

**Message, Mode, Means**  
**Selected Scriptures**  
**3/17/19**

Every week we gather together in church & spend most of our time listening to somebody talk to us about the Bible. What other places do you go every week where you listen to a monologue? Probably not many. Many churches follow the fads & trends & what the so-called *experts* tell us what we need to do to be relevant in our day & age. Many do surveys to see what people want & then give it to them hoping they might grow. Some churches & pastors have gone overboard with this to such an extent that the gospel is seldom preached. Hopefully we all steer clear this. Why? Because we believe that God clearly tells us that 1) He has given us a *message*. 2) He has given us a *method* to spread that message. & 3) He's given us a *means* whereby the God-given message is conveyed through a God-given message. PRAY

**1. THE MESSAGE** Why is it that we all bring our Bibles to church every week & listen as someone talks at length about some verses found in the Bible? Why don't we discuss the latest best-seller or the newest psychological trend? Why don't we get more politically active from the pulpit? Because God has given us the message we all need. What is it? The Bible. What message do we find there? How would you summarize the Bible in one sentence? In one word? Think about it. How would you answer? Hopefully, by naming Jesus the Christ. The Bible, God's written Word, from cover to cover, sets forth one great & glorious Person, His Son, Jesus. The Bible is God's plan of how sinful man can be reconciled to the Holy God through Jesus Christ's death, burial, & resurrection. The Bible isn't just a book of virtues. Neither is it a manual for directing us through life successfully, although it does that. The message that God has given us is a book that makes known the sinfulness of humanity & the plan of God to save humanity through His Son. Jesus is promised within the earliest pages of Scripture. We have numerous prophecies telling us what He is like & what He will do. The gospels provide the historical account of His coming, life, accomplishments, death, & resurrection. At the end we see Him as the glorious object of worship for all of eternity. Every portion of Scripture reinforces this redemptive theme. The Bible is God's record of the redemption of people by His Son, Jesus Christ. Yes, the Bible does give God-centered wisdom for life, but if this were its primary

objective, Christianity would be a religion of self-improvement not a religion of the cross. The message of the Bible is Jesus. We must read the Scriptures with the aim of finding Jesus in them. The Bible, our message, is the divinely inspired revelation concerning the incarnate Word, the Savior of sinners. Our message is Jesus Christ. Most Christians agree the principle subject of the NT is Jesus. But how are we to see the OT? It is just as much God's Word to us as the NT & the OT is about Jesus! 2 Tim 3:14-15 says:

**You, however, continue in the things you have learned & become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, & that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

The **sacred writings** were what we know as the OT. These are at the heart of Paul's statement in the next verse that **all scripture is inspired by God** (3:16). What purpose do these OT Scriptures serve for people living in NT times? Paul is very clear: **which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**. That stuns many Christians. The OT can lead a person to faith in Jesus, as it did for Timothy. The OT contains signs in anticipation of the redemption that would be accomplished by Jesus. Peter writes:

**As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search & inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ & the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven - things into which angels long to look (1 Pt 1:10-12).**

Two questions should be asked at this point. 1<sup>st</sup>, who was the source of this revelation, giving to these prophets what we know as the OT scriptures? The **Spirit of Christ within them**. 2<sup>nd</sup>, what was the **Spirit of Christ** pointing to? Initially, Peter speaks of **this salvation**. Then he refers to **the grace that would come to you**. Then Peter says of the prophetic Spirit, **He predicted the sufferings of Christ & the glories to follow**. In other words, the Spirit who inspired the writings of the NT, which center upon the person & work of Jesus Christ, is the same Spirit who inspired the writing of the OT, also focused upon Christ, but in anticipation of Him. This is perfectly clear from Paul's introduction & benediction from his letter to the Romans.

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called *as* an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ... Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel & the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, & by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen* (Rom 1:1-3; 16:25-27).

