



THE BIBLE IN THE CHURCH – Part 2

Part 49: Acts

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open it to Acts 20. Last week we were in the first part of Acts 20 and this will be Part 2 of “The Bible in the Church.” Specifically we saw how God intends for the Bible to be taught, discussed, obeyed and visualized in the church. We had an opportunity to visualize the Word as we saw 53 people baptized here. There was story after story of men and women, students and entire families to whom God has given life through His Word. This week, I want to ask this question: why is it so important for the Bible to be the supreme focus in the church? As we mentioned last week, all sorts of churches relegate the Bible to a minor role in the church. All sorts of pastors relegate the Bible to a minor role in their preaching.

I remember my mentor in preaching, Jim Shaddox, who used to describe different approaches to using the Bible in a sermon through the imagery of a swimming pool. He said some pastors use the Bible like a diving board. They read a text and jump off into the water, never to return to the text. Others use biblical texts like pool furniture. They just swim around in their thoughts and stories, and every once in a while give a nod or two to a text here or there on the side. He said it’s totally different when a pastor sees the biblical text as the pool and he just jumps in. Then the whole sermon is swimming around in the text. He reminded us, “Brothers, swim in the Word.”

Why? Why should we swim in the Word? Why should this Book be supreme in the church? And the last part of Acts 20 gives us the answer to that question. We mentioned last week that this text is a sermon that Paul preached to the elders or pastors of the church at Ephesus. You see both those words, “pastor” and “elder.” You also see “overseer” in this text. All these words in the New Testament are interchangeable. They all refer to the same group of people. There wasn’t just one pastor or elder or overseer in the church at Ephesus or in the other churches in the New Testament. We always see a team of pastors or elders. Which, as a side note, there’s not just one pastor here at McLean for over 10,000 people, but many pastors in this church. A plurality of pastors is a biblical picture.

It’s in the context of this emotional, powerful speech to these pastors that Paul pleads with them to keep the Word primary in the church. There are at least seven different times in this sermon when he talks about the importance of declaring, teaching, proclaiming and admonishing with the Word of God.

Last week we went through verse 24, so let's pick up with verse 25. Listen to what Paul says to these pastors, then we'll ask, "Why must the Word be supreme in this church?"

²⁵ "And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Ah, what a scene, with these men weeping as they spend their last moments together with Paul on earth and then part ways. So here are five reasons why the Word must be supreme in the church, why Paul wanted to make sure that the Word was supreme at Ephesus.

1. The Word must be supreme in the church because of what's at stake.

After Paul says he'll never see these brothers again, he says in verse 26, "*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.*" Now, that is quite a statement. Think about what Paul just said. He said because he declared to the people at Ephesus the whole counsel of God, he's now innocent of their blood. What does that mean? Well, I'm glad you asked. Hold your place here in Acts and turn to Ezekiel 33. Paul is using language here in Acts that is based on language the prophet Ezekiel used in the Old Testament. Ezekiel was prophesying, speaking God's Word, and proclaiming judgment that God was about to bring on His people. In chapter 33 we see a dialog in which God is speaking to Ezekiel about his role as a prophet, calling him a watchman. Watch for the language that's similar to Paul's language in Acts 20. Ezekiel 33, beginning in verse one:

The word of the Lord came to me: ² "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, ³ and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and

blows the trumpet and warns the people,⁴ then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.⁵ He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life.⁶ But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.

⁷ "So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.⁸ If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.⁹ But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul."

That's a pretty heavy passage. Imagine you know news that could save someone. If you tell that person that news that can save them, and they reject that news, then you're innocent of that person's blood. It's not on your hands. But if you know that news—news that can save somebody—and you don't share it with them and something happens to them, then you are guilty of that person's blood.

