

Battle Plan

by Dean Taylor

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Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:14, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 8:13, Mark 9:50

Topics: "Deep Study of Scripture", "Faith and Tradition"

Description

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Transcript

So today is probably going to be the most academic of the different sessions. And I have a burden on my heart to give you some meaty understanding of ways to read your Bibles and to dig into the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. So we're going to look at the battle plan, which is what we're going to discuss today.

And so get your thinking caps on, and so I'm going to hope to address ways and give you something that can give you some foundational thinking as you have your journey. So let's start with a word of prayer and come before God in this time. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you, Lord, that you saved us, that you redeemed us by the blood of the Lamb.

And I pray, God, that you would send your Holy Spirit and be here present with us today. Lord, I ask you that you would let all my words of my own and my own ambitions and my own thoughts fall to the ground, but that the ways of you, that your word, your spirit be lifted up, and mostly that we would glorify you in all that is said and all that is done. So Lord, we thank you, we praise you, we ask you today to be with this session.

In Jesus' name, amen. So I think it was D.L. Moody, years ago, gave a story that I really found fascinating. And it was a story of early 1900s.

There was a telegraph office that had a job offering. So they put in the paper and some people showed up for the job offering. And as they did that, about nine or 10 people showed up.

And when they showed up, they got there and there was a sign in the room when you all walked into this little room. And it said, on the receptionist counter, instructed the job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter into the inner office. So wait there, fill out a form, and wait till you're summoned to enter into the inner office.

And then in big print, pay attention, you will be notified when to come in. So they're all there, they're sitting in there. And you know, in this day, people would be pulling out cigarettes and they're getting rowdy.

And there's about 10 people and everything. And this one young man is there. And then all of a sudden, they look and this one young man stands up and walks into the door.

Right there, they're thinking, oh, this guy just blew it. I mean, it says very clearly, wait, you will be summoned when to come in. But then he's not there for about, you know, five or 10 minutes.

And next thing you know, the boss of the telegraph office comes out with the young man, his arms around him. And he says, gentlemen, thank you very much for coming. But the job has just been filled.

And they're like, what's going on? The other people grumbled at each other and spoke up and saying, wait a minute, I don't understand. He was the last one to come in. And we never even got a chance to be interviewed.

What went on? And he said this, while you were all sitting here talking and smoking and carrying on and all this, overhead, the telegraph was clicking out. And it said, if you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.

And out of all of you that were talking and carrying on and everything, only this young man paid attention, came in and took the job. That's the man we want for the job. Fascinating story.

In today's environment, and I think that even more so than when maybe D.L. Moody gave this analogy, that there is so many distractions, so many things that can just get your attention off so much more than they had in the 1920s or even earlier. And so in this, it is my concern, it is my burden that you are, it's hard in all of that static, in all of those distractions, to pay attention to the voice of God, to understand your place in the journey of following God. As a matter of fact, you see throughout all the generations also kind of like systems of the world intentionally wanting to distract you.

It's been the same forever. Even way back in ancient Roman times, they would have just distracted them with circuses and breads and this thing. As a matter of fact, one of the ancient saying, there was a poet by the name of Juvenal that said, he talked about that all they were given is panum et circenses, which just meant bread and circuses.

Give them enough bread and circuses and they won't revolt. It's interesting. Give them enough bread and circuses and they will never revolt.

You think about now, I was, you know, just in the last few years, you see many states legalizing marijuana and different things and different distractions and all these types of things. What do you think is going on at the higher thing, at the higher level? Just keep them all distracted, keep them all fed and playing enough games. You think of all the phone games and all the different things that we have as distractions for us.

Just remember, Paul says all things are lawful, but all things do not edify. And having this understanding, you have to be careful that there is a system, there always has been, that wants to keep you with bread and circuses. Matter of fact, that was first written about 150 B.C. Cicero, who was a big senator in the time of Julius Caesar, about 40 B.C., interestingly spoke about this and he said, the evil was not in bread and circuses per se, but in the willingness of the people to sell their rights as free men for full bellies and the excitement of the games which would serve to distract them from the other human hungers which bread and circuses can never appease.

