

Savage Wolves from Within, p.1

True Church Conference 2022

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We were talking about biblically healthy local churches, body life in the local church, same thing. You say biblically healthy church, what are you talking about? You're talking about the body of the local church being biblically and spiritually healthy. Um, we started off with preaching the word in the power of the Spirit, there's no, not going to be a church, there's not gonna be certainly, well, I shouldn't say that, the church can exist without a pastor, it can't exist well without a pastor and God's way is that it's very seldom and very limited time when a people might be called a church and they not have a pastor. But it, while pastors are not essential for the being of the church, they are essential for the well-being of the church, and uh, Brother Richard Caldwell preached powerfully and wonderfully on the essential of preaching the word in the power of the Spirit. I'll hit on some of that this morning and we talked about, um, the wolves from without when Paul was talking to the Ephesian elders, he said, "I'm gonna leave and, in effect, I've been a good pastor for you. I've preached to you the whole counsel of God but when I leave, savage wolves are gonna try to come in from without." And so Brother Darrell and Brother Virgil have done a fantastic job of warning us of the wolves and the wolf doctrine that's trying to get in and we gotta keep out, amen? And then, uh, there's not gonna be a healthy church if you don't quit and then not quit a thousand times. Brother Jono Simms preached powerfully and wonderfully on don't quit. Did y'all get that message? I thought, thought you did.

I, well, I've assigned myself protecting the church from savage wolves from within. Now I've broadened my topic out a little bit to kind of take in the whole broad perspective of a biblically healthy church life but I will deal with those main topics of biblical conflict resolution, biblical counseling, and biblical church discipline but I want to put things in a packaged whole and I get teased a lot about my 20 year vision thing. Um, well, I'm in my 41st year and I learned things studying this week I'd never seen before, Brother Jono. We're always learning so I'm gonna have to change it to a 41 year vision and, uh, you're not done until you get put in 41 years, at least that's true for me, but a lot of you are better and smarter than I am.

So I'm using this tree analogy, it'll be on your screen, to illustrate where we're going and what we're talking about. Go ahead and put the whole full screen up, if you would, Brother Tommy. Um, we'll start with the roots of a biblically healthy church or biblically healthy body life, and that is, you must be Bible driven or have a biblical theology. We're

gonna talk about that in a moment. Then coming on up from the roots, the trunk of the tree is preaching the word in the power of the Spirit. The limbs of the tree, biblical structures and strategies. And the fruit is the agape mature love shared in the local church body. That's the crown. That's where we're getting to. Um, Grace Life Church of the Shoals has not arrived but we walk in these truths. I'm not teaching you just what I studied, I'm teaching you what we're experiencing and many dangers, toils, snares, mistakes, repentance, corrections and starting over again, okay, in that 40 years of journey.

So let's talk about the roots, first of all, the roots of the tree of the biblically healthy local church so what I'm calling it must be Bible driven or, you could say, have a biblical theology. Now what I mean by that is when you look at the Bible and in the flow of progressive biblical revelation what is the ever-developing theme. So you go Genesis through Revelation and God slowly unpacks and unfolds what his purpose is, what the main thing is. Um, you might say in the, in the Old Testament it's contained, then you progress to the New Testament it's explained. In the Old Testament it's somewhat concealed in types and shadows, in the New Testament it's revealed. So when we study through the progressive revelation of the book, what is that ever-developing theme – listen to this – that is climatically verified in the culmination of the book? What's the theme that flows and progresses and unfolds and then at the end it comes crystal clear what God was all about? Well, I've outlined that with three aspects. There are three components to this gem, if you will, of a biblical theology or what is the main point.

1. The priority of God's glory. You cannot study through the text and you certainly can't get to the climactic end without realizing the priority is the glory of God. When Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name," revered be thy name, now he's not talking about praying and hallowing God's name, certainly we should do that, he's saying when you pray, pray that the hallowing of God's name will be established in the earth because that's how it's going to end up at the climactic conclusion. All that will be left is those who hallow the name of the Lord. So this purpose of glorifying God is the prominent theme, I think, of the three things I'm gonna mention under the biblical theology head, it's the foundation stone, if you will.

