

Persuasive Preaching - Part 1

by Alistair Begg

Alistair Begg's sermon emphasizes the importance of persuasive preaching that confronts stubborn wills and relies on the Holy Spirit for effectiveness.

Duration: 1:02:13

Scripture: Exodus 3:3

Topics: "Preaching"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal anecdote about attending a Methodist church in Ireland where the service was only 17 minutes long. He then discusses the importance of preaching and teaching the Bible, using the example of the apostle Paul's instructions to Timothy. The speaker emphasizes that in today's world, many people do not want to hear sound doctrine. He concludes by urging the audience to humbly listen to the message of Jesus Christ, as it is through Him that they can be delivered from sin and brought into eternal bliss.

Transcript

I invite you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, 2 Corinthians 5. And as you're turning there may I just make one slight change, not to the program but to location. You can tell that this incidentally was printed by one of the junior members of our pastoral team. Next year when they do this we will have a magnifying glass that comes with this.

But if you can see down to seminars at 1 p.m. the only thing you need to know is that I think, in fact not I think, but I have planned that John Lennox will be here in the auditorium and that I will go to room 227. So that gives the maximum number of you the opportunity for interaction with John which I think is the right way to do this. And so just if you'll make note of that in the auditorium will be John Lennox in room 227 myself and then the rest will be as is written.

2 Corinthians and chapter 5. I'm going to read the whole chapter although we will only deal with part of it. The chapter divisions in our Bibles of course are not always particularly helpful and this chapter break between 4 and 5 breaks up the thought of what Paul has been saying. We don't lose heart, we're actually wasting away but he says in fact the reality is that what we see is transient, it's ephemeral.

What is unseen is lasting and is eternal. And then it's as though his mind moves on from there and he has a discursus on the whole hope of ours in terms of our heavenly dwelling and he writes, now we know that

if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling because when we are clothed we will not be found naked.

For while we are in this tent we groan and are burdened because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

We live by faith not by sight. We're confident I say and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him whether we're at home in the body or away from it.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body whether good or bad. Since then we know what it is to fear the Lord we try to persuade men. What we are is plain to God and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than what is in the heart. If we're out of our mind it is for the sake of God. If we are in our right mind it is for you.

For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Though we once regarded Christ in this way we do so no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has gone the new has come.

All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Amen. Well I've taken as our text for this study verse 20. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us we implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God.

We've set ourselves the task in this session to consider the matter of preaching that confronts people's stubborn wills. Or if you like we have taken to ourselves the responsibility of thinking about persuasive preaching. Preaching that persuades.

For us to do so is to immediately place ourselves in good company. For the apostolic pattern and indeed the apostolic precept pushes us urges us in this direction. And Luke throughout his record of the acts particularly in relationship to the teaching of Paul makes this perfectly clear.

I'm not going to give you a whole host of cross references but for example in Acts 18 and in verse 4 Luke describes how Paul every sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue seeking to persuade Jews and Greeks.

He was in there seeking to persuade them. He was not like the individual who goes fishing comes back with nothing and when his wife says did you catch any he says no but I did influence a few.

It is an insufficient exercise. And the passionate longing of Paul was that he might be used under God so to convince and see the Holy Spirit convicting so to persuade that both Jews and Greeks might come to bow before Christ. He ends that is Luke ends Acts 28 right around verse 23 telling us the same thing from morning until evening in the location in which Paul found himself people came to him and he explained and he declared to them the kingdom of God trying to convince it's the same word in Greek trying to convince or persuade them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets.

In other words he was doing biblical exposition. He was turning to the Bible and he was doing what had become his routine pattern. First of all arguing with these people seeking to convince them that the Christ had to suffer and die and rise from the dead.