That's what can happen to you in your generation and even more so than in his generation. So as we go into this new kind of concept, I see one more wave, I don't think it's anything necessarily different, but it's just a different wave to attract us to bread and circuses. It's amazing, during the time of the Renaissance, living in Rome, let's say around the 1400s and that kind of a thing, was kind of curious.

It was like this. You still had the ruins around you, but people had little houses and little places and everything and then there was all these, you know, kind of pillars and stuff laying around. Many of the Renaissance artists actually drew this, so there's the Colosseum and you see people had a little farm on top there and all this kind of a thing and it was very odd.

This one's one of my favorites. You actually get an old cathedral or whatever it was, not a cathedral, but an old whatever and then the sheeps and everything. But then interestingly, in the midst of all that, there was a few people in this, now we're talking about the classical world here and everything, that started to look around going, wait a minute, we're living here, how did they ever build that? And even though they were living around and around them, right around them was all this incredible classic, you know, literature and art and architecture and all these types of things, they were living in squalor and all this.

Now maybe for our purposes, we can see that's actually an improvement, but for the sake of analogy, for the sake of analogy, they were seeing that what they were trying to create, that there was something that they had lost. I bring to you today the concept that this is in many way happened to us in our Christian walk. We get very, very shallow, shallow thinking, shallow understanding, and you have no grasp of the church that has gone before you.

It's one of my burdens that I want to bring to you is a historic Christianity, a faithfulness that you can say, wow, we can do this better, and I think we can. Nowadays I think of some of the different ways that we're creating, and your generation, this whole meta concept, this is the way it's going to be here. I think in about 10 years, there's going to be people coming to Bible school with these glasses on, you know.

And so this is your generation right around the corner, all right? So as you have all of these facts and all these things that are going to be known to you and everything, right on the outside are these deeper thoughts, deeper ways of thinking, and yeah, you may know, okay, that that guy's body temperature is, I don't know, whatever, and you know what I mean, all these little random facts, but it's to distract you from the deeper thinking. And so I would like to look at our battle plan of how we're going to go in to this next generation and keep going. And I will say that when we ask the question, what is our Bible plan? And I do

believe it is the Bible.

It is the word of God, and I mean that seriously. It's, I know that many people have abused it in generation after generation. People have taken it this way and done all things, but it's still the answer for humanity.

It still is. But I want you to think of the Bible now practically, not just devotionally, which is great, but practically. There's an analogy that I love.

I picked this up from actually an old New York Times article from 1879, and the story went that there was this musicologist, this is a guy who studies manuscripts of music and that kind of a thing, and he was trying to discover, to find some of the actual manuscripts of old Johann Sebastian Bach manuscripts. From his diary, apparently there are many actual works that we don't have, and so he was trying to find them. So he's going through all the different mansions in Germany and Austria and all these different things to see if he could find some of these manuscripts.

As he was walking along in one of the mansions, so the article says, as he was walking along, he saw some gardeners in front of one of these mansions, and it had a tree that they were, you know, putting the ropes on to get the tree straight, and he noticed that wrapped around the tree was some odd-looking paper. So he went up and inspected the odd paper, he said, what is that? He said, oh, it's some sort of old music stuff. It's up in the attic, we had a trunk, we've been using this for years.

He begins to inspect it, and he looks, and this was actually an original copy, according to the story, of a Bach music. So he ran up, he said, where is this? And he ran up to the attic and saw this trunk, and sure enough, he found these original pieces, and he was aghast, and then wrote about it, and talked about the thing. So in this, though, I want you to think of the irony, or the tragedy, of what was happening there.