I like what one Greek scholar said is a good definition for glory and he said it's to esteem as glorious, to make the dignity and worth of something or someone to be manifest. God is all about manifesting in the earth his dignity and worth above all others, all right? Now folks, that's got to be with you in the ebb and flow of all of your pastorate, that God wants to make his dignity worth, you can expand that out to the other attributes, his beauty, his power, his wisdom, etc. etc. He wants it to be made known, all right?

Now that's why we have a purpose statement. You'll see our purpose statement on the screen and after almost four decades, I finally edited it, Brother Jono. Do you see the parentheses there? I put something else in there. I just couldn't stand it no longer. I had to put the local church in there. The purpose of Grace Life Church of the Shoals is to glorify God, that's first. How? Our way? By through our clever ingenuity and finding out what's going on in the culture and adapting it? No, by obeying him, by obediently making and

equipping disciples of Christ which is establishing local churches both in the Shoals and throughout the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I think not thoroughly, there's much, by the way, everything I'm gonna talk about there are hours and hours and hours more to say and much I must leave out, okay? But we need to have a Q&A, we need to have lunch, so I'm gonna hit things and run that need expanding. And I would like to say this to you, if you find something you think's worthy of taking down as a note, let me encourage you just take the broad outline this morning and get the messages later if you want to fill in a lot of the blanks because I just want you to hear what we're saying.

Now in John 12:23 the Bible says, "And Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" Jesus said, "I'm about to do something that's gonna cause people to make much of Me, gonna cause people to honor and praise and talk of My worth and dignity." And of course, that was the cross. Now scholars would say, well, this is referring at least partially to his resurrection, ascension and glorification, surely that's true, but it also points particularly to his work at the cross of redeeming his church, saving his elect children.

In John 12:27 and 28, Jesus says, "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour." We see this humanity, if you will, of Jesus. Now we don't know, we can't enter the mind of the Godhead but here Jesus said, "Should I avoid this? Should I just get around this? No, I came for this. I came for this purpose," talking of the cross. And then he says in verse 28, "Father, glorify Your name." So he says, "Now Father, We've had this plan from eternity past and I'm going to the pentacle center-point event of what's going to glorify You, the saving of Our church at the cross." So he says, "Now Father, let's, let's, let's do what We're all about, let's glorify Your name." Notice the other verse, Brother Tommy, put it back up there, "Father, glorify Your name," verse 28, "Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'"

I don't, again, being reverent I don't want to take a silly human, uh, interpretation of God the Father and God the Son but it's, it's as if God the Father or rather God the Son said, "Let's glorify Your name," and the Father said, "Oh Son, don't, don't worry about that. I've glorified My name," and I think that means, "through what You're doing right now coming to the centerpiece of Your and ministry of the cross in saving the church. I've glorified it through that and, by the way, I'm going to start building this church and then I'm going to at the end glorify it with us forever. I have glorified My name and I'm going to keep on doing it." Look, brothers and sisters, God is thrilled about being God. He's absolutely, can I use the phrase, tickled to death at himself. He's the only being in the universe that can look in the mirror and say, "Perfect." If God didn't rejoice in God he would be a sinner himself. God is all about manifesting his glory.

So we found out that Jesus is driven to glorify the Father, i.e. particularly in his work of redeeming his church and building his church, and by the way, so should we. Are you with me, church? So should we. So the Father also is driven to glorify his own name,

"I've both glorified it and will glorify it again." Now my question to those of us who are pastors, as you prepare your sermons, as you preach your sermons, as you shepherd your local church flock, are you as passionate about God's glory and particularly the work of God's Son in building his church his way, as he is concerned about it? Are you as passionate as he is? I can answer that: you're not. But there ought to be something in our hearts that says, "Lord, I want to be." There ought to be at least the germ in there, brothers, that says, "I want to be glory of God centered and glory of God focused in the motive of why I do everything I do." That's what I mean by Bible driven and have a biblical theology behind the totality of our pastoral work. That's the only way to build a true or healthy church.