And once he had labored to that end he would then say to them and this Jesus that I am telling you about is that Christ so that men and women might be brought to an understanding of Jesus. Now what Paul did by way of his own pattern and by example he also urged upon others by way of precept and classically of course in his swan song in his final letter when he writes to Timothy as his young lieutenant in the faith he gives to him very clear exhortations concerning the performance of the pastor's primary duty namely the preaching and teaching of the Bible. And you'll remember he says to him in the fourth chapter the time will come seasons will appear and indeed you're in one now Timothy where people won't put up with sound doctrine they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say with their itching ears want to hear but what I want you to make sure you do is that you continue in what you have been taught what you have become convinced of and then that you preach the word and do it in such a way that others might come to faith in Christ.

Now for Paul to do this to say this to Timothy was not a call to some easy existence it was not an exhortation to some soft option and when you read second Timothy from its very beginning and all the way through you realize that the exhortation to be this preacher and this teacher is set firmly within the context of suffering. Indeed he hasn't gone many words into second Timothy before he says to Timothy now I invite you to join me in suffering for the gospel. Why does he say that? He says it because he knows that that will be the eventuality.

He says it because as he goes on later to say this is what I am also doing this is my gospel for which I am suffering and the nature of his suffering was directly related to the clarity with which he was communicating this news concerning Jesus. Now what we find there in that thank you in that swan song of his we find also here in second Corinthians and you don't go very far in Corinthians that is in this second letter without being introduced to this same theme. I'll leave it to you to look and see if it's actually there but I can guarantee you that it is and he launches into his letter and here are the words that come jumping out of the first chapter trouble distress suffering great pressure far beyond our ability to endure and the despair even of life itself.

So it's not as if you say dear Corinthians I know you're all having a wonderful time and I'm having a wonderful time too and let's all go out for ice cream. No it is something far graver than that it is something far more significant than that and it is not an invention it is not a contrivance it is a reality and it is within that context as he unfolds his personal experience that he turns then to confront others with this great responsibility of persuasive preaching. Incidentally it is quite wonderful the way in which he understands

the doctrine of providence isn't it where in chapter one now I'm in it you may as well look at it but he says in verse nine of chapter one our hearts in our hearts we felt the sentence of death and then here's here's this theology coming through but this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God.

It is from page one to the last page of the Bible manifestly clear that God kicks the legs out from underneath the stools upon which his servants seek to sit comfortably and almost always to ensure that we are brought to an end of ourselves.

By the time you get to chapter 12 he's saying the same thing isn't he in fact he uses the very terminology to keep me from becoming conceited to keep me from getting a fat head to keep me he says from believing my own press reports to keep me from succumbing to my natural affinity to think it may be about me and what I say there was given me a thorn in my flesh a messenger from satan and it is in that context that he now finds himself writing to the Corinthians and he is the receiving end of criticism and of false accusations that abound he doesn't actually identify them in a straightforward fashion but as you read the letter you realize that he is responding to some of these accusations they said he's really a bit of a coward he writes very well but if you see him up close he doesn't

amount to much he's frankly incompetent although he's a blusterer he's really really not much of a man of spirituality at all indeed we're not sure that he should even be part of the church and quite honestly we've heard some of his sermons and we think that he's actually lost it he is out of his mind in other words clearly there was nothing particularly safe about what he was doing there's nothing particularly orderly about what he was conveying there was that which called for the reaction of people that said you know what now we have no truck with this man we have no time for this man so his exhortation here in 2nd Corinthians 5 and we don't want to stray too far from our verse his exhortation to those who would be on the receiving end of his instruction is set within the context of one

human opposition and two divine compulsion human opposition and divine compulsion and let me just say to you that if we do not share with him the latter then we will crumble in the face of the former in other words if our biblical expository teaching preaching ministry does not emerge from a sense of divine oughtness then I suggest to you that as soon as the battle rages before us the temptation will be simply to fold up our tents and head home as quickly as we can for let us be clear preaching is unpopular preaching is unpopular sangster at the end of the last century in Britain said preaching is in the shadows the world does not believe in it I think if he was around now at the end of the last century into this he would have said preaching is in the shadows the church does not believe

