

TIM PATRICK AND ANDREW REID | FOREWORD BY GARY MILLAR

THE  
WHOLE  
COUNSEL  
OF  
God

WHY AND HOW TO PREACH  
THE ENTIRE BIBLE

“Good books on preaching are many. Great ones are few. I regard this one among the great, because it advances novel proposals and covers ground generally overlooked. The authors are well qualified by training, gifting, and longtime practice. They have a burden for congregations not just to know but to love the Bible. They know the key to a congregation that is strong in the word is pastoral preaching that opens up the whole of Scripture, not just cherished bits and themes. Most importantly, they have a plan—calmly articulated but revolutionary in its way—and wise, strategic suggestions to move church leaders toward a more effective grasp and disclosure of *the entire* Bible’s deep nourishment and challenge. They lay out this plan with skill, tact, and compelling insight.”

**Robert W. Yarbrough**, Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

“Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid have served the church well in this book. Their aim is to encourage and aid pastors in preaching through the whole Bible cover to cover, and to do so in a way that is informed by biblical theology, systematic theology, and the gospel itself. The book is thoughtful and practical, with many helpful diagrams and lists. The authors are rightly concerned about biblical illiteracy in churches. As they point out, even in churches where the Bible is expounded, it can be done in ways that don’t help the person in the pew gain a grasp of the whole counsel of God. This work is a very useful addition to the literature on preaching and one that ably addresses that need.”

**Graham A. Cole**, Dean, Vice President of Education, and Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; author, *He Who Gives Life* and *Faithful Theology*

“Practical ‘how-to’ advice from the school of experience is always welcome, and there is a wealth of it here, challenging the expositor to focus and think through issues that are rarely, if ever, considered. How should our preaching schedules faithfully reflect the *whole* counsel of God, as well as the pastor’s heart for the long-term welfare and nurture of the congregation? It will be a stimulating challenge and tonic for the more experienced preacher, but will prove especially valuable to those in the earlier years of pastoral ministry.”

**David Jackman**, Former President, The Proclamation Trust

“As individuals, we are positively influenced by our favorite Bible passages. We return to them to form our lives, and we use them to teach and encourage others. Of course, we are negatively influenced by the Bible passages we do not know, do not read, and do not use. This limits our growth and maturity, and also limits our usefulness to others. In the same way, churches are positively influenced by their favorite Bible passages and negatively influenced by the Bible passages they do not know! While our evangelical theology may be that the whole Bible is the word of God, our evangelical culture may lead us to neglect most of it. Here is a robust challenge to preachers to ensure that we preach every part of the Bible—a big call for preachers and for churches! How good to be reminded to look for the maximum God has revealed rather than the minimum we can get away with!”

**Peter Adam**, Vicar Emeritus, St. Jude’s Carlton; Former Principal, Ridley College, Melbourne

“Patrick and Reid have done a great service to working pastors. After considering theological foundations for preaching through the whole Bible, they give very practical instructions and tools for how to do it. Here are the answers to questions many younger preachers are asking about how to organize and maximize the impact of their work in the pulpit.”

**Darrell Young**, Associate Director of International Workshops, Asia, Charles Simeon Trust

“So many Christians have simply lost the plot—that is, if they ever knew there was a plot. They have never been shown how the Bible as a whole tells the true story of the universe, from creation to new creation, governed by the sovereign mission and purpose of God, with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as its integrating center. The result is a crippling ignorance of what it means to live consistently as participants in that great drama of Scripture, instructed by the Bible’s historical revelation, and in expectation of God’s mission accomplished. This book’s rich theological reasoning and practical suggestions will motivate pastors to rectify that deficit by taking even more seriously their calling not just to preach ad hoc from the Bible, but to preach from the whole of the Bible over time, in such a way that their people grow in understanding the whole plan of God across the full canon of Scripture and live purposefully and fruitfully in the light of it (Col. 1:9–11).”

**Christopher J. H. Wright**, International Ministries Director, Langham Partnership; author, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*

# The Whole Counsel of God



# The Whole Counsel of God

Why and How to Preach the Entire Bible

Tim Patrick and  
Andrew Reid

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*The Whole Counsel of God: Why and How to Preach the Entire Bible*

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To Robert Miller,  
who apprenticed me in preaching  
through the books of the Bible  
in the local church.  
—Tim Patrick

To Denesh Divyanathan and Andrew Cheah,  
friends and gospel partners,  
who have graciously invited me to share with them  
in the privilege of training young Asian pastor-teachers.  
—Andrew Reid



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## Foreword

I was delighted when I heard that my friends Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid had started on this book, and doubly delighted when I read the finished product. I'm confident that their work will be immensely useful for pastors and those training pastors in the great work of preaching the whole counsel of God.

Over the past twenty years or so, a large proportion of the conversations I've had with fellow preachers (and latterly with students) have revolved around the very issues that are dealt with carefully and graciously in this book. The challenges of how to preach the larger books, how to ensure a "balanced diet" of Scripture, how to ensure that our preaching is both rigorously textual and deeply theological, as well as how to balance exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology are enduring questions for every generation. In addition, ongoing questions around topical versus expository preaching are perennial causes of debate. This book most helpfully tackles such deeply practical questions in a principled and richly theological way.

You probably will not, of course, agree with everything you find in these pages. That's the nature of any book that seeks to be of genuine practical help to the preacher working in the local church context. The more finely grained the argument becomes, the more we encounter minor differences of approach. But I suspect the enduring value of this book will be not in persuading everyone of how many chapters of Isaiah to preach at a time,

but rather in encouraging and fostering a thoughtful, realistic, theologically rounded, and literarily sensitive approach to preaching the whole of Scripture in the local church. That is a priceless contribution to make to the work of the gospel, and one that has been significantly neglected in recent times.

This book is also extremely timely. After the resurgence of expository preaching in the English-speaking world over the past fifty years, I suspect we are in danger of starting to assume its advantages rather than celebrating and promoting them. As is always the danger with a movement reaching its second and third generations, there is a growing tendency to drift away from a confidence in God doing his work through his word. Even amongst like-minded “word people,” it is very easy to slip into an unconscious pragmatism that sees the key to health and change lying in other approaches. This book provides a sane and compelling rationale for God-honoring, word-centered ministry, which is vital for the progress of the gospel and the flourishing of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gary Millar  
Queensland Theological College  
Brisbane  
March 2019

## Preface

This book was motivated by our love for the Lord and his church. In writing it, we were driven by our twin convictions that the church is established and grown by the word of the Lord, and that the Lord is rightly honored when the church sits under his word. While none of this would seem to be in any way controversial among evangelical Christians, the sobering reality is that a great deal of the Bible—perhaps, in fact, the majority—is never preached to the people of God, even in evangelical churches. There may be many reasons for this, and we will explore some of them in the chapters that follow. But whatever they are, we are worried that the practice of preaching only *parts* of the Scriptures necessarily results in the church being underfed and the Lord being only partly honored. In this volume, we want to address those problems by putting forward the case that vocational preachers should work to preach the *entire Bible* to their congregations and by offering some suggestions for how it might be done. In its essence, the concept is not complicated, but there is much to say about it given that so many of today’s preaching programs are a long, long way from the ideal.