To have this as the driving force of your church is key. Here's what's not key – are you listening? If you have as the, definite article, the driving force of your church to save sinners from hell, you are at least unbalanced and at the most unbiblical if not blasphemous. Did you hear that? Now we have a passion for souls here. Have you see the mission work we're a part of? Do you know the church Juan just talked about is the first church planted among an unreached people group by any church in America without the aid of a career missionary? God let us get in on that. Here's what I'm saying, we're passionate for souls but the passion for souls and keeping people out of hell is a great motivation but it is not the motivation of the church, the glory of God is the motivation and God is most glorified when his children are sought and his children are saved and his children are added and in God's local churches.

So let's don't take a secondary motive. I'm trying not to get off track so hard. Did y'all see the video, I'm not trying real hard right now, did y'all see the video of the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Orlando, Florida to adamantly proclaim that you must have immoral people and sinners on your membership roll because that's the best way to reach them for Christ? Blasphemy. Absolute blasphemy. Radically the inverse of biblical doctrine. That's why you've gotta have a biblical theology. Brother Barry King, that's a man who praises "winning souls over the truth." He's got it backwards. Matter of fact, he will not win as many souls that way. He may add a bunch of numbers of people who jump through hoops but he won't build God's church that way. Unbelievable. You see, what, now what's he driven by? He's driven by his own cleverness and creativity. He's driven by an unbiblical theology, not a biblical theology.

Now let's be gracious, all right? I wasn't very gracious to him, was I? But he's, he's an older fellow. Good night, he ought to know what he's doing. But brothers, let's be gracious to one. There's good brothers, now there are some brothers out there, well, I'll presume they're brothers, there are a lot of men in the pulpits who aren't saved, but there are men out there in pulpits who are prostituting the church to build their own stuff and glorify their own names. That's why they're doing all this clever crazy stuff to appeal to the world. But on the other hand, let's be patient and gracious because there are a lot of pastors who mean well, they just haven't grown. I, uh, Brother Jono, we know that process, you just learn and you realize, "Hey, I'm thinking wrong here and I'm, I'm thinking wrong about that." You repent. You get things better in line. So a lot of pastors are like Apollos, they need Anchored in Truth, they need you, they just need folks to

bring them aside like Aquila and Priscilla brought Apollos aside and showed him a more excellent way. So let's be gracious with one another. Can I get an amen right there? We're all growing and learning together.

Okay, the second part of our Bible driven theology that's gonna build a healthy church is the preeminence of the Son of God. First we had the priority of the glory of God, next on the tree the preeminence, that's the trunk, of the Son of God. Colossians 1:18 says, "He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place," or the preeminence, "in everything." That's the passion of our hearts that Christ might be exalted in everything, and obviously these interlink, they're inseparable. That is to the glory of God.

Now in 2 Corinthians, we, we'll not spend a lot of time here but in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and 6, Paul talks about how the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so they might not see, they can't see who Jesus is. They can't see the preeminence he ought to have because Satan's blinded their minds. They can't see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who's in the image of God. Then he says in verse 6, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." So Satan's blinded the eyes but then God has shone in the hearts of believers, so in the hearts of believers we carry a light put there by the new birth so now we can see what God has known all along, we can see and know that the glory of God is most fully seen in the Son of God, and you never can leave this out, brothers, and in the work of the Son of God in building his church. That's why I'm rabidly local church centered.

So as we think about the glory of God, we think of the preeminence and the honor we give to the Son of God and the Son of God's work of building his church, pastors, do you realize what an awesome trembling position you've been assigned to, to co-labor with Jesus in this work of building his church and glorifying God the Father? If we properly preach any biblical text, we will properly exalt Jesus Christ.

Now the third component to this biblical theology that must drive us and one way to look at this is this biblical theology is the dye that permeates the entire fabric of our ministry. Did you hear that? It permeates everything. It permeates sermon preparation. It, it permeates our proclamation when we're preaching. It permeates how we structure and design and run the church. This biblical theology must be the driving force, it must flavor everything we do. Now the third part is the centrality of the local church. Now I know theologians would probably argue and say, "Well, you probably not, should not put local there because, you know, in the eternal state it will all be one big glorified church." I know that but we live in time and all we know in time are local churches.