in the church does not believe in it let's get it over with as quickly as we can put something up on the screen show me videos you're boring try and do something to keep my attention I was golfing some years ago in the south of Ireland and we were a mixed bag and on the Sunday morning we some of us went to church some didn't our Catholic friends went dutifully to the church I went to a little Methodist church that I found with a friend and when we came out and down the street of somewhere in County Wicklow I think it was we met one of our good friends who come out of the Catholic church and I said to him and how was your service this morning he said fantastic he said he did it in 17 minutes he did it in 17 minutes did what well there was a time when we would have just been able to laugh

at that without it actually the laugh becoming slightly hollow in our ears now when I talk about preaching I'm not talking about anybody that stood up behind a box a sort of well-intentioned fellow speaking with enthusiasm we're talking about spirit-filled bible-based Christ-exalting delivery of the scriptures in such a

way that it becomes apparent that god chooses to deign to consecrate the lips of individuals to his service so that as he says in here the ambassador actually is the one through whom god himself makes his appeal so it's not about mr jenkins it's not about mr x it's not about who do you think you are or where do you think you've been it is about god making his appeal through unlikely folks now here's the thing incidentally to quote dick lucas i freely confess that i am

wagging on the t quite a bit at the moment you understand those of you who are golfers you can you can fiddle about with a golf club for about 20 minutes and nobody knows whether you can hit the ball or not you just stand there and waggle it so i am wagging a little bit but i am purposefully wagging i'm not it's this is not like some of my english essays at school this is not fuller filler it might be fuller but it's not filler so if preaching is unpopular if preaching is unpopular and i put it to you that it is not no preaching is more unpopular than the preaching which addresses the stubborn will of men and women and calls them to repentance and faith in jesus if preaching in itself is unpopular whatever way we might define it anybody giving a monologue from behind a box if that in

itself is unpopular then none is more unpopular than the persuasive preaching which we find in the apostolic pattern and in their precepts now the very unpopularity of it confronts us with challenges and i want to just suggest to you three and then we'll go to the positive side of things so here are the challenges and then and then we'll think in terms of the antidote the challenges that confront us first of all may well be personal in a sense they always will be personal for when we think in terms of the peculiar responsibility of standing between a holy god and those whom god has made and fashioned for himself then any sense of natural and natural inhibition and fearfulness will almost necessarily present itself and depending on our personalities whether we are extroverted or

introverted whatever it might be it may take absolutely everything out of us and from us and demand everything in us simply to fulfill that to which we've been called and that's why i think it is so encouraging to recognize that as paul says back in the previous chapter we have this treasure in jars of clay in old clay pots so that the transcendent power might be seen to belong to god and not to us and just this morning i was thinking again about one of my favorite passages in numbers that of balaam's donkey and i just love the i love the encouragement that is there and also the inherent warning i think where it just says and then the lord opened the mouth of the donkey and sometimes when i feel myself at the very lowest of all i go to that verse and find it a great encouragement and uh

and also i find it a great warning that god says shut up beg i could replace you with a donkey any day i choose and some days the donkey might be a lot more articulate the personal challenge of natural inhibition and fearfulness but also we face a challenge when we're tempted to self-preservation self-preservation and what i mean by that is an unwillingness to bring the demands of both the law and the gospel to bear upon our listeners a fearfulness an unwillingness to bring the demands of both the law and the gospel to bear upon our listeners we recognize don't we that those listeners as paul has said in the previous chapter cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of christ who is the image of god and how are they to see well as a result of us opening up the scriptures how are we

to do this well not only independence upon god's spirit but as articulately and as imaginatively and creatively and effectively as all of our might and ability might muster and it's hard and every sunday comes around as if there were only 48 hours in between them and time passes and we might think that we would be more at ease that we would find it much more accessible we find ourselves battling again our own tendencies our own fearfulness our own sin our own incapacities and so on and we recognize too that the

minds of men and women are blinded to the glory of the gospel in jesus satan is not blinding people's minds to religion satan is not blinding people's minds to family values satan is not blinding people's minds to tall stories and emotional exhortations and all kinds of things that