Here the brilliant and genius musician Bach wrote something that was intended to be a symphony, a beautiful song that actually plays and sings and everything, and people were using it to wad around the paper for a tree. How do we use the word of God? Do you use it practically, as a guide to your life, a symphony to be sung, a plan, a blueprint for humanity, or is it something you just kind of read and say, oh, that feels good, and oh, that feels good, and those are good things. I don't want to distract the sentimental or the devotional side of the scripture, but there's also a practical, a guide to your life, and I would like to lift up this way of looking at the scriptures in a very practical way today.

Now, there's different ways to come to the word of God, and different people have kind of different focuses. I'm a historical guy, so that's my take, but it's just one part of it, and so I'll give you my take, and then I want to give a bit of a disclaimer that there's other ways that you balance out. So here's the belt.

Those are my abs. Tanya took a picture there, but no. All right.

So I would use historical theology, but there's other things. Exegetical would be like looking at the languages, and these are tools that we use to look at the word of God. Okay? You don't have to laugh so hard, but anyway.

So like Brother Andrew here, it's focusing on Greek, and I think these are great. Looking into Greek and Hebrew basics I think are good, and nowadays the resources that you have at your fingertips to do this are amazing. How many people here have on your devices the ability, and you use it, that you have your scriptures, you touch a button, and bam, the Hebrew and Greek comes up.

Have you got it set up that way? Good. That's crazy compared to the old times of old. I love that.

I use it all the time on mine. Okay. A biblical theology, as someone who really studies, Paul does this a lot, how the whole themes of the Bible fit together, and that's great to look at how we study.

And then systematic theology, we look at different systems. I like that one the least, but the systematic theology is system, and this is good to be in balance. I'm a history guy, a historical theology, and what I intend to do today in that balance is to give you something that you can hold onto that is a robust historical faith.

And so that when you want to study and want to go further in your study of the Word of God, where do you start? How do you do these things? What do you go with this? I would like to offer a historical approach to you, and I think it is healthy for you. The Scripture says in Jude 3, I can say 1-3, this passage, which is one of my guiding principles to looking at the Word of God. The Bible says in Jude 3, it says, Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

This is to me an axiom of my life, a foundational principle, or something that I stand on, that the faith was given to us complete from the apostles. And so I look to this, and it drives me, this concept of understanding how to study and how to learn and that type of a thing. To give you an analogy, so here is a, I can see like a water, so the wells or the spring is coming here, and the water comes out and everything, and it comes all the way out to here until you've got some cows here and some factories here and everything.

If I was to drink some water, what would you do? I'd go up here. I wouldn't probably go here, and I certainly wouldn't go over here. Essentially one of my favorite scenes in the second part of The Pilgrim's Progress, when and Christiana is there, and the interpreter is showing him, they look at a well, and as they're looking at the well, they said, this is where your father drank from these waters.

The children were like, it's all muddy. Why is it so muddy? They said, well, the theologians have muddied it up. And so, I will argue that I think that there is a faith that was very simple given to us from the word of God, a very simple message.

And in that simple following of Jesus Christ, I think you can have some foundational principles that can keep you going. So the other scripture that is, I think, important to a historic understanding of the faith, comes in 2 Thessalonians 2.15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. And so this is a principle that, and I'll touch on this a little bit later.

So I am intentionally unoriginal. And I'm going to say that today, and particularly in your generation, that the distractions and the heresies and the factions and the Pharisees and the cult leaders and all this are going to be continually growing and increasing and grabbing at you to try to move you to and fro. You more diligent ones would be easily drawn away to cults and to different factions.

The others could be drawn away to different tangents and different things like this. And so today, I'm going to try to make a clear line that you can stand on a historic faith of the church and study within that as something that you can go through your whole life. I love this quote by G.K. Chesterton.

I didn't like where he ended up, but it's still a great quote. It's the intro to his famous book, Orthodoxy. And he talks about this idea of digging deep into historic Christianity and how that strengthened him.

And this is the way he gave the preface to his book in Orthodoxy. He says this. He says, I will not call it my philosophy, for I did not make it.