Ephesians 3:20-21, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within, to Him be glory," there it is again, now notice the horizontal here, "glory in the church and in Christ Jesus," just for time? No, "to all generations forever and ever." What God was planning in Genesis 1:1 that he unfolds in the progressive revelation of the Bible that becomes very clear in the

New Testament that culminates climatically in the glorified state at the end is that Jesus is going to build a church and the church along with Jesus brings God great glory because actually they're inseparable. He's the head, it's the body. You can't, you can't honor me and dishonor my wife. You can't love me and not love my wife too. We're one flesh. You can't honor Jesus and not honor and love the church.

So the priority, so much more I need to say but I'm not gonna say for time sake, at least don't think I am, let me look right here. No, I basically said that. The priority of God's glory. The preeminence of God's Son. The centrality of God's local church. Pastors, that ought to be burning in your hearts 24/7.

Part 2. We're moving on up the tree. The roots of the tree is a Bible driven passion or a biblical theology that drives everything. The sap comes on up and then we come to the preaching of the word in the power of the Spirit. Now you could argue that the preaching of the word might outta be the roots because in, it informs the biblical theology and that's true, but for my purposes I'm coming from a perspective of, of you're already converted and you already have a general understanding of, of sound biblical theology, now the preaching of the word is the instrument, the primary instrument, it's the trunk. Nothing's gonna happen with the tree if the trunk isn't solid. It's the primary instrument used by God in building the church.

2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." Studying is implied here. That's, there's hard work in that. Approved is mentioned here, that means tested and proven. Uh, a workman. That's what it's called here. By the way, preaching is hard work. If you're gonna build a healthy church with graciousness, with wisdom, with balance, you're gonna have to say no to your people a lot of times when they want your time and attention because you've got to prepare to preach. I offended a lot of people at this church the first 20 years because they were used to a pastor who was on call 24/7 and I just wasn't available 24/7 because I, I'm not one of these guys that can throw it together in two hours and it's laborious to prepare sermons exegetically sound and local church centered sermons.

So you've got to understand, look, Satan is probably not gonna bring a band of infidels to march up and down in front of your church to keep you from studying but he'll, he'll use some sweet little old lady that everybody loves in the church to talk about you, "You don't care about me. You didn't have time for my call." And you're just going to have to take it. Be kind, be gracious, but you've got to make a priority to preach and prepare to preach. And if you're a layperson here with your pastor, you be the warrior that helps your church understand, "Whatever else that man does, he has to preach the word to us. I don't care if he makes it when momma's surgery, I hope he can, but if he don't, if he preaches the word in the power of the Spirit, I'm happy." If you talk to Grace Life Church people, I spend a good bit of time out on my farm sitting on a tractor and doing stuff like that. My people take, we don't care if he goes to Six Flags every week if he's ready to preach on Sunday. Whatever it takes. If, if it helps him meditate and get ready, that we

don't care. And I think that's why God's allowed me to grasp a lot of things. I've had more time to study and meditate than almost any other preacher I know.

Then he says here we've got to be handling accurately the word of truth. You know the idea, they'll cut it straight. Scholars say it's probably like a stonemason has to cut his blocks straight or they're not gonna fit straight in the building. Or, or an engineer when he builds a road, he's gotta have his angles, his degrees right, and so we've got to be careful to cut it straight, to exegete it properly and the only way I know of to handle the text and cut it straight, handle it accurately is through expositional preaching verse by verse, chapter by chapter, interpreting the text grammatically, contextually, historically, culturally, and what I call systematically which gets into our biblical theology, what does the Bible say here about the, the thing that this text is particularly saying. And all of that, brothers, must be empowered by the Holy Spirit. I can't emphasize that strongly enough. You do understand you can be a faithful expositor for 40 years, dot every i and cross every t, and miss a humble yieldedness to the Holy Spirit and you've been a waste of time. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit behind the effort is essential. I mean, there needs to be a desperation of yielded dependency in your spirit as you study. I say it regularly, "O dear God, if Your Spirit don't help me, this is not gonna work." Now you can impress men without the, the Spirit but you can't build God's church without the Spirit.