The OT was the Bible for early Christians, but not because it supplied some moral guidelines until the NT could be written. The OT Scriptures pointed them to Jesus, to the days of fulfillment when all the pictures, shadows, types, & promises of redemption would be fulfilled in Him. Of whom did Moses & the prophets write of? Jesus! Listen to Jesus' words from Jn 5. **You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it's these that testify about Me...** For if you **believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me** (39, 46). Then in Luke 24:27 we're told that Jesus, **beginning with Moses & all the prophets, interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.** Our message is Jesus, no matter where in the Bible we look, we find Jesus. In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost Peter quotes from 2 Sam 7, Ps 16 & 110, & Joel 2. In Acts 3, when Peter preaches the gospel in the temple, he explains: **But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled** (18). As his sermon unfolds he quotes Gen 22 & Dt 18. Preaching before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4 Peter quotes Ps 118. In Acts 8 Philip preaches Christ to an Ethiopian eunuch from the text of Isaiah 53. Clearly, it was the apostles pattern to preach Jesus from the OT. Not surprisingly, this proved to be Paul's approach as well. After arriving in Thessalonica Luke records:

*... he went to them, & for 3 Sabbaths reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining & giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer & rise again from the dead, & saying, *This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ* (Acts 17:2-3).*

Before Agrippa, Paul proclaims,

**& so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small & great, stating nothing but what the Prophets & Moses said was going to take place, that the Christ was to suffer, & that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light...** (Acts 26:22-23).

Throughout the book of Acts the apostles preach Jesus from the OT. They were convinced that this was the Spirit-intended purpose of the OT Scriptures. Of course, this shouldn't surprise us. Jesus' ministry began with much the same emphasis. In the synagogue at Nazareth He stands, & reads from the 61<sup>st</sup> chapter of Isaiah. As He finishes, He closes up the scroll, hands it back to the attendant, & sits down. & then, with every eye riveted upon Him, He says: **Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing** (Lk 4:21). In other words, *Isaiah wrote of Me*. Our teaching, preaching, & proclamation must always be of Jesus. What do we see time & time again throughout the NT? What did the apostles preach, teach, & proclaim? (Acts 8:5, 35, 9:20, 11:20, 1 Cor 1:17, 23, 2 Cor 4:5, Eph 3:8) Jesus! What must we do no matter what Scripture we are in? Preach Christ! Does this mean there's no place for preaching the ethical commands of the Bible? No. Are we to speak to issues of family? Yes. Can we biblically challenge our children toward moral behaviors? Yes! But we must never preach them in a way that would fit in an Islamic mosque or a Mormon temple. If our message is appropriate to those settings we are not preaching a Christian message. A preacher, for example, may proclaim to husbands, *You should love your wife in a selfless manner*. That's true, right? But he hasn't yet said anything distinctly Christian. This advice could come from a rabbi, a psychologist, or anyone else who has common sense. Christian preaching, on the other hand, grounds the commands of Scripture in redemptive fact. For example, a Christian would say to these husbands,

*You have a command from God to love your wife selflessly. Yes, this is an awesome task. But think of it this way: The source of this command is the Lord Jesus Christ; The model of this command is observed in His own great sacrifice; The strength for this command lies in His giving of the Holy Spirit; & finally, if disregarded, the encouragement to resume this command is found in the forgiveness He offers because of His work of redemption.*

A message that merely promotes morality & compassion isn't necessarily Christian, even if we can prove the Bible demands such behavior. Our message must be Jesus. We must preach the Word no matter what people want. The written Word is the divinely inspired revelation concerning the incarnate Word, the Savior of sinners, through the cross of Calvary. The cross is the central doctrine of the Scriptures. All other truths either find their fulfillment in the cross or are founded upon it. Therefore, no doctrine of Scripture may faithfully be given unless it's displayed in its relationship

to the cross. We must preach Christ because there's no other message from God. Why is it that **Jesus Christ, & Him crucified** should be the message of all Christian preaching? Consider the following 3 reasons:

**A) Our primary objective is the salvation of sinners.** Sinners are dying & headed to hell. They're in urgent need of the cure from the great Physician. The brazen serpent must be lifted up (Num 21) before him, not because he believes, but because he needs the Savior. **There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). No one comes to the Father, but through Me (Jn 14:6). The word of the cross ... to us who are being saved, it is the power of God (1 Cor 1:18).**

**2) Jesus is the focal-point of all biblical revelation.** We haven't been faithful to the Spirit's purpose of a text if we neglect to see its place in the overall redemptive plan of the Bible. Our job is to declare the whole counsel of God & Jesus Christ & His cross are at the center of that counsel.