Part 1 has three chapters that tease out the importance of preaching the whole Bible, the many different ways that preachers fail to do that, and some of the troubling implications of offering less than the entirety of God’s word to his people. This is followed by the central challenge of the book, which we might have called

our “audacious” or “outrageous” challenge, except that we think it is neither of those things. Rather, we believe that a practical commitment to preaching through the whole Bible is completely consistent with the teaching found within the Bible itself, as well as with our doctrines of Scripture and the canon. Next, Part 2 offers five chapters that serve as something of a “how-to” guide, first showing the importance of theological frameworks for preaching across the whole Bible, and second offering some nuts-and-bolts advice for planning balanced long-range preaching programs. Finally, Part 3 has four chapters in which we consider the ways that our challenge fits in with the real-world issues that face any preacher who leads a busy and complex ministry.

We have been excited to work on this book as a joint project, recognizing the richness that comes from bringing two minds and two sets of pastoral experience to the conversation. Sharp readers may discern our unique voices at different points in what follows, but we trust that they too will see the benefit of our collaboration.

Tim is deeply grateful to the Bible College of South Australia for its most generous research and writing provisions, and for the wonderful colleagues who all share a passion for bringing the whole Scriptures to the people of God. He is also thankful to the various congregations of St. Jude’s Anglican Church in Melbourne—especially Unichurch and those of the Parkville campus—for their time spent together learning through whole books of the Bible. On the home front, he cannot say enough about the constant support received from his wife, Catriona, who is as precious a partner in ministry as she is in all of life. Andrew would like to thank the board of the Evangelical Theological College of Asia for giving him the time to write in his early and critical days as principal, and also the congregations of St. Matthews Church in Shenton Park, the church plant of Curtin Community Church (both in Perth), and Holy Trinity Doncaster in Melbourne. Each of these churches loved the word of God and their pastor expounding it each week, and it was a delight to minister among

them. However, before them was always Andrew's most prayerful and sharpest critic—his wife, Heather—who often found herself awakened early to hear the final product after having already talked the passage through while walking the dogs numerous times in the preceding week. Both Tim and Andrew must thank Justin Taylor and the Crossway team for their most professional and caring support throughout the entire writing and editing process. We are also both indebted to Kim Folland, Tim's executive assistant, for her excellent work in text editing and document formatting. Any faults that remain in the text are entirely our own.



# Introduction

One of the most disturbing stories in the Old Testament tells of Jephthah, one of the judges of Israel (Judg. 11:1–12:7). Jephthah is not known for his marvelous victory over the Ammonites. Nor is he known for his rise from obscurity and destitution to be the head of the tribe of Gilead or a judge of Israel. No, he is known for a terrible vow he made. It ended in him presenting his only daughter as a burnt offering (11:29–40). If you read Jephthah’s story in the context of the Old Testament narrative, you find what lay at the roots of his deed. Although he appears to have been zealous for the Lord, Jephthah simply did not know the Scriptures. He was theologically deficient and lacked knowledge of what God had revealed in his word. This can be seen in his negotiations with the king of Ammon in Judges 11, as well as in his vow and failure to back out of it as it appears that God allowed him to do.

The point is that the people of God need to know God and his ways, but they cannot know God and his ways without knowing his word. This raises a critical question: How can God’s people know the fullness of God’s word unless it is constantly held up before them and systematically explained to them? In many places throughout the Bible, we see that this kind of commitment to the Scriptures—the entirety of the Scriptures—is indeed meant to characterize the people of God and to shape their activities. For example, Deuteronomy 17:18–19 gives a key requirement for every future king of Israel:

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them.

Similarly, as part of Joshua's commissioning to succeed Moses, Deuteronomy 31:9–13 speaks of the place of the word of God in the annual pattern of Israel's life:

Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess."

Chapter 8 of the book of Joshua records the people of Israel coming together for a covenant renewal ceremony. Verses 34–35 say,

Afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.

Generations later, the kingdom of Israel became divided and suffered many years of decline into sin and faithlessness, which was due to their abandonment of the word of God. But in the reign of the young King Josiah, the Book of the Law was rediscovered in the temple, and there followed a time of some renewal. Second Kings 23:1–3 tells how Josiah began his reforms:

Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.

Moving forward many more years in the history of Israel, to the time of the restoration after the exile, we find Ezra again bringing the entirety of the word of God to the people of God as the nation is being reestablished. The event is found in Nehemiah 8:1–8 and is worth quoting at length:

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the

scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

The core conviction of this book is that the need for God’s people to hear the whole Scriptures read and explained continues today. A light, thin, hotchpotch diet of Scripture—even well-taught Scripture—is not what God wants for his people, and yet this is all that too many churches offer. This book is written to help pastors and teachers of God’s word make the fullness of that word known to their people over a lifetime of preaching. Our hope is that through such comprehensive preaching, God’s saints might be better equipped for their roles than Jephthah was—that is, that they might know the mind and purposes of God, and so be equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17).

We have set ourselves two specific tasks in writing. First, we wish to encourage preachers to make it their goal to preach the *entire* Bible because we are convinced that *all of it* is the word of God for us. This is a much bigger aim than simply saying that we want to encourage preaching *from across* the Bible. We are not just saying that we want to encourage the feeding of Christian congregations with a good sampling of many parts of the Scrip-

tures. Rather, we want to promote the preaching of the whole Bible! We are conscious that whole-Bible preaching is such a monumental ambition that some might feel immediately that it is impossible even to contemplate it, and we are quite prepared to accept that for a range of very understandable and practical reasons, many, if not most, preachers will never be able to achieve complete success. However, our second purpose in writing is to present a number of paradigms and very practical helps that should allow most preachers to have a really decent shot at preaching through the entire Bible over long-term ministries to their congregations. As we lay out these suggestions, we are also convinced that even if preachers never quite end up bringing every single part of the Bible to their congregations but maintain it as their working goal to do so, they will at least end up offering a far fuller, more balanced, and even-handed program of teaching than they would by taking any other approach. There is nothing to be lost in aiming high.