God and humanity made it, and it made me. Everyone heard that phrase before? I didn't make it, it is making me. An old song, Creed, would use that.

When I fancied that I stood alone, I was really in the ridiculous position of being backed up by all Christendom. It may be, heaven forgive me, that I did try to be original, but I only succeeded in inventing all by myself an inferior copy of the existing traditions of civilized religion. The man from the yacht thought he was the first to find England.

I thought I was the first to find Europe. I did try to found a heresy of my own, and when I had put the last touches to it, I discovered that it was Orthodoxy. In the pursuit of, in all the distractions, and you can let the Holy Spirit take and lead you in all the different directions, but today, I'm going to give you at least some sense of a foundation of historic Christianity for you to study on and to go.

So I use a principle, I use a hermeneutic, which is a big word for a biblical principle, and I'm going to give it to you today. It's very simple, and here's what I use, and it's called the Apostolic Quadrilateral, I called it, and it uses this thing. The picture that I give here is Thomas looking at Jesus' wounds on his hand, and if you recall, he was doubting, and so he wanted to know if I could just touch this scar, let me see the scars on his hand, then I will believe.

So I use this as the acronym for my principle, and this is where we're going to go through these four steps today. So scar, scripture, Christocentric, antiquity, and real. Scripture, nothing can be required of us for faith in salvation and practice that's not written explicitly in the word of God.

Number two, Christocentric, I read the Bible, and I'll break these down, I'll read the Bible and I'll interpret the Bible in focusing on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Number three, antiquity, I try to find a practice that agrees to my interpretation within the earliest church, like the water thing, analogy that I gave you, and number four, it's real. It's not just a bunch of thoughts, but it's real.

So let's look at the Bible first, and I want to really lift up the word of God today to you and have you fall in love with it and use it and use it practically. Scripture, so we're looking at the scar, the first S is scripture, and by the way, it goes in line of being more exacting from scripture down to real, it gets a little bit more fluffy. The most staunch part of the one is scripture.

The Bible is received as the sole and fallible source of authority for Christian faith and practice. Do you believe that today? We have to look at this today. There's all kinds of distractions and different things that want to drag you away from it.

The word of God is your guide. The scripture, if there's any scripture that I want to surround the message today, it's found in 2 Timothy 2.14. Know this verse. This was given for Paul to give to Timothy to give to his people, I give it to you and I pass the tradition on to you from the apostle Paul, and he says this about the word of God.

Listen to it and own it. He says this, remind them these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase the more ungodliness, and their message will spread like cancer. It's interesting here in another place the Bible says, talks about people getting involved in vain janglings, the King James puts it in different contentions about words. I love talking about theological subjects.

You want to sit around and talk about this minutia of the atonement or whatever, I love it. But I do put that on a different category, and I think the Bible was meant very significantly to be very simply understood. As a matter of fact, one of the early Anabaptists, Conrad Grebel, when he was writing during the Reformation to try to say, to explain his old counselor and friend, Vadian, to try to explain to me this message, what's going on, and he said like this, he said, I believe the Bible without a complicated interpretation, and out of that, I speak.

It's that simple. He also said in another letter, the words of Jesus were meant to be put into practice. These are simple things, and so even though I love the deep theological things, well grounded in the word of God and looking at it practically, I think is very good.

So let's just for a minute look, what does the scripture say about itself? These are powerful passages, and there's many, I was trying to look, and look up some, but I just, I grabbed six that I thought were very powerful. And 2 Peter 1:19, it says, this is what the scripture says about itself. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart.

Notice how the word of God causes this faith to rise up in your hearts. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Do you believe, and you need to believe, the word of God is inspired word of God? Not people just trying to think of a writing literature, there's a real big tangent that's coming on in your generation, it's actually, it's been in the early 1900s too, but it's rising again.