Now strap in, listen carefully. Do not misunderstand what I'm about to say. I want to exhort you about something Dr. Seal and Dr. Jono and I have been talking about for a few years and that's what I'm calling expositional idolatry. "Oh, my goodness, couldn't even think such a thing." Expositional idolatry. Now lest you think I'm like Charles Spurgeon and don't do exposition, I said that on purpose, are you getting what I'm saying? I think he's a pretty good preacher of the word, can I get an amen? I don't recommend that because you're not Spurgeon. He had a brain that God only gives out once every 100 million people. Now he just had an ability that's just off the charts. For all the rest of us normal preachers, the mainstay of our pulpit must exposition. I've preached through 27 books of the Bible here, six years going through Luke, 4-5 years going through Hebrews, and Lord only knows Isaiah because I preached it Sunday morning and Sunday night, it might have been eight years. Don't do that. Don't do that to your people. Don't take that long in your exposition, okay? Do better than I do, all right? I'm saying that to say I don't have to back-up to anybody to say I'm an expositional preacher but I have been guilty of expositional idolatry until a dear faithful brother years ago released me from that idolatry.

Listen to these texts. Well, let me say this first, you have to grasp, pastors, that you can preach expositionally and have a name that you're alive but yet be dead. Matthew 28:20, Jesus gives this culminating charge to his church, go into all the world, make disciples of all preachers, "teaching them all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age." You know, it's interesting what Jesus says there. "Now you guys are gonna go out. I want you to go all to all the earth and expositionally preach My word." He didn't say that. He said, "Teach them to do everything I've commanded you." Now exposition is an essential foundation to getting your people to do it but it's not the

end of getting your people to do it. There's more than just that to pastoring is what I'm saying.

Now let me tie this in and you're gonna have to think with me this morning. If I'm missing it, then privately tell me later, don't tell me in front of anybody, okay? In John 7:17 and 18, there's something incredible here. John 7:17 and 18, "If anyone," here's the phrase, "is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." Jesus said, "If from your heart, in effect, you love God and really want to serve and obey and please God, then God will enable you to know the truth," in our context, of the text. Did you get that? You know why some people can exegete the Scripture wonderfully and powerfully but they never really get it? Because in their hearts there's not the abiding passion, "Lord, I want to be pleasing and obedient." And for us pastors, I mean pleasing and obedient in how I structure, build, form this church. Y'all getting this? A passion of the heart to be pleasing to God and obedient is a key to interpretation. It's not just an intellectual activity. Dr. Seal and I talk about this all the time. You've got to learn the nuts and bolts of sound exposition and he's as good as it gets on that, but Dr. Seal and I haven't found a way to cut a guy's chest open and get the Holy Spirit in there yet. I mean, if they don't get that heart right, they're gonna take everything Tim teaches them and just misuse it. And the sad thing is a lot of people will brag on them because they're not wise enough to see the difference between true local church exposition and expositional idolatry.

Now let me build this on a little bit more. Listen now. Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, I love, do y'all like Jamieson, Fausset, Brown's commentary? I just love it. It's just a great quick commentary. The guys just seem to get it. In this phrase about if you're willing to do God's will then you'll know, in effect, then God will illumine the understanding, here's what they say about that. A principle of immense importance. I don't think I'm missing it. If Jamieson, Fausset, Brown says I'm right, I must be right. They're saying this is immensely important, pastor, because I'm in the context of pastors here. This applies in other ways but us as pastors. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown goes on and says singleness of desire to do God's will is the grand inlet to light on all questions. What's this text mean? How does that apply to the church? If in my heart I really desire God's church be built his way, on his doctrines, structured the way he wants it, functioning the way he desires, then God has promised, "I'm going to open up to you primarily in the appli, area of application in your sermon, I'm going to open up to you the insights that will really help you have an effective ministry." I could run through a wall right now. Brothers and sisters, that's gold. That's gold. It ain't my gold, this is God's gold but it's gold.

Well, I've quoted Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, let me quote Noblit. Here's what I would say. Love for God and a true desire to obey his will in building a biblically, spiritually healthy church is the key to proper interpretation of the text and proper unction in the preaching of the text. It's the key to grasping what God wants you to see and know and the key to it coming out and having effectiveness in the hearts and lives of the hearers in your local church.

