

# Power of the preached word

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a focused and consistent relationship with God amidst the changing world and distractions, highlighting the eternal truth of the gospel and the need for a deep personal connection with Jesus. It encourages discernment in listening to various preachers and urges believers to prioritize knowing God through His Word above all else, drawing inspiration from personal testimonies and biblical teachings.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:8, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 2 Corinthians 4:5, John 10:27, Job 28:24, Acts 2:37, Galatians 1:15

**Topics:** "Focus on God", "Discernment in Faith"

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## Description

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## Transcript

For those of you who may be joining us by the internet, I'd just like to say that you've joined a Zoom meeting that basically is under the umbrella of the Mackenzie Christian Fellowship in Abbotsford, Canada, and we welcome you to join us. And if in fact you'd like to contact me or us at any point, you can do that through our website. The address is [mackenziefellowship.com](http://mackenziefellowship.com). It's very easy, [mackenziefellowship.com](http://mackenziefellowship.com). Thank you.

The way the Lord has been leading me yesterday and today has been very interesting, because if I was to describe to you just now the opposition that I've had while preparing this message, you would agree with me that Satan does not want me to share this with you. And I won't take the time to describe what has happened, but there was one point where I was on the verge of tears, I think. But here I am, and here we are together.

You know, there's a hymn that we've loved singing for a long time. And Charles Wesley didn't write it, but it's a great hymn. And one of the verses goes like this, and I want to invite you to make it your prayer this morning.

Speak, Lord, in the stillness, while we wait on thee. Hushed my heart to listen in expectancy. Speak, O blessed Master, in this hallowed hour.

Let me see your face, Lord. Hear your word, Lord. I've forgotten what the line is.

And feel your touch of power. Amen. I invite you to listen with your heart.

You know, for me to say to you this morning that we live in a changing world, that would be very likely the greatest understatement of the whole of the history of this planet, I think. It's so obvious to every one of us, even the younger people among us can recognize, even in their short lifetimes, in the last couple of years, in the last months, almost in the last weeks, so much has changed and is continuing to change. So much so that for me to provide examples of that would be just redundant.

You don't need it. It's obvious. But there's a sense in which I can't resist just saying something.

And while I was sitting here before we got started, I was thinking of this whole concept of talking from my own study here and yet sitting alone, and yet there's very likely, you know, several hundred people who will be listening. That's just amazing. But I was thinking about the first manager I had when I started work a very long time ago.

And I can still vividly remember him bragging. I mean, it wasn't just once, but he would regularly come in and be bragging to us. And he was bragging about his new television set.

We hadn't yet learned the abbreviation TV. So it was either the television or the telly if you're in England. And I remember him bragging about it.

He said, you know, he said the screen, it's a whole 12 inches wide. And yeah, the picture's in black and white. And then he would go on to describe just the enjoyment that he and his wife were having with this newfangled device.

And now look at me here, just looking at my computer screen or a little camera. And here we are, how things have changed. But you know, there are things that have never changed.

One of those things that I'm thinking about just now is human need. Let me just read a letter to you. I received it this week from someone who will remain nameless.

And it's typical of many letters that are going around at the moment. And we've received quite a few. This person said, I love to watch and listen to your teachings, Pastor Fred.

I am 75. I'm widowed and deaf. I can read lips in person close up.

I'm vocal and do not sign. It is very hard. I don't attend church because I can't understand the preacher.

I watch my favorite pastor on one program and several others on YouTube. I love your teachings and I'm adding you to my list. She's a very wise person.

She said, it's hard to even watch the CC. I guess that's the closed captioning. As I currently have a cataract on my left eye and my vision is a little blurry.

My brain gets tired from constantly striving to hear and read lips. I am saved. I trust my Lord Jesus no matter what.

My faith is in him, Christ alone. I'm also caring for my elderly widowed mother who is currently in a nursing home, bedridden and on oxygen 24-7. She is 91.

I can't hear, sorry, she can't hear or lip read. I sit with her two hours a day, which is all they will allow and write to her on a dry erase board. I tell her Jesus loves her.

Mum is saved also. Any advice or word would be greatly appreciated. I confess I'm weary and if it were not for Jesus, I could not go on.