Given these two purposes, it should be clear that this is not at all a book about *how to preach* a sermon. There are already many excellent books giving instruction on preaching, ranging from those that introduce the rookie to the basics of pulpit work right through to those that can stretch and deepen the most seasoned preacher.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this book is about *what to preach*, and about *how to plan and manage a long-range, ordered, and deliberate preaching program*.

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1. Some volumes we would recommend include Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1996); Murray Capill, *The Heart Is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014); Allan Chapple, *Preaching: A Guidebook for Beginners* (London: The Latimer Trust, 2013); Dale Ralph Davis, *The Word Became Flesh: How to Preach from Old Testament Narrative Texts* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006); Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Leicester, UK: Eerdmans and Inter-Varsity, 1988); Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Scepticism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2014); Eugene L. Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form*, exp. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980); John R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982).

## **Why a Book Like This Is Needed**

In light of the standard evangelical convictions about the nature of Scripture, it would seem that it ought to be very commonplace for pastors and teachers to work toward preaching through the whole Bible for the people they serve. And yet the reality is that it is not. This is not only sad, but also somewhat ironic, given the heritage of the church in the Western world since the Protestant Reformation.

In the medieval period, despite the fact that the Mediterranean region was highly controlled by the Roman Catholic Church, the Bible was not very accessible. Even if people could afford their own copy (which would have been incredibly expensive before the days of the printing press), most would not have been able to read it. This was partly due to low literacy rates, but also because the main authorized version of the Bible was in Latin—the language of high scholarship—and not in the languages of the European peoples.

It was against this backdrop that the Protestant Reformers translated, mass-produced, and widely distributed the Scriptures. Their work cut directly across the priorities of Rome and so was incredibly dangerous. Indeed, some who pioneered the translation and promulgation of the Bible in English, such as William Tyndale and John Rogers, ended up paying with their lives. But they were willing to prioritize this task because they recognized that there was no greater need than for people to have access to the word of God.

Today, we Protestants have inherited not only the convictions of the Reformers, but also the reward of their great sacrifice, with churches and individual Christians around the developed world—and beyond—now having easy access to the Bible. In fact, *billions* of copies of the Bible have been printed, and it is by far the best-selling and most widely distributed book in history. The whole Bible has now been translated into well over five hundred languages, and more translations are being worked on all the time. If

we think only about English speakers, we are humbled to find that we have too many Bible translations to even be able to keep track of them all; there have been hundreds! With growing literacy rates, cheap printing and transport costs, and increasing access through technology, more people than ever before can now read the Bible for themselves. In terms of access to the word of God, the Western world has come a long, long way since medieval times.

However, despite our common convictions about the Bible and the virtually unrestricted access to the Bible that was won at such cost, large numbers of people today are not at all familiar with the breadth of the Bible's teaching. What is particularly worrying about this is that it is true not only of non-Christian people, but too often, and increasingly, of Christ-professing, church-going, Bible-believing Christians. The idea seems to be a contradiction: Bible-believing Christians not knowing their Bibles. But it is too often the reality. It may be true that many faithful believers today have a favorite Bible verse or two, and some may even have memorized a good number of verses. Many may know lots of the famous Bible stories, perhaps in more detail than is often given in Sunday school classes. Some may even have reading patterns that take them through the whole of the Bible regularly, and many no doubt have a truly deep and sincere love for Jesus as Lord and trust in him as their Savior. But if you were to ask them, for example, how the Old Testament book of Joel fits into the grand story of the Israelite people, they would not know. If you asked what is the turning point of Mark's Gospel, they would again be stumped. If you asked what 2 John teaches, they would have no idea at all. In fact, it might even be possible that if you asked them to look up 2 John in their Bibles, some might have no idea where to turn and might instead end up in John 2.

Now, to be clear, none of this implies that the quality or "realness" of people's faith is a function of their Bible knowledge or that Bible scholars are the best and most praiseworthy Christians. Any such suggestions could quickly lead into all kinds of very

wrong and dangerous thinking, to say nothing of their being completely against the core truths of the gospel itself. However, such trivial examples do again highlight the most significant question: How can it be that sincerely committed Bible-believing Christians who now have mostly unhindered access to the Scriptures—and whose spiritual forebears saw no greater priority than providing that access to the Scriptures—can still have relatively thin biblical knowledge? It is clear that Christian engagement with the Bible is not singularly proportional to access.

Of course, a simple explanation as to why many believers do not know their Bibles as well as they might is simply that they are not reading them enough. Profiting from our Reformation heritage, it may be that we own several copies of the whole Bible in our first language, but it may also be that we have left many of their pages unturned. Undoubtedly, in our honest moments, a good number of us would confess that our laziness and distraction are major factors contributing to our lack of Bible reading, and therefore our lack of Bible knowledge and consequent personal Christian formation. Indeed, when we hear the preacher at church conclude his sermon with the oft-repeated application point that we need to be reading our Bibles more, we rightly feel convicted.<sup>2</sup> We probably *should* be reading our Bibles more.

But while it would be wrong to completely ignore such matters of personal responsibility and discipline, in this book we actually want to turn the tables a little to ask some questions of those who are set apart as preachers, pastors, and teachers of the word. Could it be that many believers' limited Bible knowledge is a product of the limited biblical teaching they have received Sunday by Sunday in their churches? Could it partly be the case that some of them do not dedicate regular time to reading right through the Bible

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2. Throughout this book, we refer to preachers using masculine pronouns on the general understanding that lead teachers of local churches—who are the primary audience of this work—will be male. However, we also recognize and hope that much of what we say is valuable for others, too—trainee or associate pastors, elders charged with appointing teaching pastors, congregation members taking responsibility for their own diet of Scripture, and women teaching women (e.g., Titus 2:3–4).

because they do not see their pastors preaching right through the Bible in their weekly sermons? Could it be that some do not feel equipped to engage with every part of the Bible because they have only ever heard a limited selection of Bible passages expounded for them by their pastors? Perhaps their piecemeal reading and studying of Scripture is just a reflection of what they have seen modeled by their ministers of the word. Even if they are regularly told to read their Bibles, what are they seeing modeled and what is being done for them week by week in church?

The reality is that few church members rise above their leaders. What Christians see pastors do is often what they do themselves. What they see them failing to do, they do not consider to be important. So if a pastor does not teach from the Bible, his sheep are unlikely to pick up their Bibles. If a pastor pulls a single verse out of the Bible without any reference to its context, it should not be surprising if the people he oversees similarly use the Bible like some kind of spiritual lucky dip. If a pastor has a few favorite passages or themes that he seems to return to over and over again, the members of the congregation may well also narrow down their Bible reading to those few “central” texts that seem to communicate all that God wants us to know and that do duty for every part of the Christian life. In all of these cases, the pastor is teaching the people that they do not really need to engage with the whole Bible in order to live and grow as disciples of Jesus.