Now in John 17:17 and 18, he, he gives two contrasts here and contrast to the one he says if he's willing to do his will, he says then there are those, in effect, verse 18, those "who speaks from himself, they seek their own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." Now he's talking about himself but is it not true that we in the ministry, and if you don't have to fight here in repentance, if you tell me you're not fighting here in repentance because you don't have to, then I'm telling you you're a liar. We all have to keep fighting that pride thing, don't we? "O God, it's not about me. O God, get me outta the way. O God, I repent of thinking that I'm important." Your church is what's important but what I charge you to do, brothers, is be in that fight. Can I get an amen there? Fight with me there. Let's fight together for that so that God will open up our understanding and give us grasp of what he's trying to accomplish in his church and what he wants to teach through the text.

Jesus says those who are in it for their own glory are not allowed to understand the truth the way it ought to be understood. The Bible says those things are foolishness to the natural man. The natural man dig, digging with all of his might can't get it. He may be brilliant, may dot every i and cross every t of expositional study but if he's a natural man without the Spirit's enablement and particularly that special light God says he'll give us if our hearts are genuine to build his church his way for his glory. You see, an atheist may perfectly follow the rules of exposition but God does not allow the atheist to properly grasp the truth or certainly not the preaching. An atheist can study and study and study and study and he can articulate the historical context but he doesn't get it. You know why he doesn't get it? He doesn't have a love for God's glory and he doesn't have a love for the good of God's church. It's all about him studying it.

Now if Satan cannot get you to slack on exposition, he can do just as good by getting you to slack on your application of the exposition in local church life. If he can't get you to slack on your study for your exposition, he'll get you to slack off on the application of your study to the local church. That's why he said in John 7:7, "If he's willing to do My will, he will know the teaching." Uh, the scholars this is experiential knowledge. They say this means you'll be able to grasp the certainty and the importance, the authority of the teaching, the doctrine that's in your text. Well, this speaks to heart conviction and determination of the teaching.

Now I'm convinced that though with many weaknesses and failures and repentant seasons etc., but I'm convinced my decades long passion here to send out Spirit-empowered preachers and to plant or revitalize so that we can have spiritual biblically spiritual local churches to the glory of God, and my love and passion for that is why he's allowed me to grasp some things about local church life and local church structure and local church ministry. I know the certainty of some things because of my desire to please him in what's important to him. Brothers, you don't use God to help you be a great expositor, God uses you to build his church.

Now I've preached through 27 books of the Bible for 40 years, actually it's more than 27 because I picked up Romans and Psalms where the former pastor let off and I preached those half a books. And then there are many sections I exegeted, you know, here, uh,

Sermon on the Mount, whatever it might be. Let me give you, um, this key question. Here's a key question to discern if you might be an expositional idolater, or let me say it this way, to what degree the temptation to be an expositional idolater has taken root in your heart. None of us are 100% free here but you ought to be on the high road of repenting of it and staying above it, amen? Key question: is your primary motive to be known as a great expositor or to build a true church? Is your primary motive to be known as a great expositor or to build a true church?

Now as far as I can tell from the biblical text, there will be no expositional preaching in heaven. Anybody found a text that...I don't see that anywhere. Brother Barry, you run across that in your study? As far as we know from the...there will be no expositional preaching in heaven but there will be a healthy church in heaven. You see, that was the end of it all. That was the goal. That's the climactic conclusion that validates the theme that unfolds through all the Bible. In heaven Christ will be there face-to-face. Now Christ is revealed through the faithful preaching of the word of God empowered by the Spirit. Christ is made known to people through preaching. You won't have to make him known there, he's there. He's in heaven. We'll see him face-to-face. There will be no need to make him known. Why would you listen to me or Brother Jono preach exegetically in heaven when Jesus can just talk to us? Are you with me?