pass for preaching in our day he blinds the minds of the eyes of men and women to the glory of the gospel in the lord jesus as he is in the image of god and it is important for us to remember that lest we fall foul also under personal challenges i think we face the challenge some of us at least of familiarity with our material and yes let us be honest a familiarity which unless we go frequently on our knees to god on our knees before our bibles in the secret place in our room in the private place in our car in the hours of the night about which no one knows unless we are there we may very quickly become the purveyors of that which does not pass with any sense of conviction through us at all because familiarity has bred in us something that has cut if you like the nerve endings that are

marked by vitality and effectiveness in other words the very understanding of that which we convey unless we come to it in reverence and in awe and in wonder we may find ourselves like the gravediggers in hamlet laughing and joking and singing at our task you remember that great scene don't you the gravedigger scene if i could be in a shakespeare play i would just like to be one scene i want to be one of the gravediggers it's one of my favorite scenes and you remember hamlet and horatio come on the scene and hamlet says to his friend horatio as he hears this fellow singing and joking and he looks at him and he says has this fellow no feeling of his business that he sings at grave making has he no feeling of his business do you remember her ratio's reply custom routine familiarity custom

have made it in him a property of easiness custom hath made it easy it is not easy if it is come and tell me afterwards because i want to know the secret it may become easy because we have become so familiar that we have trivialized the very truth to ourselves if i go one more place to preach and go in what they call the green room and have some fellow slap me on the back and say go get him i'm not sure what i'm going to do to that fellow what do they think is happening in the delivery of god's word who do they think is involved spurgeon can teach us can't he goodness spurgeon was brighter at 24 than most of us are on the on the brink of our graves listen to spurgeon the gospel is preached in the ears of all it only comes with power to some the power that is in the gospel does not lie in

the eloquence of the preacher otherwise men would be converters of souls nor does it lie in the preacher's learning otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men we might preach till our tongues rotted till we should exhaust our lungs and die but never a soul would be converted unless there were mysterious power going with it the holy ghost changing the will of man oh sirs we might as well preach to stone walls as to preach to humanity unless the holy ghost be with the word to give it power to convert the soul the challenge that is personal secondly the challenge that comes to us that is cultural for we live in a world we read newspapers magazines our companions our our colleagues in ministry do the same our congregations are there and so on and it is ridiculous for us to think that

somehow or another we are able to fashion a citadel which removes us from those influences and from that realm last week on business kingdom business in new york my wife and i had the opportunity to go and see beckett's play waiting for godot although i think you call it waiting for godot but it is actually waiting for godot now i don't know whether it is or not but anyway if you say it with authority people go oh yes i guess it is but you know the two characters vladimir and estragon i must confess i slept through a to come through good just i breasted the tape just before 10 o'clock but it's no surprise that you sleep through it i mean you do have to be awake i mean what is the opening line nothing happens there's no plot there's no

play there's no movement nothing happens no one goes

no one goes anywhere no conclusions are reached and nothing is resolved and it costs you 100 bucks to go and see it i've got to be insane i can't believe i went there i wish i had the money back right now but what beckett is conveying is the fact that all purpose has collapsed the thing is pervaded by an air of sort of unrelieved emptiness and i sat there once i'd wakened up and and i wondered whether the people laughed for the same reason when it opened in 1953 in paris as they laughed 2009 in new york city i have a sneaking suspicion that there were at least some in 1953 who watched this play and laughed realizing that it was a spoof that the reason it was funny was because it was there was a dissonance between what beckett put in the mouths of his characters and what people were

experiencing in their lives i don't know but i felt that the laughter on broadway was somewhat strangulated because i'm not sure that the dwellers in the 21st century regarded as a spoof i think they probably think that it's an accurate representation a tumbledown existence in a world without meaning life just a dirty trick as hemingway put it a short journey from nothingness to nothingness now the cultural challenge that comes to us in being ambassadors of the gospel has to be faced do you realize how long has elapsed since the book amusing ourselves to death was that berger or berger wrote that book who was it postman neil postman that's right berger was rumor of angels neil postman and you remember the the chapter on uh sesame street and how the the implications of sesame street were