When things are put as starkly as this, many Christians immediately and instinctively recoil. Few of us would consciously devalue the Bible in this way. However, what we believe in principle is not always what we adopt in practice, and this is true when it comes to teaching and learning the Bible. In order to find out how extensively our beliefs really shape our practice, perhaps it would be a revealing exercise to investigate when your church last heard an expository sermon from, say, the book of Jeremiah. If it has been a very long time, or it has never happened, might that indicate that for some reason your church does not think that God

has anything particularly important or relevant to say through his words inscripturated in that biblical book? Taking it a step further, perhaps if your church records did tell us that there had been a sermon on Jeremiah in recent times, it could still be quite sobering to see how long it has been since you last had a whole sermon *series* on Jeremiah. And then—lest you feel overly confident about how your church’s preaching program is standing up to this kind of scrutiny—would it even be worth looking to see whether you had ever had a sermon series that systematically preached *through the entire book* of Jeremiah, chapter and verse? In writing this book, we surveyed the preaching records of one well-known preacher with a lengthy pastoral ministry that was mostly connected to one church, and we found that his preaching on the historical books of the Old Testament was restricted to sixteen sermons, four of which were on Ruth. Another Bible-teaching church had recorded many great biblical sermons, but the ministers had preached from only nine Old Testament books in a nine-year period, and mostly in series that did not work through the whole book.

Of course, we can ask these kinds of questions with more than just the big Old Testament books on view. It is unfortunately true that many local churches have not even heard the entirety of one of the four Gospels preached through in a methodical way in living memory, but have instead heard only a range of sermons from different Gospel passages at different times. Perhaps some were delivered in six- or ten-week-long sequential preaching series, but when added together, even these did not cover the whole book. Undoubtedly there could well have been many faithful and quite excellent sermons delivered in these series. However, we are now asking not just whether there has been any serious exposition of individual passages of Scripture, but rather whether there have been any attempts to exposit the books of the Bible as they were written and intended to be read: as coherent wholes that together with other books of the Bible form a corpus that is recognized as the fullness of God’s deliberate and enduring revelation.

The reason for pressing this point—including inflicting the sting of this kind of examination into our patterns of preaching—is because it helps us recognize a few very important things. First, it demonstrates that while we who preach may hold to a high view of Scripture theoretically, in practice we have perhaps only ever aspired to feed our flocks on limited parts of it rather than on everything that God has spoken to his world. Second, it might make us realize that we have not been as deliberate and long-range as we should have been in our planning of what we will preach to the church. Finally, it could also make us wonder whether we may have unintentionally communicated some things about the Bible that we do not really want to say: that some parts of it are not so important, and that the way God has ordered it is not particularly meaningful or useful for us. None of these thoughts are welcome for pastors or preachers, and we do not raise them here only with the intention that preachers turn to lamenting their failures, but rather as a stimulus for thinking frankly about preaching programs and how they can be made stronger.

We do hope and pray that you will come on this journey with us and benefit from it. We believe that it is quite possible to plan to feed the flock on a full diet of Scripture and to make good progress in achieving that end. We also believe that teaching according to such a long-range program will be used by God to deepen our people's grasp of Scripture, and their understanding of who he is and of his full plans and purposes. Ultimately, we trust that this book will result in God's people being better equipped to live well as his servants in his world for his glory, and will help them to avoid some of the unwanted outcomes of having just a shallow and piecemeal knowledge of Scripture.



PART 1

THE IMPORTANCE  
OF PREACHING THE  
WHOLE BIBLE



## What the Bible Says about the Bible (and about Preaching)

Famines affect masses of people. Many die, with children often being the first. During the writing of this book, one famine continued to drastically unfold in Yemen. Famines are terrible and terrifying events wherever and whenever they occur. Their terror stems from the fact that they strike the very core of human existence: our need for sustenance—food and water—to maintain our health. It is perhaps for this reason that God uses the analogy of a famine at various times in the Bible. The most striking is Amos 8:11–13, where God declares the most disastrous famine for the people of God: a famine of hearing his word.

In this chapter, we seek to lay the groundwork for ensuring that the people for whom preachers have responsibility before God do not suffer such a terrifying spiritual plight. We want to start by getting our thinking right about what the word of God is and does, and then to focus on two particular passages of Scripture that are addressed to leaders of congregations and that give advice as to how they should think about the task of proclaiming the word of God to the people of God. We will also give some consideration

to what the Bible says (or does not say) about preaching as the means of communicating the word of God.

### **The God Who Speaks**

The first page of Scripture tells us much about God. However, undoubtedly one of the most striking things that we see and hear is that he is a God who speaks, and whose speaking has its desired effect.<sup>1</sup> Repeatedly we hear, “And God said, ‘Let there be . . .’ And it was so” (Gen. 1:6–7, 14–15). This pattern continues as the story of Scripture is told. It is dominated by God speaking to his people and by God’s words doing what they are intended to do. The life of Abraham was crafted by God speaking to him, calling him, and making promises to him (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1; 17:1–22). Similarly, those descended physically and spiritually from Abraham were people of a God who speaks. Moses heard God speaking from the flaming bush, and this encounter set the course for his ministry and for the deliverance of the Israelite people from Egypt (Ex. 3:4–22). Moses also went up Mount Sinai to hear God speak all of his covenant laws that would govern his relationship with his people throughout Old Testament times (Exodus 19–31). The prophet Samuel heard God speaking out loud to foretell judgment on those who had rejected him and to appoint the first kings of Israel (1 Sam. 3:1–14; 9:15–17; 16:1–12). The main condemnation of King Saul was that he did not listen to or obey the right sounds (1 Sam. 15:6, 13–16, 19, 22–24, 26). Elijah, who represented God against the evil King Ahab and the prophets of Baal, repeatedly took his direction from the words that he heard God speak (e.g., 1 Kings 17:1–9; 18:1; 19:9–18). The Psalms record the love that the people of God had for his words (e.g., Psalms 1; 19; 119). The later prophets heard and sometimes formulaically repeated the words of God for the people (e.g., Jer. 2:1–3:5; Obad. 1–21; Hag. 1:1–7; Zech. 1:3–6).

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1. For a fuller theology of the word of God spoken and written, see Peter Adam, *Speaking God’s Words: A Practical Theology of Preaching* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1996).

And Jesus himself is presented to us in the opening lines of John's Gospel as the Word of God incarnate (John 1:1–18). We could go on and on, but the simple point is that in Scripture, our God presents himself from beginning to end as a speaking God.