So I believe to the degree that you esteem preaching over the purpose of preaching a healthy church, you're an idolater and it's the heart condition. Now we live and die on exposition so you can't pin that on me but it's the heart issue. The degree to which you esteem preaching over the purpose of preaching, then you're an idolater, and if this is true and you're an expositor, then you're an expository idolater. Don't miss the forest for the trees. God is not looking so much for "know-it-all's," God is looking for "do-it-all's." "Go therefore and teach them to obey all that I've commanded you." You're not finished when you preach the word, you just told the church when you preached, "Hey, here's stuff we're fixing to change in this church. I found it in the text. We're reforming this church." And I'm telling you, in those early years, talk to my church members, they came in all knots in their stomach when I preached. They'd say, "He's gonna run across something else we're not doing and he's going to have to, he's gonna start making us do that too." Well, that's what you do, you preach it so we can start living it as the body of Christ. Exposition is not the end, it's the means to the end of a healthy church.

Keep that order in your heart and mind. We don't want to be like the silly women that Paul talks about in 2 Timothy 3:7, silly women are those who, the context teaches us, love their sin and made a charade of loving God. These silly women that Paul's talking about in 2 Timothy 3, they chose to chase one fad, one gimmick, one new novel teacher after another, they would study, study, study with these new guys or Beth Moore or whoever it is, and they used the word as a novelty and not to obey Jesus as Lord. So a preacher that does not deeply desire to reform and obey God's will for his church, you maybe not be a silly women, he's become a silly preacher. He don't understand. He's always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. He don't even get what it's about.

God has fulfilled what I'm about to tell you. I'd much rather be known that my church is a godly, spiritual, loving, mature church that be know that Jeff Noblit's a great preacher. That's rubbish because you know why? I might be "the great preacher" for a little while, then somebody else is "the great preacher," then somebody is "the great preacher," but when you build a true church, that lasts for eternity and gives God's glory for time and eternity. That's what God's called us to do, brothers.

The wheel illustration is something we use here to mark out the structure of what we're about. The wheel is, um, they'll put it up there in a minute, it shows you basic biblical structures for how we function in a church. Well, the wheel came out of my exposition. We'd learn and study, confirm that church history had a lot of it because you're not gonna find something in the Bible that 2,000 years of church history missed. That may not be in recent church history but if you back a few decades or a few centuries, you'll find people who lived out the Bible truth that you're burdened you're not seeing in churches today. But that came out, that practical understanding of functioning this way and, by the way, you don't have to do the wheel, you don't have to do it my way, you're welcome to copy anything we have, you can do something else as your illustration. And matter of fact, I've found through the years every illustration falls apart. It doesn't quite adequately display God's truth. It never can. But it gives us some help and some idea. We like to say the local church is theology in shoe leather. We like to say that sound exposition proclaims sound doctrine and theology but it must produce a sound methodology. That's our methodology. Has your sound preaching, is it producing a sound methodology of structure and function in the local church?

I'll close with this. There's a guy who owns an 18 wheeler truck, you've seen some of these 18 wheeler trucks and, um, this thing is rigged out: chrome wheels, got flames painted on the hood, the side of the truck's got this big stagecoach scene. This is beautiful. You get a glimpse of the inside of the cab and it's plush leather, it's got a sleeper, a microwave, satellite tv. I mean, amazing. But interestingly, you look at his logbook and you find that the miles driven and the, and the loads hauled, he's about half of average. Just about half of average. Then you've got another truck driver. His truck is painted drab white, vinyl seats, no sleeper, no microwave, no satellite tv. The trailer is just dull, unpainted gray. But you look at his logbook and he runs about 110% of average on runs made and loads hauled. He hauls the load.

Now if you preach an exposition that's not primary, primarily driven by a love for God and a desire to reform God's church to be spiritually and biblically healthy, then you are polishing the truck and not hauling the load. Woo, did you hear his sermon? Polished up nice. I want to see his church. Show me his church. Show me his people. Paul said, "You're my letter known and read of all men." Brothers, you're a letter. Some of y'all are writing books [unintelligible] book first but nevertheless, I'm not saying you're wrong for writing it and those are helpful obviously but let your church be your book, your statement of who God is and what God's about. And you know what I found out? You never get done. Brother John, I'm still writing that book. I've had to go back and tear it, tear out whole chapters and think, "Boy, I missed it on that one. That wasn't biblically right. I gotta redo that one." And so we just keep reforming God's church out of the

overflow of our expositional preaching until we take our last breath and we get to heaven and we'll wait for that day when God will glorify what we somehow in grace got in on starting.