgent 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 the greatest need of the world also.” If the doctor’s diagnosis is correct, and this writer believes it is, then a return to true preaching—biblical preaching, expository preaching—is the greatest need in this critical hour. If a reformation is to come to the church, it must begin in the pulpit.”

#### Ac 6:1–4

**6** Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

**Ac 20:26–32**

<sup>26</sup> Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

**1 Ti 3:1–2**

**3** The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

**1 Pe 5:1–2**

**5** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the

glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you

1 Ti 1:3

<sup>3</sup> As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine

1 Ti 2:7

<sup>7</sup> For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

1 Ti 4:6

<sup>6</sup> If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed

1 Ti 4:11–16

<sup>11</sup> Command and teach these things. <sup>12</sup> Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. <sup>13</sup> Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. <sup>14</sup> Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup> Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so

that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup> Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Ti 5:17

<sup>17</sup> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Tt 2:1

**2** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Tt 2:15

<sup>15</sup> Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

2 Ti 2:1–2

**2** You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2 Ti 2:15

<sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

## 2 Ti 4:1–4

**4** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

The Scottish Reformer John Knox certainly understood this reality. Upon being commissioned to preach, and feeling the weight of that responsibility, Knox “burst forth in most abundant tears and withdrew himself to his chamber” (Marion Harland, *John Knox*, 16). He was completely overwhelmed by the awesome accountability of that duty.

Consider the following anecdote from Spurgeon’s ministry: A young preacher once complained to Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher of the 1800s, that he did not have as big a church as he deserved. “How many do you preach to?” Spurgeon asked.

“Oh, about 100,” the man replied.

Solemnly Spurgeon said, “That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment.”

(Cited from W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:254)

## Why Preach the Word?

For many reasons, faithful and full proclamation of the Word is the only right way to preach.

**First** of all, such preaching lets God speak rather than man, because it declares God’s own Word. And it is an incredibly thrilling privilege to give voice to God!

### 2 Ti 3:16–17

<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 complete, equipped for every good work.

**Charles Haddon Spurgeon said**, “I would rather speak five words out of this book than 50,000 words of the philosophers. If we want revivals, we must revive our reverence for the Word of God. If we want conversions, we must put more of God’s Word into our sermons.” This remains the crying need of the hour.

In *Famine in the Land*, Steve Lawson writes of hearing Walter Kaiser say in a commencement address that those who preach should always be pointing to a text. When a man preaches, he

should never remove his finger from the Scriptures, Kaiser charged. If he is gesturing with his right hand, he should keep his left hand's finger on the text. If he reverses hands for gesturing, then he should also reverse hands for holding his spot in the text. We should always be pointing the Scriptures.

**Second**, preaching the Word is the only right way to preach because it brings the preacher into direct contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit, the author of Scripture. It is for that reason that the preacher of the Word finds the process of study and discovery to be even more rewarding than the preaching that results from it, gratifying as that can be.

It is tragic and puzzling that so many preachers who recognize Scripture to be God's own Word spend more time investigating and interacting with the limited and imperfect minds of other men than delving into the infinite and holy mind of God. Part of the reason, of course, is that many hearers do not really want to delve into the depths of God's righteousness and truth, because it exposes their own shallowness and sin. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul warned his son in the faith about the danger of those who hold "to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2 Timothy 3:5). Later in that same epistle he would warn again that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; . . . and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths" (2 Timothy 4:3–4; cf. Acts 20:29–30).

**Third**, preaching the Word is the only right way to preach because it forces the preacher to proclaim all of God's revelation, including those truths that even many believers find hard to learn or accept.

**Fourth**, preaching the Word is the only right way to preach because it promotes biblical literacy in a congregation, not only through what is learned from the sermon itself but also through the increased desire to study Scripture more carefully and consistently on their own. The faithful pastor, and all other faithful

believers, love to learn God's Word because they love the God of the Word.

**Fifth**, preaching the Word is the only right way to preach because it carries ultimate authority. It is the complete and perfect self-revelation of God Himself and of His divine will for mankind, which He has created in His own image.

**Sixth**, preaching the Word is the only right way to preach because only that kind of preaching can transform both the preacher and the congregation.

**Seventh**, the final and most compelling reason that preaching the Word is the only right way to preach is simply that it is His own Word, and only His own Word, that the Lord calls and commissions His preachers to proclaim.

Martin Luther was one of the great preachers of all time. He explained the need for preaching like this:

Because heresies threatened the living apostolic message, it had to be recorded in a book to protect it from falsification. Preaching reverses this process of conservation again, allowing the Scriptures of the past to become the tidings of the present . . . The Gospel has been committed to lifeless paper; fresh words

can transform it into glad tidings again.

## **II. The Perfecting**

<sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

## **III. The Purpose**

<sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

## **IV. The Protection**

<sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

## **V. The Participation**

<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2016). (). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.