that when you took the puppet away from the children then they didn't want education anymore i want the puppet i want the puppet and then he talked about the nature of television itself and education via television and he said if you're going to attempt to educate via television there are three things that you have to make sure that you do not violate one thou shalt have no prerequisites two thou shalt induce no perplexity three thou shalt avoid exposition like the 10 plagues visited upon egypt sounds a lot like the average pastors conference encouraging us all to go back to our congregations and make sure that we avoid those things as well and then this is what postman says the name we may properly give to an education without prerequisites perplexity and entertain and exposition is

entertainment no prerequisites no perplexity no exposition that's entertainment he says yes oh i hope it niggles just a little and i hope it niggles some quite a lot you come into church as represented by the gathering of god's people i think time has long since passed in most places apart from just the stuffy and and moribund where there's any sense of now i want you to sit up pay attention and think now some well-meaning soul who gets up and says a few pleasantries essentially says i want you to sit back relax and enjoy yourselves i hope there's nothing here today that will be a prerequisite for you to do anything at all i certainly hope none of you will be perplexed and you'll be glad to know that our pastor has had hardly any time to study this week and he's got a very long video clip

which i'm sure you're going to enjoy thirdly the challenge that is theological the challenge that comes to us that is personal that is cultural and that is theological this may surprise you but i think it's i think it's fair to say and i'm noticing this as i move around the country just a little bit i keep meeting these individuals who have tripped over a systematic theology and decided that they both believe it understand it and feel that they ought to convey it i don't know where they were before ever they started to read their bible or to read the systematic theology but that's not for me to be concerned with suffice it to say that this particular brand of discovering a biblical theology has had a radical impact on these individuals they often seem to talk about it far more than they

talk about jesus they seem to talk about it far more than they talk about just about anything else at all and something has happened to them this may be you they've come to convictions about election about the depravity of man about the particularism of the atonement all biblical truths all vitally important but what has happened to them is this that they find themselves now in relationship to the prospect of preaching persuasive persuasively virtually tongue-tied despite the fact that paul as he preaches in athens on act 17 says and luke records it for us that god commands all people everywhere to repent he commands all people everywhere to repent but what has happened to some souls is this that they have begun to set in juxtaposition or in opposition not apposition to one another the

truths of god's sovereign purposes in election and the truths of man's responsibility in preaching the free offer of the gospel and because they have now determined that the one cancels out the other in the worst of cases they have virtually ceased from evangelism totally in less extreme cases their diffidence is seen in a sort of conspicuous awkwardness and spontaneity in the preaching of the free offer of the gospel somehow or another we find ourselves they find themselves at the point of pressing upon people the claims of christ this sneaking suspicion that maybe i'm not supposed to do this because after all god has done what is necessary and so we find that there is a theological challenge where men are laboring under the inhibitions that arise from the fear that in freely offering

christ to the sinner we might be impinging upon god's sovereign purposes in salvation in short men are frightened that they might be involved in seeing the non-elect get saved now of all the things you want to worry about during the week take that one off your list but i'm i may be completely wrong in this but i don't think i am and the necessary and wonderful benefit of the restoration of reformation principles not least of all in relationship to soteriology for which we can be absolutely thankful in our day carries with it the correlative possibility that people who are unable or unwilling to wrestle with the great antinomies of the bible may find that they have actually become silenced in relationship to these things and as we return to second corinthians 5 let me just take you to

matthew chapter 11 because i want to show you i want to show you that this point the way i always deal with theological things like this i always say how does it work with jesus how does it work with jesus that's not the same as getting a bracelet that says what would jesus do because we don't know what jesus would do so get rid of the bracelet the real question is what has god said and that that'll do us fine so you can get a new bracelet but anyway you come to this question and say okay so we did that god's god's particularism in the atonement god's sovereignty and salvation god's elective purposes from all of eternity how does this work in the ministry of jesus matthew chapter 11 and verse 25 at that time jesus said i praise you father lord of heaven and earth because you've hidden