He is my blessed hope, my Lord and my rock. Thank you and God bless you. That's one letter.

There are others. We had another one that was passed on to us which we shared in our prayer meeting a few days ago. Human need comes in so many different forms, doesn't it? But the fact of human need is something that's ever been present and will continue to be present as long as the Lord allows this world to continue as it is at this point in time.

Looking at the same issue from a different point of view, man's need of God will never change. It's just the fact that not every person recognises the fact that God is in a position to meet our human need and minister to us as we find ourselves in things that we cannot change in any way. The fact is the gospel, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will never change.

It's timeless and essentially the story of the gospel is that God in the person of Jesus Christ came into this world to meet the deepest roots of human need and he is the world's only hope. There is no hope to be found anywhere else and we could spend a long time, we could spend hours expanding all this and thinking about these things but I'd like to just share a few words this morning to you as to Christians who are living at this time in this rapidly advancing world of knowledge and yet simultaneously is careening toward a gaping catastrophe while I believe that God is using even this Covid issue for his own purpose and I believe that he is using it in his own unique ways to further prepare his bride but at the same time we recognise that that which is taking place around the world today and right in our own societies is an opportunity which the enemy of our souls is seizing and he's seeking to ensnare men and women, professing Christian men and women and to discourage them like this lady that whose letter I just wrote to you to bring discouragement and also distract us from what a hymn writer called, it was Charles Wesley actually, the central point of bliss. He was referencing the Lord Jesus himself at the time.

And the all important thing for us as professing Christian men and women is that we maintain a very precise and fixed focus. Listen to the Apostle Paul and what he had to say, I'm looking into Philippians chapter 3 and in verse 8 and down a little way he says but what things were gained to me those I have counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but done that I may win Christ and be found in him not having my own righteousness which is of the Lord but that which is through faith the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith.

He goes on that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death if by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead not as though I had already attained either were already perfect but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended but this one thing I do. He goes on forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Wonderful those words are the words of a man who was focused there were all kinds of events that were taking place around him there were those events which were impacting him in a very adverse and painful way in the of him fulfilling his calling and his ministry but he was a man who he tells us this in Galatians chapter 1 he knew why he was conceived in his mother's womb he knew why he was born into this world he wouldn't have realized that at first but he came to a point where of course he had that encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and everything changed as a result of that and looking back he was in no doubt at all that he had been chosen by God and called of God and that God had a very distinct purpose for his life and we from his writings we can see so plainly and clearly that he maintained his focus on him and I was reading again one of my favorite epistles this morning which is the second epistle to Timothy where we're left in no doubt at all that even in the most adverse and frightening human circumstances expecting the executioner at any moment he was at peace in his heart his mind was razor sharp and the things of the Christian gospel were uppermost on his mind as he communicated with Timothy he was a man who was focused and this for each one of us is such an important in fact a crucial factor for us we live in a world which even apart from the Covid issue I've mentioned it's filled with so many distractions especially in our culture I'm sure so many distractions and they come in so many different ways to us but always the the ploy is to draw us away from that central point of bliss and to turn our eyes from Jesus and I want to spend this few minutes here with you just encouraging you to consider this fact the need for our focus to be clear and to be fixed and consistent and to walk through our daily lives in the light of this fact we ourselves also should know as did Paul that the reason that we are alive today is because God ordained it so and that he has a purpose for each one of our lives and I appreciated the remarks I read earlier from Watchman Nee reminding us that we're not to spend all of our lives hoping that we can relive the past but God has given us this particular moment and in this very moment may God find my heart and your heart also reaching out to him and focused upon him and looking to him to empower us and enable us to maintain that posture for the whole duration of this journey amen growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus moving on from one experience of his glory to another experience of his glory by the Spirit of the Lord what a wonderful prospect may God help us in truth to do that you know while referencing the internet a few moments ago we can't forget it because it's right on top of us here now it's impact it has pros and cons you and all about that as well but there's in the midst of it all and with that in mind that is the internet let us let us just consider something that is crucially important to us it's not the only thing but it's very very important and we must understand it very clearly and that is the impact of the word of God you know I'm just wondering how to say this permit me to just draw a contrast as I go ahead here I'm looking back into the past to do this of course but I was born into a home where my parents belong to a group known as the Plymouth Brethren and until I was 25 years of age I never attended a meeting in any other denomination or any other group we kept very much to ourselves the only exception to that to be totally honest would be that in my junior school days I went to a Church of England school and so on church holidays you know special holy days we went to the church that was associated with the school that's the only time I went outside of Brethren meetings I read the King James Bible exclusively and we attended as young people many many meetings many every week not only we were we encouraged to read the Bible and study the Bible we had even sessions in in our one of our youth sessions on just publicly reading the Bible and so on this was my life there was no such thing as internet preachers there was no such thing as CDs and so-called worship recordings that you would listen to all that was unknown to us and in saying all of that it would be very easy to either critique what I've said or be critical of it and say well you know that's the you know there's pros and cons certainly and I admit this pros and cons to being so isolated as I was but you know as I grew up through my teens and into my early 20s I along with those other young people that I was part of we knew what we believed we understood what was being