**3) Preaching the gospel has been commanded by Jesus & modeled by the Apostles.** By clear command of the resurrected Lord, preaching must be preoccupied with Him. The Bible, Old & NTs, centers its attention on Jesus. The story of the Bible is one story. It has great variety & diversity, but it's still one story. It begins with Christ the Creator (Jn 1:1-3), it climaxes with Christ the Savior, & it ends with the return of Christ in glory. The message we have is the message of Jesus. The Holy Spirit desires to glorify Jesus through fallible people who faithfully proclaim Jesus from the Scriptures. Jesus is our message. Without Him, we have no message. God has given us a message, Jesus Christ, but has He given us a method to make this message known? I believe He clearly has.

**2. THE METHOD** is the proclamation, preaching, & teaching of God's Word. Many churches try to entertain or impress & never get around to the message of Jesus or they simply try to do it with their own methods & in their own strength. Is the method we use important? Do the Scriptures teach that anything goes in the name of reaching people for Jesus Christ? No. How does God want us to get the message of Jesus out to the lost & dying world? What method does the Bible say is to be used to make known the message of Jesus? I believe it's the method of preaching. We read in Lk 24:46-47: **Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer & rise again from the dead the third**

day, & that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. What's the message mentioned here? Jesus. What is the method? Proclamation. Preaching Christ from all of Scripture is to be our method. Preaching the gospel has been commanded by Jesus & modeled by the disciples. What's the Great Commission say? **Go into all the world & preach the gospel** (Mk 6:15). Who's to do this? Every Christian. We see this throughout the NT (1 Cor 9:16, 2 Tim 4:2). Preaching is the central & primary function of the Church. Why? Because it's the method best suited to the nature of the message being made known. The gospel is a message which declares the invasion of God into human history. God has intervened to address our sin & separation from God by means of His Son's redemptive death & resurrection. This good news is to be announced, it's to be proclaimed. As the Lord of the universe He's declaring something that demands obedience from His creation. God has acted. God has come. You must respond. Our responsibility is proclamation. We are heralds, charged to proclaim a message which didn't originate with us but with Him who gave it to us to make it known. The Message is Jesus. The Method is proclamation. But we can't do it on our own. What is the God-given means to powerfully proclaim Jesus?

**3. THE MEANS** is the Holy Spirit. What do I mean by that? The most gifted preacher in the world can't bring about a saving experience for anyone apart from a gracious work of the all-powerful Spirit. Even Jesus, who had the Holy Spirit without measure & is the human face of God (God with skin, representing God without skin) who would send the Holy Spirit to be God inside our skin, said in His 1<sup>st</sup> sermon in Nazareth: **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor** (Lk 4:18). If Jesus the Son of God, the infinite One, the Sender of the Holy Spirit to the church on the day of Pentecost, declared that **the Spirit of the Lord** was upon Him to preach, can we, who are frail, weak, & finite vessels, settle for anything less? To see the work of God demonstrated in our preaching & ministry necessitates the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Any effective ministry of proclamation must include both a commitment to prayerful study & a complete dependence upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Remember Lk 24? The disciples were told,

it is written, that the Christ should suffer & rise again from the dead the third day; & that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things (Lk 24:46-48).