these things from the wise and learned and reveal them to little children yes father for this was your good pleasure all things have been committed to me by my father no one knows the son except the father and no one knows the father except the son and those to whom the son chooses to reveal him come to me all you who are weary and burdened and i will give you rest we dare not hide behind our inability or unwillingness to bow beneath the immensity of scripture and thus fail to be persuasive in our preaching so if the challenges at least as i've represented them or the enemies to persuasive preaching are confusion fear and complacency then the necessary prerequisites for preaching to the stubborn will be number one clarity instead of confusion and clarity about the nature of the gospel

itself if we are not clear about this you can't if we are confused in our own minds we will never be clear from the pulpit and really we here we find ourselves exactly where we were set up last evening where john

was taking us aren't we because here in second corinthians 5 verse 21 following verse 20 gets to the very heart of the matter making it clear that it is not the mere possibility of salvation nor simply the provision for salvation that is offered in the gospel but it is salvation full and free and that that is what paul is making clear in verse 19 that's why he says what he says that god was not counting their sins against them all this is from god who reconciled us to himself through christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that god was reconciling the world to himself

in christ not counting men's sins against them why didn't they deserve to other sins counted against them yes didn't we haven't we broken god's law yes and we spurned his offers of mercy and of love yes and more besides but here is the wonder you see and loved ones this is so important because some of us want to move far too quickly to this notion biblical notion that god does not count our sins against us and we're hardly two minutes into the service before we want everybody to know that god does not count our sins against us so the people have been making a royal mess of their lives for the last seven or eight days they breathe a great sigh of relief and go well i'm glad i got in here for that that is absolutely terrific but we have to tell them why and how it is that god has done this

god was not counting their sins against them because he was counting their sins against him that he was not overlooking sin that he was not saying it was a matter of indifference that it didn't make a a bit of difference at all but no that what he was doing was charging as we heard last night all of our sins to the account of christ and it is this you see which is wonderful which is awe-inspiring and which is majestic there probably are a couple of books by goldsworthy through there in the bookstore i commend them to you i know some of you will know them and here's a quote from goldsworthy he says only the message that another true and obedient human being has come on our behalf that he has lived for us the kind of life we should live but can't that he has paid fully the penalty we

deserve for the life we do live but shouldn't only this message can give assurance that we have peace with god through our lord jesus christ so that the gospel is not good advice the gospel is good news and that you see that clarity is what gives to paul his boldness what gives to paul the sense of absolute drivenness if you like in order that in first corinthians nine i think it is he says and i want to win as many as possible you know you can imagine his wife saying what are you hoping to do today paul said i want to win as many people as possible to faith in jesus christ today really wow i thought you were just going to answer a few phone calls and fiddle around with one of your sermons again no no no no i want to win as many as possible well you don't mean that you're going to win

them do you paul no of course i don't i told you that yesterday when we were having breakfast no i know what god does but i know what i'm supposed to do i have to get out and into the marketplace i have to preach i have to reason i have to persuade i have to urge i have to give myself diligently to seeing unbelieving people becoming the committed followers of jesus christ that is why he saved me he made me as a servant to the gentiles he made me this is why i exist this is what i want to do isn't there something of that when paul finally says to timothy says timothy all of this is going on but you keep your head endure hardship do the work of an evangelist and discharge all the duties of your ministry i think you were challenged as i was when our friend dr john lennox looked down at us

yesterday and says when's the last time he gave somebody a copy of the bible now i have one of my colleagues who got into that immediately said probably 15 minutes ago a person sitting next to him because he just gives bibles out all the time but i i don't remember i think i could think of it but it was challenging we're urging upon our congregations things that we don't do ourselves in christ says paul god