So that's the background to what Paul says in Acts 20. When he refers to people's blood, he's not talking about their earthly death. He's referring to their eternal death. He's talking about them being lost forever in hell. We know this. It wouldn't make sense for Paul to say, "Because I've taught you the Bible, I'm not responsible if you get killed on earth." That's not what he's saying. In fact, Paul's teaching of the Word may actually get them or him killed on earth. But what he's saying is, "If you're lost for all eternity, it won't be because I didn't warn you. I warned you with everything in me. I taught you the whole Word. I didn't shrink back from any of it."

This is huge. We live in a day in the church where we are tempted to pick and choose what we talk about from the Bible. "Keep it positive," people say. "Just talk about love, not wrath. Talk about mercy, not judgment." But ladies and gentlemen, the church does not have the option of picking and choosing which parts of the Bible to talk about. So yes, absolutely—this Book contains good news of God's love toward those who trust in Him and we want to talk about that. But this Book also contains terrifying news of God's judgment toward those who turn from Him—and we must talk about that.

This church will not be faithful before God, and pastors and teachers in the church will not be faithful before God, if we know this and say nothing. If we know this and say nothing, we will stand guilty before God, responsible for people's eternity. That's what the Bible is saying. This is massive. Do we realize what's at stake here? I hear people say, "If you're going to be effective in preaching, keep it light. Keep it positive. Tell stories. Be creative. Include some jokes." You see churches advertising, "No fire and brimstone here—just practical, witty messages." Can you imagine? "Be witty, Paul. Keep it light, man."

I come into this gathering and I know there are marriages right now in this room that are struggling. Husbands and wives are wondering what to do. I know there are hurting single parents right now. I know there are parents whose children have disabilities and they're trying their best to love their kids, but they're worn out. I know there are family members from this church off in a foreign country, defending freedom, and their families are wondering when they're going to see them again. I know that right now there are moms and dads and husbands and wives and kids who are walking through cancer and some are dying of debilitating diseases.

In the middle of all that, I'm supposed to tell a joke? Share some stories? And all of these things are just trials and sufferings on this earth. If you lift your eyes to eternity and things go to a whole 'nother level. I read one church advertisement that said, "Our sermon are relevant, upbeat and best of all, short. You won't hear a lot about sin and damnation and hell. Preaching doesn't like preaching. It's sophisticated, polished and casual talk." Clearly we don't realize what's at stake.

I read 2 Corinthians 4:4-6—it's an incredible picture. Verse four says, *"The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."* Verse six says there's a God over this world Who *"has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

So you have this picture of a cosmic battle between a god of this world and God over this world. One is blinding minds, the other is shining a light. And right in the middle, in verse five, it says, "We preach Christ. We preach the One Who died on a cross and rose from the grave and conquered sin and death." So do we realize what's at stake here? There is a true God over this world right now Who longs for everybody in this gathering to bow at the feet of a loving Savior and live forever with Him. At the same time there is a false god in this world who longs for every single person in this gathering to burn in hell forever. There's a god who's working every moment of every day to blind us from the fact the God of the universe is infinitely holy, that our sin is infinitely offensive in His sight, that His wrath toward sinners is infinitely just and His grace is infinitely precious.

The brief life of every one of us either leads to everlasting joy or everlasting suffering. If that is the case, then we don't need casual talks every week. The world is filled with monotonous, meaningless chatter all week long. We need at least one hour in the week where together we open this Book and we see the glory of God, the wrath of God, the love of God, the judgment of God, the mercy of God on display. If the preaching in the church doesn't carry the weight of these things, what will? TV? Twitter? Facebook? No, we need to be reminded every single week when we open this Word of what is at stake in our lives.

This Word must be supreme because of what's at stake.

2. The Word must be supreme in the church because of Who's in charge.

The second reason the Word must be supreme in the church—why it must be taught and discussed and obeyed and visualized—is because of Who's in charge. I love the language in verse 28, when Paul describes the church as a “flock.” See how he brings the whole Trinity into this thing. He says, “*The Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*” God the Holy Spirit has made you pastors, it's the church of God, and then the last phrase is a reference to God the Son, Who bought the church with His own blood.