Think about these guys. They were given the best preparation for ministry ever experienced. They'd communed with God incarnate for 3 years, benefitting from His constant instruction & seeing His displays of unlimited power. Three of them saw His glory at the Mount of Transfiguration. All of them observed His power over death by His resurrection. If ever someone had been equipped for preaching the gospel, these men were. Yet Jesus knew that left to themselves they'd meet with nothing but failure. Therefore, to meet the demands of a commission impossible to accomplish in human strength, He promised a source of power: **Behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high** (Lk 24:49). Luke later records: **But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; & you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, & in all Judea & Samaria, & even to the remotest part of the earth** (Acts 1:8). The unfolding of the book of Acts reveals the fulfilment of this promise. We'll never experience the fruitfulness we desire until our understanding of the Holy Spirit & His work goes beyond mere head knowledge. The Holy Spirit is the communicator of divine truth. Jesus said, **I will ask the Father, & He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth** (Jn 14:16-17). Who is the Author of our message? Peter tells us to **know this 1<sup>st</sup> of all, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God** (2 Pt 1:20-21). But that isn't all. He also communicates divine truth by directly applying the inspired Scriptures to our hearts & mind. He opens our eyes to understand the message. People are brought to faith in Jesus not because a preacher happens to be eloquent. Rather, in God's sovereign plan, the Holy Spirit empowers the preaching of the Word of God & produces effects that are in keeping with the purposes of God. We need the Holy Spirit.

**The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, & bring to your remembrance all that I said to you** (Jn 14:26).

**When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me** (Jn 15:26).

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; & He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, & shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, & will disclose it to you (Jn 16:13-15).

The baton of the Great Commission has been handed to us. The message is the same. The sinful nature of man is the same. Maybe the only substantial difference is that we aren't the men the disciples were because we haven't been given the privilege of learning directly from Jesus. The conclusion is obvious: If they were in need of the power of the Spirit for the proclamation of the gospel, we, at the very least, are equally needy. It's foolishness to attempt to carry out the proclamation of Jesus without the empowerment of the Spirit. Our challenge is to be Spirit-filled Christians before we are Spirit-empowered witnesses & teachers. We can only anticipate the Holy Spirit's power when we are in tune with the Holy Spirit's purpose. What is His purpose? To glorify Jesus Christ through the message of Jesus as revealed in the Old & NT Scriptures. Jesus clearly told us the Spirit's purpose when He said, **He** (the Spirit) **shall glorify Me** ... (Jn 16:14a). The Spirit's message is never, *Look at Me; listen to Me; come to Me; get to know Me*, but always, *Look at Him, & see His glory; listen to Him, & hear His Word; go to Him, & have His life; get to know Him, & taste His gift of joy & peace*. Jesus is the subject of the Spirit's ministry. The predominant work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal & glorify Jesus Christ, a fact of which we must never lose sight if we're ever to anticipate the Holy Spirit's power. Paul reminds the Corinthians & us, **My message & my preaching** (always of Jesus) **were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit & of power** (1 Cor 2:4). Isn't that what we all want? Preaching, teaching, witnessing aren't an exhibition of our skills; rather, as Paul says, it's a *demonstration of the Spirit's power*. Paul's reminding us that his preaching wasn't effective because of his skills. What caused his message to be so persuasive & convincing was the power of the Holy Spirit. It's this power which makes the foolish message (a crucified Lord) & a foolish method (preaching) effectual in the lives of people; the Holy Spirit pouring out His power on the proclamation of Jesus.

How does the Spirit intend for this message of Christ to be made known? Through Christians who, with the message of Christ on their lips, will be given divine power by this same Holy Spirit. Christ



is our message, proclaiming Christ from all of the Scriptures is our method, & the attending power of the Spirit of God is our means. Throughout the Bible there's a close connection between the Holy Spirit & the proclamation of the Word of God. We see time & time again an instantaneous, sudden, & sovereign operation of the Spirit of God coming upon someone so their proclamation of Jesus might be attended by God's power. For example: In Num 11, as a fulfillment of God's promise to Moses, the Holy Spirit is given to the 70 elders of Israel, with the related sign of their prophesying. Jealous for the unique position of Moses, Joshua pleads with Moses to restrain them. Moses says, **Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!** (29). There's a connection between the gift of the Holy Spirit & the communication of God's Word. David declares, **The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, & His word was on my tongue** (2 Sam 23:2). In 2 Chron this relationship of the Spirit to the proclaimed Word is seen again: **Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; & he stood above the people & said to them, *Thus God has said...*** (24:20). The prophet Ezekiel writes: **Then the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, & He said, *Say, 'Thus says the Lord...'*** (11:5). A predominant ministry of the Holy Spirit as recorded in the OT Scriptures is His coming upon men for the purpose of making known the Word of God. The NT shows the same thing. The angel said to John the Baptist's father, **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit** (Lk 1:13-15). The angel continues by indicating that this filling is connected to the ministry given to John: **He will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. & it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit & power of Elijah** (Lk 1:16-17). John's ministry of repentance required the filling of the Spirit of God.