That it is “in Scripture” that we find God to be a speaking God is very significant, as Scripture itself is the word of God not just spoken out but also written down. The Bible consists of words from God that are relevant and important to all people in all places at all times. The Bible does not directly engage all of the fine details of everyone's life and times, but it preserves and communicates the words of God that address the most important and constant aspects of the human condition, and it gives the explanations and guidance needed by all people for good and right living.

Written words should not be thought of as being more stale or less personal than audible spoken words. Indeed, the written word is powerful in ways that the spoken word is not. From a purely human perspective, one reason for this is that we tend to be far more deliberate, thoughtful, and structured with our written words. Although in the age of social media people do tend to write without thinking, more frequently it is spoken words that deliver unfiltered stream-of-consciousness communications. Written words, on the other hand, are usually more carefully considered, more helpfully structured, and more crisply expressed. Consider examples as broad as anniversary cards, legal contracts, memorial plaques, scientific reports, and corporate strategic plans. In all of these cases, the written words carry a sense of significance, permanence, and accuracy that is greater than the same words would have if they were only spoken. Of course, there can be very powerful spoken words, but even most great speeches are carefully drafted and prepared, so that these spoken words are actually a reading of written words, with all the benefits they bring. Further, the texts of many speeches are often distributed in written form after they have been delivered so that the words that were spoken can be experienced over and over again by many people.

God does not need to write his words down to ensure they are well-considered, well-structured, and well-presented, but he has given us some of his words in written form so that they might be permanently preserved, accurately copied, and then broadly distributed to, and received by, many people who can read them over and over. The Bible is God's means of communicating to all people the fixed things he wants all to hear.

It is worth pausing to reflect for a moment on what it would be like if God had not providentially and graciously enabled us to have his enduring and universal words in the Bible. How would we know him, ourselves, our true needs, or our purpose otherwise? We would have to rely on individual senses of what we feel God's will to be at any point. If we did not trust our individual internal senses, we might turn to nature to see what it might be able to teach us of God. Now, while the Bible does indeed say that nature can tell us some things about him, it also says that this is only a small part of what we really need to know, and we certainly could not deduce the gospel from our own observations or reflections; it is a nonintuitive message that needs to be passed on verbally (Rom. 1:19–20; cf. 10:14–15; 1 Cor. 15:1). We might instead take an anthropological approach and decide that we can learn about God from looking at all the world's cultures and religions to find some common points that we could assume were universal truths. Or we might resign ourselves to the fact that God, if he exists, is largely silent and ultimately unknowable. But the good news is that while we might not completely dismiss all of these other means of learning about God, he has given us the Bible, his unchanging word that we need for our well-being and that all the people of his world need to hear for their well-being. All we have to do is read it, hear it, and, for preachers, preach it to others too.

### **What the Word of God Does**

As we read God's words in Scripture, we come to know God as he wants us to know him, and our understanding of him is shaped by

what he has communicated, not what we have imagined or speculated. Importantly, the Bible also sets the limits of our understanding and forces us to humbly accept that where it is silent, we must remain trustingly ignorant and confident that, in his goodness, God has not deprived us of any knowledge that we need in order to be true and faithful to him (2 Pet. 1:3–4).

But the Bible does more than just give us information. It is more than a big book of facts for us to learn. The words of God in the Bible do a great many other things. For example, they capture abstract notions, describe details, direct actions, affect relationships, explain events, explore ideas, express emotions, inform situations, permit freedoms, promise hope, recount history, request participation, warn of danger, and more. It is very important for preachers to understand all of the different things that the words in the Bible do, because if they do not, their preaching can easily end up like a dry and old-fashioned form of lecturing in which the only goal is to transmit information. But through all that they do, the words in the Bible are meant to *shape us*. They are meant to determine not only what we believe, but also how we conduct every facet of our lives. The application of sermons must be more than the standard triplet of “Read your Bible,” “Pray,” and “Tell people about Jesus,” because while all of these things are great biblical priorities, they do not exhaust all that the Bible says to us, or all that it does in and for us.<sup>2</sup>

One reason that evangelical preachers have sometimes been slow to suggest that the Bible does more than only inform us about faith in Jesus is that over the past half-century or so, there has been a great concern to protect the doctrine of justification by faith. Protestant Christians rightly recognize that this is one of the non-negotiable, central concepts in the Bible and that the greatest threat to its clean transmission is any idea that Christians

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2. See Murray Capill, *The Heart Is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2014) for an excellent approach to application of biblical texts in preaching.

gain salvific benefit from the things they do. By God's grace, our justification comes by our faith in Jesus as the Savior who paid the price for our sin so that we can stand before God himself. Nothing we do can either add to or subtract from the work of Jesus. The worst of sinners and the most morally upright of people stand in the same relationship to God. We are either justified by our faith or we are not justified at all. The things we do, either good or bad, are not part of the equation. Other than the fact that this is the plain teaching of the New Testament, the reason for wanting to defend this doctrine so vigorously is easy to understand. If we admit any form of justification by works, we immediately relativize or diminish the sacrifice of Jesus. It becomes something that is not technically necessary, and we therefore lose our comprehension of our real spiritual need, of God's grace toward us, of the thankfulness we owe him, and of the unquestionable centrality of Jesus in the purposes of God. In short, our whole theological framework begins to collapse.

As plain as it is that we must not distort the doctrine of justification by faith, sometimes our zeal for it can lead us to pit this belief against the Bible's call for obedience and good works. If we go too far, we can end up essentially saying that our morality is no longer important, and even that seeking to do and be good is bad because that might undercut our belief that it is exclusively through Jesus that we have God's saving acceptance. Of course, if we do get to this place, we have made the mistake of letting a doctrine drive our understanding of the Bible rather than letting the Bible determine our doctrinal convictions, because as much as the Bible holds up justification by faith, it never does that at the expense of obedience and disciplined living. The relationship between our faith and good works is, in fact, spelled out quite clearly in a number of places in the New Testament (e.g., Eph. 2:8–10; James 2:14–26). We are to be people of faith as we receive the free gift that transforms us from children of darkness into children of light. But that transformation also makes us want to be completely obedient to the words of God.

All of this is important to preaching because it means that the work of preachers is not done when they have preached Romans 1–5 to their congregations and established the doctrine of justification by faith. As they continue to preach through to the end of Romans, and then through the rest of the Bible too, they will need to give voice to so much more of what God is saying to his people and his world. Like the Bible, their preaching should be life-shaping as well as faith-shaping, and the integration of faith and life should also become clearer as more of the word of God is proclaimed. However, this will not happen if preachers do not have some practical commitment to the whole of Scripture, and lesser preaching risks the growth and perseverance of the people of God who are under their care.