has dealt with our alienation he's dealt with our alienation the our alienation from god we have to explain to our people is two-sided isn't it we're alienated from god on account of our own rebellion against him and we're alienated from god on account of his wrath against the sinner and therefore unless there is one who comes in the place unless there is a mediator and i'm not so sure

that some of us are not actually falling foul of this and i say it first to myself that we think that because we tell people the benefits of the gospel or we warn them about the dangers of rejecting the gospel that we actually think that we've told them the gospel when we haven't and they go away going he's very steamed up about that but i for the life may i can't think what he's on about there's nothing that will dull the soul of a man more than exhortations minus substance a hortatory ministry that is not didactic that does not actually provide the basis upon which the appeal is made paul does not fall foul of that and what he says here in this section is essentially that in christ as we saw last night we don't need to go back through it because our time is almost gone but everything

lacking in us is given to us in jesus that everything sinful in us is imputed to christ and all the judgment that we deserve is born by christ as i was listening to the study last evening i was trying to remember four verbs that i think i got from john stott and i can't be certain that these are right because i couldn't find them and i didn't have time to look but i think they're these uh study talking about the righteousness of god in in the context of our study last evening says this is a righteousness first of all that god requires of us if we are ever to stand before him secondly it is a righteousness that god achieves for us in the atoning sacrifice of his son thirdly it is a righteousness that is proclaimed to us in the offer of the gospel and fourthly it is a righteousness that

is bestowed upon those who trust themselves to christ it is that kind of clarity that is essential thomas hooker in his day said we care for no knowledge in the world but this that man has sinned and god has suffered that god has made himself the sin of man and that men are made the righteousness of god so clarity secondly authority or boldness i think it was martin lloyd jones who said that preparation is power what he meant by that is you better know what you're talking about and clarity in relationship to the gospel makes it far easier for us to be bold because we've been clear and you will notice that paul here is absolutely convinced that he is as are others who have been reconciled an ambassador of christ we are he says therefore christ's ambassadors why because god has committed to

us the message of reconciliation we have become the messengers of good news god has done this you know i can get a little saint andrew's cross that is a scottish flag dress up in a kilt and go to washington dc and offer to speak on capital hill on behalf of the nation of scotland and everybody just tell me go away little man you're a strange little person you have no basis at all to be here but if i am sent by her majesty's government then irrespective of my dress i may come as an ambassador representing an authority that is not my own where does such a sense of authority come from well he says we fear god knowing the fear of the lord we persuade man where is the fear of the lord tied to the judgment of god because paul was afraid that on that great day of the last of size he would be

set aside no because he was concerned that having preached to others he would not become a castaway because he was concerned that on the day when his work was tested he would prove to be gold and silver and precious stones and not wood hay and stubble and the sense of authority is that which bows down before god's judgment and stands to its feet on the strength of christ's love the judgment of god and the love of christ verse 14 for christ's love compels us because we are convinced and it is on account of this that he makes his appeal through us now it's clear that this ministry of reconciliation falls to more than the

pastor teacher interestingly calvin in his commentary ties it almost directly to ministers and he says that this is the task of the minister to be the ambassador of christ

and then he says not to glorify the minister but to confront the listeners so that when they hear the gospel they may know that god is dealing with them they may know that god is dealing with them there's all the difference in the world between a kind of bombastic approach an authoritarian approach that is derivative of our personality or our peculiar style of delivery or whatever it might be there's a vast disparity between that and what paul is addressing here this is not an authority of our own engendering this is not an authority that comes by way of our schooling or by way of any particular gifts and graces this is the authority whereby that divine dialogue takes place in some mysterious fashion that none of us can fully articulate nor even understand when when god's word is truly

preached that god's voice is really heard and that people that we have never met find themselves responding to the voice of god responding to the voice of god if you're confident in this if you're clear in this then it will enable you not only to be bold but finally to be urgent to be urgent that's the significance of the verb i think in the king james version it is we beseech you here it is we implore you in the niv i'm not sure what it is in the esv but it's a strong verb we implore you there's no sense in which people coming to the end of the sermon say oh well that's it sermon's over let's go get a coffee let's go through the bookstore it's all done now let's just get on with our day where are we going brunch yes brunch here we go a lot of that has to do with the approach and the