**Now at this time Mary arose & went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, & entered the house of Zacharias & greeted Elizabeth. & it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; & Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit** (Lk 1:39-41).

What follows this sudden filling of the Spirit? Elizabeth prophetically proclaims Mary to be the mother of the promised Messiah: **& she cried out with a loud voice, & said, Blessed among women are you, & blessed is the fruit of your womb! & how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me ...** (Lk 1:42-45, 67, 79). Prior to His ascension Jesus reinforces the promise previously made to His disciples: **You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;**

**& you shall be My witnesses** (Acts 1:8). On the Day of Pentecost this promise came to fulfillment (Acts 2:2,4,6,8,11). Following the healing of a man lame from birth (Acts 3:1-8), Peter & John begin to proclaim Jesus & His resurrection from the dead. This preaching leads to their arrest. On the following day they're placed before the Jewish leadership & asked to supply an explanation for this healing: **By what power, or in what name, have you done this?** (Acts 4:7). Luke then records: **Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...** (Acts 4:8). Wasn't Peter already filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:4? Yes. All Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit permanently (Jn 14:16; Rom 8:9), & all believers will experience the effects of the Spirit's presence in their lives. But the Spirit is directly involved with the proclamation of the Word of God. Later in Acts 4, when Peter & John are released by the Jewish leadership they return to their fellow believers. Luke records this: **When they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, & they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, & began to speak the word of God with boldness** (Acts 4:31). Are you seeing a pattern here? In Acts 9, Ananias informs the recently converted Saul that he's been sent by the command of the Lord so that Saul might regain his sight & be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). The reason for Paul's need of filling is implied from vs 15, where the Lord tells Ananias that Saul **is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles & kings & the sons of Israel** (Acts 9:15). It's no surprise that after Paul received this filling of the Spirit Luke *tells us, **Immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, He is the Son of God*** (Acts 9:20). What's this Spirit filling? It appears to be an instantaneous, sudden, & sovereign operation of the Spirit of God coming upon a someone so their proclamation of Jesus Christ might be attended by holy power (1 Cor 2:4). The Spirit, by the means of His power, through the words of a preacher, establishes, verifies, & confirms the gospel in the heart of a man so he must respond to the truth he hears. Paul conveys the same idea throughout his writings (Col 1:28-29, 1 Thes 1:5, 1 Pt 1:12). It isn't enough to possess the proper message. Nor is it enough to embrace the proper method. We desperately need the divinely appointed means; the filling & empowering of the Holy Spirit.

**My message & my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit & of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.... For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even**

so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God (1 Cor 2:4-5, 11-12).

We may be knowledgeable & eloquent & be proclaiming the message of Jesus with all our strength, power, & might. But if it's without prayer & the power of the Holy Spirit it's not being done according to God's plan. We must come to see proclaiming & witnessing of Jesus as the Spirit's ministry through us. God by His grace uses us, weak as we are, to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. We're to **teach them to observe all that Jesus commanded** (Mt 28:20). This doesn't come from our own strength or power but from God's power as the Holy Spirit energizes & ignites the proclamation of His gospel. We must be dependent upon the Spirit in our life & in our ministry. To take a stand on the Word of God is to take a stand for the Spirit of God who inspired it. To proclaim the Word is to honor the Spirit, & to honor the Spirit is to declare His Word about Jesus Christ & Him crucified. Perhaps God is convicting you that you need to make a fresh surrender to His power in your life. Maybe you've quenched the Spirit instead of surrendering to the Spirit because of your own sin. Perhaps unconfessed sin has hindered the Spirit's work in your life, & He's calling on you to turn from it & confess it. Can you honestly say the Spirit is in control of you today? Ask God to give you a fresh dependence upon His Holy Spirit for your life & ministry. It isn't enough to possess the proper message. Nor is it enough to embrace the proper method. Christians desperately need the divinely appointed means; the clothing with power from on high.