Having laid some of these larger foundational points, it will be helpful for us to turn to two key passages in the New Testament where the apostle Paul explains to Christian leaders the importance and the shape of a word-based ministry.

### **The Whole Counsel of God (Acts 20)**

The first passage comes in the midst of Paul's defense of his ministry and final teary exhortation to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17–38. He is on his way to Jerusalem bearing a collection that he has been taking up among the churches that he had founded and ministered in. In his haste to arrive by Pentecost, he can spare only minimal time. So he sends for the elders, and they come to him in Miletus, where he addresses them in what is his only recorded address in Acts to a Christian audience. It ends with a deeply affectionate and sorrowful farewell, with tears on both sides indicating their shared deep love for one another. However, the content of the address gives us a wonderful glimpse into the motivations behind Paul's ministry and the way those motivations were fleshed out in practical ways when he was among the Ephesians.

Toward the end of his speech (Acts 20:27), Paul tells the Ephesian elders that he is innocent of the blood of all because he has

not shrunk from declaring to them “the whole counsel of God.” The term here translated as “counsel” (βουλή/*boulē*) can also be rendered “will,” “purpose,” or even “plan,” and when it is linked with God it is very important in Luke and Acts (occurring for the first time in Luke 7:30, as well as in Acts 13:36, part of Paul’s first reported sermon; see also Acts 2:23; 4:28). Used in this way, *boulē* often has echoes of Scripture’s revealing of God’s great plan of redemption, which finds its focus in the necessary death and resurrection of Jesus, and which results in the evangelization of all nations (cf. Rom. 16:25–26). It is apparent then that “declaring . . . the . . . counsel of God” is somewhat parallel to “testify[ing] to the gospel of the grace of God” and “proclaiming the kingdom” in the preceding verses (Acts 20:24, 25). It is also similar to Paul’s idea of the “will of our God” (Gal. 1:4; cf. Eph. 1:3–14) and his outline of God’s purposes in his letter to the Romans (chaps. 1–6).

But the idea is even fuller in our passage, being modified by “the whole” (πᾶς; πᾶσαν τὴν βουλήν / *pas; pasan tēn boulēn*). This means that Paul does not just give the Ephesians a summary, overview, or highlights package of God’s plans, but rather that he carefully instructs them in the complete counsel of God as it is available to him. This accords well with the fact that Ephesus has been the headquarters of Paul’s work in Asia Minor for two to three years (Acts 19:10; 20:31) and that he has devoted his time there to “teaching . . . in public and from house to house” (20:20). It also squares with the fact that prior to Paul’s arrival, the believers in Ephesus had received only a piecemeal teaching of the faith, having been formed well on some important matters, but not on others (18:24–19:7). They needed “the *whole* counsel of God” to be ministered to them in order to reach maturity in the faith.

It is also important to see that in our passage, Paul is passing the baton to the elders of Ephesus. He is not simply reminiscing about his ministry with them, but is reminding them of his model of ministry so that they can take it up and continue where he

leaves off. Paul knows that he will not return to minister among them again (Acts 20:25) but that others will come with the intention of destroying the church, and that the best protection for the flock of God under the care of the Ephesian elders is the word of God (v. 32; cf. vv. 25–32), the whole counsel of God (v. 27).

In summary, Acts 20:17–38 shows that it is the duty of church leaders to preach the whole counsel of God as Paul did, with the person and work of Jesus at the center, and a commitment to expound everything that God has revealed through his word. This focus on Christ and attention to the breadth of Scripture is captured in the disciplines that we will later talk about as biblical theology and gospel theology, those being approaches to each and every part of the Bible that maintain perspective on the whole plan, purpose, or will of God that is ultimately fulfilled in and focused on his Son.

### **All Scripture Is God-Breathed and Useful (2 Tim. 3)**

The second passage that frames our approach to preaching the whole Bible is 2 Timothy 3:10–17. Like Acts 20:17–38, it is a leadership charge, but this time to one individual, Paul’s protégé Timothy. There are a number of things to note about what Paul says. First, he again points to his own teaching and conduct, which is the pattern that he calls Timothy to imitate (2 Tim. 3:10–11, 14). Second, he notes the context of persecution, which should be expected for all in ministry and which is coupled with some people’s aim of distorting the truth (vv. 12–13). The implication is that the truth needs to be taught rightly. After this, Paul reminds Timothy of his good foundation in the “sacred writings” (v. 15), and this leads Paul into his comments about the nature and power of the written word of God (vv. 15–17).

In the first instance, he reminds Timothy that the Scriptures are able to make people wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). In other words, it is as people faithfully receive the words of the Old Testament Scriptures—that is, the word of

God—that they hear about Jesus. As these words are received, people are saved. This is saying something parallel to, and something converse to, Acts 20:27. In that text, we saw that people need the whole counsel of God, not the bare minimum necessary to get them saved. Here we see that the sacred writings as a whole instruct people in the ways of salvation in Christ—that is, they point to the central message of Jesus as Savior and Lord of all. Interestingly, this is as true of the Old Testament as of the New. Of course, at the time when Paul wrote to Timothy, there was no written New Testament, and so “sacred writings” refers to just the Jewish Scriptures and possibly a few of the early apostolic texts that would later become part of the New Testament. Yet we know from passages such as John 5:39–40 that even the Old Testament Scriptures, when correctly interpreted, bear witness to Jesus and are intended to bring their readers to him to receive eternal life. As we noted above, our theological frameworks are essential to us seeing every part of Scripture fold into the grand story at its center, the saving work of Jesus.

As he continues in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, which again parallel Acts 20:27, Paul does not just speak about “Scripture,” but about “*all* Scripture” (πᾶσα γραφή / *pasa graphē*), and says that it is all “breathed out by God.” This is a relatively direct way of saying that every word written—or inscripturated—in the Bible is a word spoken from God. That is, it is not just those parts of the Bible that record direct quotations from God that are to be regarded as the word of God, but the entire text of the Scriptures. Given this statement, we probably cannot imagine Paul being very enthusiastic about red-letter Bibles, which give us the words of Jesus in red, perhaps to indicate their particular divine nature compared with the other words in the Bible. Instead, Paul knows that *every* word in the Bible is divinely inspired—even expired—and so all must be respected and embraced as such.

What Paul is saying here aligns with Jesus’s own respect for the whole Bible as the word of God, captured in his ongoing commit-

ment to its every iota and dot (Matt. 5:18).<sup>3</sup> Although most Christians are familiar with the idea of the Bible as the word of God, this is still quite a profound notion. In the first instance, it of course means that we do not dismiss any part of the Bible, and neither do we add to it, as though our words could stand beside God's. In addition to this baseline conviction about the scope of God's word, we may also need to think about the nature of God's word. God's words to us are not only in the form of direct address, but also come as genealogies, laws, stories, philosophical reflections, poems, letters to churches, and more. We must also recognize odd things, such as that those parts of the Bible that are addressed *to* God, as are many of the psalms, are also words for us *from* God. All of this is Scripture, and it is all the breathed-out words of God.