Now, for non-Christian friends or family members who are here, let me briefly explain what that means. More than anything else, we hope this is what you hear today. Last week I had the opportunity to share the gospel with a couple men from Nepal and they asked me to summarize the message of Christianity. So I'll share with you what I shared with them. In a nutshell, there is one God over the world and we have all sinned against this God. As a result, we are separated from God and if we die in our state of guilt and separation from Him, we will be separated from Him forever in hell.

But this God loves us. Indeed, He is full of grace and mercy; He's made a way for any one of us to be forgiven of all our sin. God has come to us in the Person of Jesus, a Man just like us in every way—yet without sin. He had no sin for which He needed to pay, yet in love Jesus chose to pay the price for our sin by dying on a cross in our place. He shed His blood as a sacrifice for our sin, taking the judgment we deserve upon Himself. Therefore, when we turn from our sin and trust in Him and in what He has done for us, we can be forgiven of all our sin and reconciled to God—now and forever in heaven. It's the greatest news in all the world.

This is what makes the church the church. So we are not the church in this gathering because we all have the same background, the same personalities, the same politics, the same ethnicity. We are not the church because we are all perfect and have it all figured out. The one thing that makes us the church is the fact that we have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ. So if you're not a Christian, we invite you today to put your trust in Jesus. You, today, can be forgiven of all your sin and reconciled to God forever by turning from your sin and yourself—your every attempt to save yourself—and by trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord, by trusting in His love for you.

Then all of that leads back to why the Word of God must be supreme in the church. It's because this is His church. The church belongs to God—not to pastors. The church does not now and will not ever belong to Dale Sutherland or Lon Solomon or me or anybody else. We sometimes talk like that. We say, “Oh, yeah, that's this person's church or this pastor's church.” No, this church was bought by Jesus. This church belongs to God and any pastor of a church serves under His authority, which is an awesome thought, isn't it?

God loves this church. God loves McLean Bible Church so much that He bought this church with His blood—and He is in charge of it.

So don't miss this. If that's true, then no pastor has a right to speak his own words in the church. The pastor's job is to speak God's Word in the church. Paul is telling these pastors then, and any pastor including me today, that the Word must be supreme in the church because we're not in charge. He is. God's in charge of His church, which means His Word must be supreme.

3. The Word must be supreme in the church because of the threat to us.

Paul says inverse 29, *"I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."* So there it is again—this imagery of the church as being a flock of sheep. Which is humbling when you think about it. We like to think of sheep as cute, cuddly animals, but anyone who has ever been around sheep knows that they are definitively not cute, cuddly animals. Sheep are dirty. They are easily susceptible to all kinds of pests and lice and ticks and worms. Sheep have to be washed with strong chemicals to get rid of all that stuff. And they're not smart. They're hopelessly, helplessly foolish. They aimlessly wander and whenever they get into danger—when wolves come after them—they have no defense mechanism. All they can do is run. And they're slow.

We laugh, but this is how the Bible describes us. The Bible does not refer to us in the church as lions or stallions or some kind of triumphant, strong animal. No, no. We're aimless, wandering, dirty, dumb sheep. And the Spirit has inspired us to see ourselves that way. That's kind of the point, right? Jesus came to the earth not for clean, perfect, easy people, but for sinful, dirty, messed up people like you and me. As sheep, we need help against attack. That's why I've mentioned that there's a god in this world—an adversary named Satan—who wants to pull us away from the one true God over this world. He is always attacking from all kinds of sides.

You see at least three different ways he attacks in this text. First, Paul talks about threats from around us. Paul says wolves are going to come at the church from outside the church. Which is clear. We've seen it all over the book of Acts. The church was constantly being persecuted in the first century. We know we live in a culture in the 21st century where there are all kinds of attacks on the church from outside. We see that increasingly in our culture here and we see it in countries around the world, where so many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are persecuted in the church. We'll talk about that more next week.