taught because we sat under that ministry consistently wasn't always the same person speaking we didn't have pastors but the elders rotated and we had elders from other assemblies who would come and speak in our meetings as well and you know I'd like to say just as a parenthesis here that a lot has happened in between the time period I'm talking about and there are a number of things that I see rather differently today than I was taught at that time that's just a parenthesis by the way but the the fact that I wanted to emphasize and this is my point that that I was consistently under particular ministry and someone will say well that's for better or for worse yes I agree with that as I've said but nevertheless that was true however in complete contrast today we have the internet and preachers and preaching is reminds me of a smorgasbord and I'd like to go on record as saying I don't go around listening to all kinds of the preachers on the internet in fact here's another parenthesis for you I was greatly blessed by someone who was ministering this was after the days of my brethren experiences who discouraged me from listening far and wide but to be very discriminating in what I exposed my mind to and I pass that on to you but on this smorgasbord clearly there are all kinds of preachers there are different personalities and different presentations and performances and topics which are being covered and and so on and my own conclusion whether you agree with me or not I don't know maybe someone will tell me people seem very bold on the internet but it seems to me that that the so-called Christian community today is really quite filled with what I think of as being doctrinal dabblers and so with this this new arrangement where people can basically sit at home I wonder whether people will ever go out to church again after this period some will of course but there'll be those who won't I think but you can choose you choose what to listen to so you choose what what suits your taste or what you agree with and and what you choose to believe and there's a sense in which if we're not careful everyone's doing that which is right in their own eyes do you remember where that passage or phrase comes from in the bible and all this at this particular point in time and in this way is without little or no accountability to anyone because we're lacking the the very rich benefits of being together we remember the scripture which says forsaking not the assembling of yourselves together we're doing today in this strange way and it's the best we can come up with and it's got some very real advantages as we know but at the end of the day we need one another and that's so important you know let me talk about myself a little bit more I don't make a habit of this although I did do it just a week or so ago but you know when I was 25 years of age that was a pivotal time in my life I was married I can see my wife right now as I'm speaking to you and we had one child together I had a great career and my theology was set I was a member of the Christian Police Association and however God and I believe this to be true God caused circumstances to converge in such a way that I found myself sitting in a meeting that I had passionately argued against because it was wrong so much was wrong as far as I was concerned you know as I sat in that meeting I would never have thought and I know I never thought of Acts chapter 2 as I sat there but looking back on it all there were certainly some similar similarities and some contrasts of course I was not a religious Jew sitting in that meeting and that was not Jerusalem it was downtown Liverpool in an almost derelict house and the preacher he was not a professional fisherman but as his message progressed my heart was screaming inwardly and I'm telling you the truth my heart was screaming maybe not with exactly the same words but you'll recognize the words I'm just about to quote men and brethren what shall we do I was in inward turmoil because I was being exposed to preaching of the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Ghost I'd listened to some great preaching prior to this but this was different God was there and God was meeting it was ministering in that situation I've said when I've given my testimony on other occasions and this is absolutely the truth that as I sat in that meeting listening I had hot and cold sweats and there's no question in my mind if I'd been sitting nearest to the door instead of packed in an upstairs room in this house I would have left before the meeting finished but the fact is I was exposed to the Word of God the Word of God which the apostle tells us is is living and