Paul's statement about the inspiration of Scripture is made on the way to another point, which is that if the Scriptures have their source in God, then they are "profitable" or "useful" (2 Tim. 3:16). This usefulness is expanded in the four terms that follow: *teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness*. The pattern of these four aspects of Scripture's usefulness is chiasmatic, with the first and the last having to do with education, and the second and third having to do with identifying and correcting sin. This neatly balances the facts that Scripture has a *positively educative* function that addresses both doctrine and ethics, as well as a *corrective* function also directed at doctrine and ethics. The ultimate goal is that "the man of God [possibly referring to the church pastor, or possibly just an archaic way of saying "every person of God"] may be complete, equipped for every good work" (v. 17). Once more we see that teaching and learning the Bible is not just an end in and of itself, but is also a means of formation for people who will actively live their lives to the glory of God and for the benefit of others.

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3. *Iota* is a letter of the Greek alphabet and is small, written as just a short line (ι). The fact that Jesus talked about Scripture containing *iotas* shows that he was familiar with the Greek version of the Old Testament, now known to scholars as the Septuagint.

If this nature, character, and purpose of Scripture is extended to the entire New Testament as well as the Old, as we believe it is, we could summarize by saying that the Bible *as a whole* is the word of God and has the goal of making those who receive it wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, and that *every text* of the Bible is useful for keeping believers straight in terms of doctrine and ethics, and for enabling pastor-teachers such as Timothy to keep their people straight in the same. The implications of this for preaching are profound. We must preach the Scriptures in the way that they were designed. A full view of Jesus comes only from a full examination of the testimony to him in all of the Scriptures. Moreover, a full view of how to think about and live the Christian life also comes only from a full examination of all the texts of Scripture. It follows that our congregations must be fed on as much of Scripture as is possible through our preaching.

### **What Is Preaching Anyway?**

The practical purpose of this book is to help preachers follow through on the basic theological conviction about the whole of the Bible being God's word to his world by actually working to preach the whole Bible to the people they minister among. We want to assist in bridging the gap between what evangelical Christians commonly declare to be true and their actual week-to-week practice. However, before we go any further, we must pause to provide some clarity around what we mean by preaching, because this is not, in fact, a straightforward biblical word, and neither are many common ideas about preaching drawn directly from the Scriptures.

When we find the word *preach* (and its various cognates) in our English New Testaments, it is usually a translation of one of two words in the original Greek. The first of those words is *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελίζω), which is a verb meaning “to gospel” or “gospelling,” or alternatively “to good news” or “good news-ing” (“good news” being the literal meaning of *gospel*). These

are somewhat clunky terms in English because we are more used to the words *gospel* and *news* being nouns. For this reason, our English translations often render *euangelizo* as “bring the gospel/good news” (e.g., Luke 1:19; Acts 13:32), “proclaim the gospel/good news” (e.g., Luke 4:18), or “*preach* the gospel/good news” (e.g., Matt. 11:5; Luke 3:18; Acts 8:12). These are all smooth and appropriate ways to translate *euangelizo* in modern English and, importantly, they retain its emphasis on evangelistic proclamation.

However, things are a little more ambiguous when *euangelizo* is translated as just “preach” or “preaching” without “the gospel” or “the good news” included. In some cases, this is necessary, as the English would simply be too clunky for a fuller translation. For example, in the ESV, Acts 8:4 says,

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word  
[εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν λόγον / *euangelizomenoi ton logon*].

This is a reasonable translation, because it is hard to think how “gospel” as a noun could be worked in; trying to do so woodenly would result in something like this:

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the gospel, the word.

If *gospel* and *word* refer to the same thing here, this would be not only bad English, but also unnecessary.<sup>4</sup> But there is a problem that results when we have only “preaching the word” in English, because with this phrasing, we risk losing the evangelistic sense implicit in the original *euangelizo*. Because of our cultural history, we now too easily read “preaching the word” as “teaching the word to believers,” or even as “delivering half-hour

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4. Different English translations of the Bible deal with this verse differently. The King James Version, the New International Version, and the New American Standard Version all have “preached/preaching,” but the New Revised Standard Version has “proclaiming” and the Contemporary English Version has “telling.” The New English Translation even has “proclaiming the good news of the word,” which is admirable in its inclusion of “good news,” although it only manages this by also inserting “of.”

expository monologues in a Sunday morning church service.” That is to say, in today’s Western Christian culture, we do not immediately understand *preach* as just “evangelize.” Of course, we do have a mental category for evangelistic preaching, where the good news of Jesus is presented in a well-prepared talk directed to unbelievers, but we tend to think of evangelistic preaching as a subcategory of preaching. For most of us, when we think of preaching, our minds quickly go to a pastor delivering a message from the platform of a Christian church as part of a formal weekly service. But again, this is not the meaning of the word *euangelizo*, and so when it is simply translated as “preach” in our New Testaments, our baggage brings more to that text than the text itself gives to us. Because of this, it would probably be better if *euangelizo* was regularly translated as “proclaim” in our Bibles, as we do tend to more naturally connect the idea of proclamation with evangelism. If this had been done for our Acts 8:4 text in the ESV, it would read:

Now those who were scattered went about proclaiming the word.

This reads well in English, and also makes clearer that the scattered believers went out evangelizing (as the rest of Acts 8 begins to detail), not just explaining the Bible to each other.

The second word that is sometimes translated as “preach” in our English Bibles is *kēryssō* (κηρύσσω), although of its sixty-one occurrences, the ESV renders it this way only seventeen times. For all but one of the other instances, it is translated as “proclaim,” which again gives the sense that it may be referring to an evangelistic activity.<sup>5</sup> In fact, a good case can be made for “proclaim” as the preferred translation of *kēryssō* because it sometimes occurs as part of the larger phrases *kēryssō to euangelion* (κηρύσσω τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, meaning “proclaim the gospel,” e.g., Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14); *kēryssō tēn basileian* (κηρύσσω

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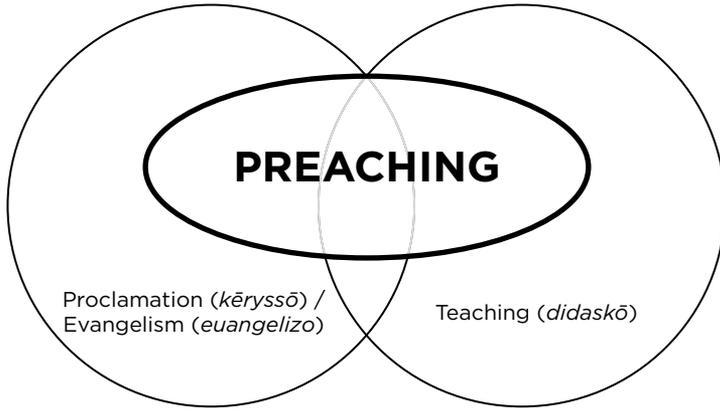
5. The other instance of *kēryssō* in the ESV (Mark 1:45) is translated as “talk.”