Paul talks about the threats around us, but then, second, he talks about the threats among us. Look at verse 30. Paul says, *"From among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."* There's not just threats outside the church, but inside the church. Paul is speaking to these pastors and he says, "Don't assume anything. Some of you elders in the church are going to rise up

and start speaking twisted things that are not in line with God's Word." Which is not surprising to hear when you think about what Paul said earlier in verse 28. He told these pastors, "Pay attention to yourselves..."—even before he tells them to pay attention to the church—"...because you're going to be tempted to turn away from God's Word."

So there will be attacks in the church by the adversary around us, among us, and third, within us—in our own lives. In verse 31 Paul says, "Therefore be alert. Don't let your guard down in the church." This is so important. Brothers and sisters, hear this. Satan never takes vacations. He is relentless in his attacks against you and your family and this church. That's why the Word must be supreme in this church. Paul says, *"Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears."* Every night and every day, Paul was encouraging and teaching and admonishing them with this Word. He knew if he didn't the adversary would come, from within or without, and would have his way with the people.

McLean Bible Church, this Word must be supreme in the church because of the threats to you. Don't be deceived. There is an adversary working every day in your life, in your kids' lives, in your marriage, in your family, in your singleness, in this church, to pull you away from God. So stay steadfast in His Word. Teach this Word. Listen to this Word. Visualize this Word. Read and obey this Word, because you're constantly under attack and you need this Word. We don't need jokes and stories. We need this Word.

4. The Word must be supreme in the church because of the promises for us.

We need the Word, not just because of the threats to us, but because of the promises in it for our lives. Look at verse 32. Paul says, *"And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."* Oh, what a great verse! Paul is about to leave these guys and will never see them again. So he says, "Here's what I give you. I give you the Word of God's grace. And see what he says this Word is able to do. It's able to build them up. It's able to give them an inheritance. It's able to sanctify them. This Word is powerful. Do you realize what this Word is able to do in your life, where you're sitting right now? This Word is able to build you up.

We wouldn't say this out loud, I don't think, but sometimes we're tempted to think the Bible might be a little antiquated. We think, "I've got all these things going on in my life in the 21st century and I'm just struggling to keep it all together. So when I come to church, are we going to spend the majority of our time studying a book that was written 2,000 years ago? And for many parts of the Bible, it was well over 2,000 years ago. With all that's going on now, are we going to spend all this time talking about a Jewish guy who's talking with some pastors in Asia in the first century?" And others might say, "Well, at least we're not in Leviticus with all those weird laws. I mean, what do they have to do with our lives?"

That's a good question. Is the Bible relevant to the pressures and challenges and realities of everyday life in the 21st century? In answer to that question, I want to invite you to hear what this Book promises you. This Book promises to show you the way to true success and true prosperity (Joshua 1:8-9). This Book has power to convert your soul, to make you wise, to bring joy to your heart and to enlighten your eyes (Psalm 19:7-11). This Word promises guidance and direction for your future (Psalm 119:105). This Word promises comfort and strength in your struggles (Isaiah 40:1-31). This Word reveals Jesus—God in the flesh—to you (John 1:1-14). This Word has the power to save you from all your sins forever (Romans 10:17). This Word promises peace to you amidst anxiety and worry in this world (Philippians 4:4-7). This Word provides daily spiritual nourishment to you from God Himself, like milk to a newborn baby (1 Peter 2:2).

Think about your life and listen to the promises this Book makes. When you feel alone, you can read Joshua 1:5. The God of the universe says, *"I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you."* When you are confused, God says in this Book, *"Trust [Me] with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge [Me], and [I] will make straight your paths"* (Proverbs 3:5-6). Are you making difficult decisions where you need wisdom? God promises this in James 1:5: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask [Me. I give] generously to all without reproach, and it will be given [to you]."*

When you feel the world coming in around you, God says in Zephaniah 3:17, *"[I] will rejoice over you with gladness; [I] will quiet you by [My] love; [I] will exult over you with loud singing."* God says that. Maybe you're afraid because you don't know what's coming around the corner. Maybe you're walking through a cancer battle like someone I was just talking with. But she said, "God gave me Isaiah 43 this week."

*Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God....
Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honored, and I love you.*

Let's keep going. How about Romans 8:1? When you feel captive to sin, this Word says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* When you're uncertain about the future, Romans 8:15-17 reminds you that you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear. You have received the Spirit of sonship, and you have the privilege of going to God and saying, "Abba!"

Father!” *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”* When things aren’t working out in your life the way you think they’re supposed to and you’re wondering why this is happening, God says, “Trust Me. I’m working all these things together for the good of those who love me and have been called according to My purpose” (Romans 8:28).

When you face seemingly insurmountable trials in this world and you don’t know what to do, just remember Romans 8:31: *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”* And when you have a mom or dad or husband or wife who leaves the house, never to return again, you have a God Who says in this Word, *“Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-39).

So ladies and gentlemen, this Book is absolutely relevant to your life. When you realize the promises from God that are all over the Bible, the question is no longer, “Why should we listen to and teach the Bible in the church?” The question is now, “Why would we listen to and teach anything else? We’d be fools not to swim in this Book.”

I need to point out one other thing here. When Acts 20 says this Word of God’s grace is able to give you an inheritance among those who are sanctified, that’s really important to pay attention to. The purpose of the Bible is to sanctify you, to make you and me look and live more like Jesus, more like God has created us to live. I think many, if not most, people don’t get this. Many people think the purpose of the Bible is to answer every question we have, or maybe to give practical instruction for every situation or decision we face in our lives. That’s how we often see the Bible and as a result pastors are prone to turn the Bible into a Book like that. They preach sermons like, “Ten tips for parenting teenagers,” or “Seven tips to financial success.”

Sure, the Bible speaks to parenting and finances in various ways with various principles, but the purpose of this Book is not to be a “How To Guide” for parenting teenagers or a “How To Guide” for 401k’s and financial success. Those are just two examples, but in reality there are all kinds of questions in the world that the Bible doesn’t specifically answer. There are all kinds of decisions we make and situations we face in our lives that the Bible doesn’t specifically address.

This causes some people to ask, “Well then, what good is it? If it’s not going to give me answers to the questions I have or practical instructions for all the decisions I make, then why read it every day? Why gather together once a week to study it in the church?” That’s part of why many professing Christians don’t spend time in the Bible every week. It’s why many churches don’t spend time in the Bible on Sundays, with pastors relegating it to a minor role.

This is why we need to realize that the Bible was written for much, much greater purposes than these. From beginning to end, the purpose of this Book is clear. In the very beginning, God creates the heavens and the earth, He makes man and woman in His image, then by Genesis 3, the earth is corrupt and the image of God in man and woman is marred. And thus begins a story of how God recreates man and woman in His image—how God restores man and woman to Himself—and how He saves them from themselves. The Bible tells how He conforms us into His image and sanctifies us, restoring us to the people He created us to be. That's the whole goal of His Word.

This is why when you get to the end in Revelation 22, we're given a picture of men and women who are resurrected from death, who are released from sin and all its effects and who are recreated in the image of God. It shows them being restored to His likeness in a new heaven and a new earth. That's what this Book is all about. It's about how God is recreating, transforming and conforming sinners like you and me into the image of Christ. The process of sanctification is what this Book has the supernatural power to do in our lives.

Which is why reading and teaching and listening to this Book is the most valuable use of our time in our lives and in the church. It's why reading, teaching, even listening to Leviticus is valuable. Because here's the deal: If the Bible is only intended to answer all the questions you and I have and to give practical instructions for every decision we face or situation we enter into, then we won't read Leviticus very much. For that matter—to use our earlier examples—if all we're looking for is parenting and financial tips, we won't read a lot of the Bible. We won't come to it every day and then come in here wondering, “Why are we studying all of this? What's the point? Why spend so much time in the Old Testament even?”