it's powerful it's sharper than a two-edged sword and it was cutting to the quick in my heart it was like a laser illuminating my soul I'm not exaggerating it was the truth that certainly I was experiencing what the apostle Paul talked about when he wrote to the Thessalonians and he said this to them in his first letter for our gospel came unto you not in word only but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake and then he continues on that's chapter one and verse five if you're interested at first Thessalonians but I was I was I was sitting under that kind of ministry Paul he put it all in a different way in 2nd Corinthians chapter four where he speaks there's a very wonderful context here that I apologize for breaking into but he says in verse five of chapter four for we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus our Lord and ourselves your servants for Christ's sake for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ then he goes on with that seventh verse for we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us amen that was happening to me in that room when I was exposed to the word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit it was light Paul here is talking about he references to illustrate his point he references that primordial darkness that once existed and God cried out into that darkness let there be light and the whole universe lit up before ever there was a sun created and Paul is using that as a very powerful illustration of what God does as he ministered to us his word comes and he illuminates our inward condition he makes our inward state exposed he sees it already he exposes it to us I had never felt so unclean as I felt in that meeting and I've been referring to and yet to all intents and purposes I was living a good Christian life but in his presence that's where we see ourselves as we truly are and it was in that upstairs almost derelict room that God gave birth to something in me that has only grown since that day you do know I'm sure that the true measure of your spiritual life is not the number of preachers you listen to or how well informed you are on doctrines and issues that many are focusing on but the true measure of your spiritual life is based on what you allow God to birth in your heart and in your life would you permit me to extend some advice to you whoever you are I don't know what's going on in your life I don't know where you stand on the sort of spectrum of the kind of things I'm sharing just now but can I encourage you to seriously consider narrowing your field it was Job a long time ago he gave some grace advice he said stop chasing the wind you know in so many ways we find ourselves and this is certainly happening today with the internet availability where we're chasing sensational issues but I want to encourage you because I believe it's the word of God for us today to listen for that certain sound do you remember it was Jesus who said my sheep know my voice and he went on to say and when they hear it they will follow me there is that there is something which is a mystery to us I can't define it in some spectacular way I know what it is in my own heart and my own life and likely most of you listening to me do also but there's something unique there's a certain sound about the word of God when he speaks to our hearts that we recognize and we need to we need to narrow the field of what we're listening to we need to discern we need to be discerning and and sense where we hear that voice and focus in set the coordinates and focus on that like the apostle Paul in the passage I read to you just earlier when he said this one thing it was a Chuck Swindoll I remember I was in my car and I heard him say this many years ago he was quoting that text this one thing I do and he said not many of us can actually say that he said we were being more not more honest we would say in these many things I dabble isn't that true but God is looking to to refine our focus sharpen our focus that our focus there may be fixed on him that I may know him amen and it's not merely knowing about him but it's knowing him whom to know his life eternal you know back in those older days of my life a man of God once said to me we were together for just a few minutes I sensed that he wanted to communicate something to me that would be very meaningful to me and we we both knew that we were only going to be together for just moments but he said Fred really get to know the Lord and soak yourself in this book he

was holding the bible as he said that to me really get to know the Lord that doesn't happen just because we listen to just sermons that live or live our lives according to our own choosing but it's the result of having a definite focus and attending to the things that are most important the most critical and maintaining that focus it's it's when we when we've done that we really enjoy some of the words of Charles Wesley I think he put this so well this is a verse that every one of you listening to me will know I expect but in this this is like a summation of the gospel here he said long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night thine eye diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee my dear friend is that your testimony this morning this is what God has for each and every one of us let's be very careful that we attend to these issues of our hearts in the light of the holy scriptures that God has given to us and let us refine our listening so that we're listening only to that which edifies and helps us to come to know him ever more perfectly amen if this message has been a blessing to you please leave a comment if you're watching on the internet somewhere and I can become contacted as I say at [mckenziefellowship.com](http://mckenziefellowship.com) hope to have your company next week God bless you thank you Fred

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