τὴν βασιλείαν, meaning “proclaim the kingdom,” e.g., Luke 9:2; Acts 20:25); *kēryssō ton logon* (κηρύσσω τὸν λόγον, meaning “proclaim the message,” e.g., 2 Tim. 4:2 NRSV); *kēryssō Christon estaurōmenon* (κηρύσσω Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, meaning “proclaim Christ crucified,” e.g., 1 Cor. 1:23 NRSV); or just *kēryssō ton Iēsoun* (κηρύσσω τὸν Ἰησοῦν, meaning “proclaim Jesus,” e.g., Acts 9:20). In all of those cases, it is clear that an evangelistic activity is being reported, and that meaning is not lost even if *kēryssō* is translated as “preach”—that would simply read “preach the gospel/kingdom/etc.” A study of all of the instances of *kēryssō* on its own suggests that most often it is really just standing as a shorthand for the fuller phrases that talk about evangelistic activity. This means that it seems best if both *euangelizo* and *kēryssō* are generally translated as “proclaim” throughout the New Testament. Therefore, as a rule of thumb, we recommend mentally substituting “proclaim” or “preach the gospel” each time we see “preach” in our English Bibles. In most cases, this will better reflect the underlying meaning.

What does all this mean for our preaching? Should we, in fact, not seek to systematically expound the Scriptures to church members at all, but just redirect all of our energies to evangelistic preaching? While it would be no bad thing at all to grow our evangelistic activities, we do not think that the lack of overlap between the words *euangelizo* and *kēryssō*, and what we had often understood preaching to be—pulpit ministry—means that we should not bother working to preach through the whole Bible to believers. This is simply because the New Testament talks of more than just evangelism; it also has a strong emphasis on *teaching* (διδάσκω/*didaskō*) the Bible, and teaching in the New Testament does largely seem to be an activity directed toward believers (e.g., Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:21; Luke 4:15; John 6:59; Acts 4:2; Rom. 2:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; etc.). Given that sometimes sermons can be both for teaching believers and for evangelism (something we will discuss more in chap. 12), and given that much teaching and much

evangelism is not done via sermons, we can helpfully diagram the relationship between evangelism, teaching, and what we know as preaching as follows:

Fig. 1.1. Evangelism, Teaching, and Preaching.



We are comfortable knowing that what we tend to think of as preaching is not the only possible way of fulfilling what the New Testament calls for in evangelizing and teaching. Additionally, we think that extensive works of evangelism and Bible teaching could—and should—happen apart from the preacher’s weekly sermons. In fact, theoretically, we believe it could be possible for a church to be faithful to the Bible’s call to evangelize and preach without any pulpit ministry whatsoever. However, we also believe that preaching as we know it has become a great tradition of the church over the centuries precisely because it is an excellent means for both evangelism and teaching. There are several reasons why this is the case.

First, preaching is a highly efficient way to teach many people at the same time. Hundreds, and even thousands, can receive a sermon all at once, meaning that huge economies of effort are possible in preaching. This, in turn, means that preachers are able to give more time to preaching more parts of the Bible. Second, and following on, preaching has the power to shape whole com-

munities of God's people as members of local churches all hear a common message. The corporate mind and will can be addressed in preaching as the preacher brings God's word to a gathered fellowship of faith, and not just to many people individually. This is critical for the healthy common life of a body of believers. Finally, preaching enables the development of a sustained, detailed, and well-crafted message that is meaningfully connected to previous and following messages. Dialogue with individuals or groups can have a tendency to wander from one topic to the next depending on the particular questions and priorities of those involved. Pedagogically, this is both good and bad. It is good because people are more likely to absorb information if they are engaged as conversation partners and get to chase down their own interests. But it can also be a problem because if people are prioritizing their own interests and questions in conversations, they may be less likely to allow the word of God to set the agenda and come to them uninterrupted. Even some of the best group Bible studies have a tendency to drift from topic to topic rather than tightly following a single passage of Scripture from start to finish. But a sermon—like any good prepared speech—can be carefully focused and can deliver an integrated message that has been thoroughly thought through from start to finish.

For all of these reasons, we believe that preaching sermons—expository monologues—is perhaps the single best way to work toward feeding the people of God with the word of God in its entirety.

“Good books on preaching are many. Great ones are few.  
I regard this one among the great.”

**ROBERT W. YARBROUGH**

Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

Expository preaching has been on the rise over the last five decades, with more and more pastors preaching carefully from the Scriptures. However, not all pastors make it their aim to preach through whole books of the Bible, let alone to preach the entire Bible to their congregations. But the people of God need the whole counsel of God to grow to full maturity in Christ. Authors Tim Patrick and Andrew Reid present the bold case for whole-Bible preaching and supply the necessary tools so that all pastors can progress toward this goal.

“Here is a robust challenge to preachers to ensure that we preach every part of the Bible. How good to be reminded to look for the maximum God has revealed rather than the minimum we can get away with!”

**PETER ADAM**

Vicar Emeritus, St. Jude’s Carlton; Former Principal, Ridley College, Melbourne

“This book’s rich theological reasoning and practical suggestions will motivate pastors to take even more seriously their calling not just to preach ad hoc from the Bible, but to preach from the whole of the Bible over time.”

**CHRISTOPHER J. H. WRIGHT**

International Ministries Director, Langham Partnership; author, *The Mission of God*

**TIM PATRICK** (PhD, Macquarie University) is principal of the Bible College of South Australia, an affiliated college of the Australian College of Theology, where he lectures in theology and practical ministry. Before moving into theological education and ministry formation, Tim served in local churches for ten years, where he worked with a number of congregations and led a number of revitalization projects.

**ANDREW REID** (ThD, Ridley College) is the inaugural principal of the Evangelical Theological College of Asia in Singapore. He previously served as the lead pastor of several churches in Australia and as lecturer in Old Testament, hermeneutics, and Hebrew at Ridley College, Melbourne. He was one of the founding council members of the Gospel Coalition Australia and is editorial director of the ministry, training, and leadership channel of TGCA’s website.

PASTORAL RESOURCES