Do you know why we should read and study and teach and listen to Leviticus and the other 65 books of the Bible? Here's why. Because Leviticus and every other book in the Bible is guaranteed by God to sanctify us and to draw us into a closer relationship with Him. These books promise to restore us into His image so we will look more like Jesus and so we will live the life God created us to live. And that is the greatest need we have in our lives. Please hear this: The greatest need you have in your life right now is to look more like Jesus. It's to know God, to walk in step with His Spirit.

Do you know what? If you're a parent with teenagers or any kids, do you know what your kids' greatest need is? Your kids' greatest need is a mom or dad who looks like Jesus—who's walking in step with the Spirit of God. Because the more you look and live like Jesus, the more you're walking in step with His Spirit, the more that radically transforms everything about you—your parenting, your use of money and every other facet of your life. Your greatest need is to think, love, live and serve like Jesus, walking in step with the wisdom and strength of the Spirit of God. And every bit of this Book is supernaturally designed by God to do that work in your heart and life.

So the last thing we need to do when we gather together is talk about how to live without feeding on the one Book that has the supernatural power to enable us to live the way God has created us to live. No, we want to saturate our singing and our praying and our preaching and our listening with this Word, because we know this Word is good. This Word alone has supernatural power to meet the deepest need in our lives—the need to know God and to walk in intimacy with Him.

God help us get this. I think about all the needs in this group. If we realize that our greatest need is to know God, then it will drive us to this Book. As long as we're deceived, thinking we have these other needs, then we'll wander around looking for all kinds of stuff in the world. We need this Book in our lives, in our families, in the church, because it has power to help us know and walk with the God of the universe. The Word must be supreme in the church because of what it promises for our lives. It has the power to build us up and sanctify us as we look forward to our inheritance.

5. The Word must be supreme in the church because of the needs around us.

It's interesting how Paul closes this time with these elders and pastors. He tells them, "I didn't covet money when I was with you." It almost seems like this statement comes out of left field. What's that about? "I didn't covet money, but I worked hard to help the weak and the needy, knowing it's more blessed to give than to receive." So Paul says to these men, "Brothers, the whole point of the pastorate is not to get but to give."

He's not just saying this to the pastors. The whole point of following Christ is not to acquire more in this world, but to give to need in this world. It's very basic. Jesus said it's more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). There's much more to say here, but for now let me point out that this Word is not just needed in the church. This Word is needed in the world. It causes people to realize what's really at stake in this world. There are all kinds of messages all around the world right now saying, "This is what matters. This is what matters." But this Word says, "No, this is what matters."

This word causes people to remember Who's in charge of this world. We talked about Satan's attacks in the church. Just think about all the attacks of Satan in this world; this Word is needed to help people in the attacks of Satan in this world. And not just because of the attacks. This Word is needed because of all the promises that are in this Word for people in this world. They need to hear these promises, to believe them and receive them. So brothers and sisters, as we make this Word supreme in the church, let's give our lives showing and spreading its supremacy in the world. This Word is too good to keep to ourselves.

Let's pray.

O God, we praise You for Your Word. What a treasure that You have spoken to us and revealed Yourself to us and that You have given us all we need to know and enjoy You and to walk with You forever.

We come as needy people. We have so many different things going on in our lives, so many things going on in our families and at work. We need Your grace in so many different ways. We praise You for the sufficiency of Your Word to meet our deepest need, which is the knowledge of You that brings us into intimacy with You. As we live and work and do all that we do this week, we need this Word so that we might walk in step with Your Spirit.

Help us, we pray, to heed Paul's warning to be alert and to keep this Word supreme. May it be so, in the days and months and years to come, that Your Word would always be the supreme focus of McLean Bible Church. May it be the supreme focus in our lives and in our families. Lord, help us not to neglect this Word. Help us to read it, preach it, hear it, discuss it and obey it, because of all these reasons we've seen in Your Word today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: By David Platt. © David Platt. Website: Radical.net