style and the nature of the way in which we establish our parameters of gather worship but a lot of it actually owes to us we can't give the impression that we are clever and that god is great simultaneously we can't give the impression that we can't wait to go home to see the final few holes of the tpc and then expect that our own congregation is not ready to get out too the urgency that attaches to it is because of the gravity of the situation alienation reconciliation life death salvation condemnation heaven hell there are not many hymns about hell in fact hell is hardly mentioned in hymnody at all that's why this verse from an old hymn in england stands out so clearly and listen to this verse as it pictures unrepentant sinners facing the reality of eternity and the hymn writer writes

as follows but sinners filled with guilty fear shall see his wrath prevailing for they shall rise and find their tears are wholly unavailing the day of grace is passed and gone they trembling stand before the throne all unprepared to meet him all unprepared to meet him the gospel is not just good the gospel is not just fine the gospel is vital the gospel is indispensable hence those who have been most effective proclaimers of the gospel have been those who have been clear and bold and urgent i would be dreadful if i didn't just take a moment to read from this book after my dear friend went and got it for me so here here's the end here's the end now examples mentors are vital to all of us aren't they and i've sometimes done this as an as an exercise with some of my friends and i've read

them the closing paragraphs from martin lloyd jones's evangelistic sermons and then i've asked them to tell me who do you think this was and what do you think their theological paradigm was and most of the time they get it dead wrong because they're in danger of being tripped up in their own theological drawers listen to how lloyd jones poses a sermon that he has preached as only he could do on the gospel from exodus chapter 3 verses 3 to 5 which begins and moses said i will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burned there's a good homiletical exercise go home this afternoon and come up with a good evangelistic sermon from that but anyway this is this is how he finishes up if you remain in your so-called objective attitude of investigation and inquiry and are

merely interested in religion you will never know it you will remain a slave to sin and you will be in darkness and go to perdition but if only you stop if only you listen if only you take off your shoes and give up your pride of intellect and all these other things and humble yourself as a little child and listen to the message concerning the lord jesus christ the son of god who came from heaven to earth he will make a new person of you he will deliver you from the bondage of sin and satan and evil and take you by the hand at last to present you to god faultless and perfect and to usher you into that eternal bliss and then if some of us can still hear his voice my dear friend he's also my dear friend my dear friend have you met god do you know god are you ready to meet god have you heard

god's word to you have you heard god telling you i know your sorrows and i have done this about it i have sent my son to deliver you to set you free are you free has christ delivered you do you know your sins are forgiven have you received life anew you have but to listen and believe this simple message to tell god that you accept it and that you're trusting yourself and your whole life to him and then you will know it and experience it as a blessed reality if you have not already done so take off thy shoes from off thy feet and listen and believe amen he finishes now you can't imagine him saying you are dismissed dismissed into perdition dismissed into your lostness christ commissions us to present christ to the unsaved sinner urging pleading that they might commit themselves to christ

in order that they might be saved and brethren in this persuasive preaching there need be no restraint save the restraints of scripture there need be no restraint final quote from professor murray the late professor murray and when i read this it made me want to jump up on my desk but it was such a mess i couldn't wherever there is faith as slender as one strand of a spider's web there the fullness of redeeming grace is active whoever comes to me said jesus i will never drive away well let's just pray we use as our closing prayer to call it for the fourth sunday after easter from the book of common prayer 1662 almighty god who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men grant to your people that they may love what you command and desire what you promise but so among the

many changes of the world our hearts may be surely fixed where true joys are to be found through jesus christ our lord amen thank you alistair we're going to take a short break here so you can get up stretch your legs go get a cup of coffee and we'll see you back here at 11 for our next session thank you

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18980.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alistair-begg/persuasive-preaching-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net