Oh, the Bible's literature, the Old Testament, those things couldn't have happened and all these types of things. Be very careful about that. They were inspired, it's the inspired word of God.

The next one, 2 Timothy 3:16, now you ever think of this one in your mind, think of John 3:16 and then think of 2 Timothy 3:16, I don't know. All scripture, he's referring to the Old Testament and the New Testament, in particular he was probably referring to the Old Testament, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. It's practical and the life lessons there are meant to give you a life of victory in God.

Isaiah 48, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God stands forever. And all the debates about the different text types and the different things, I come back and I rely on this promise, the word of God endures forever and I can count on that. Three more, for whatever things were written, Romans 15:4 says, for whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Hebrews 4:12, for the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow and is the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. I love that. The divide between the soul and the spirit, do you know that when I was in medical school and looking at this thing is that when you break down the soul and the spirit, it's like the

body and the spirit, you can break that down physically like the body and the breath and everything.

Do you know that I was in the middle of anatomy and physiology and when you take the red blood cell and break it into the different heme, which is the parts that make up the red blood cell and then break it to its very detailed part, the atomic part, particles, you end up with this little heme group that has a cross. And I remember looking at this, it was amazing, and in the middle of that cross is a little iron molecule, which I thought, and then that iron molecule is where an oxygen molecule pops on and it carries your oxygen through your body and everything. And I just had a revelation when I was looking at that and learned that, praise God, and I thought, you know, probably the iron was what they nailed Jesus' hand to the cross and the breath and the spirit and all those things and I got excited in the middle of anatomy and physiology.

He uses the Word of God to get deep into your life. Allow it. Let it.

That's as far as you can possibly go, I guess, they're explaining there. And then finally, and there's many more, but 1 Thessalonians 2.13. And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you receive the Word of God, which you heard from us, watch now, you accepted it not as the Word of men, but as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers. This is amazing.

The Reformers, during the Reformation, broke off and had different sacraments. You know, during the Reformation, there was fights over water sacraments and the Catholics and the Reformers had everything. And one of the things I really appreciate about the Reformed tradition is they actually look at the reading of the Gospel as a sacrament.

And so when the faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, when the Gospel is presented, when the Scripture is read, there's something supernatural going on. Allow God, during this week, to take the Word of God, to engraft it into your heart, and do things there that would just bless you and change your life. Matter of fact, in the Grossmünster, which is actually the church where the Reformers had and the Anabaptists would have come from, they broke down the altar and used it, that wood, that same wood, to make a pulpit.

Probably making some kind of a statement there. Granted, people went to extremes and all that and everything, but whatever. I think there's a point there that we need to receive that there's something powerful about the Word of God that goes beyond just learning.

It goes beyond just thoughts of men, but it does something into us. The external evidence. The Bible has the most surviving copies of any ancient document to put its text to the test for variance or for corruption.

There are around 24,000 manuscripts from all over the ancient world, some as early as the second century. So, in other words, okay, that's great. The Bible says that about itself, but, yeah, what does that mean? This is an important point.

I want to put this onto your mind. So, the different documents that we found, like, for instance, the Dead Sea Scrolls, was an amazing find. One of the things I really, on my bucket list, is apparently in Jerusalem there's this museum that shows the Isaiah Scrolls.

Anyone ever been there? Oh, you have? I've always wanted to go there. In that, there was one of these scrolls. They found it in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Scholars would have said, oh, Isaiah was written by these people. They dig up and they find some of these things, and it's just amazing. The different archaeological discoveries.

This little stone proving Daniel and such. But let me show you this little chart and just put this inside of your mind to give you some encouragement. So, you won't be able to read that from your seats here, but these are like all the ancient literature.

So, people like Tacitus, the historian, and Pliny the Elder, Plato, and all this. Homer, Herodotus, and all those. So, they've written all these ancient works and everything.

And what kind of documents do we actually have to believe that they really existed? And these would be the amount of documents that we have. Now, you don't see people in colleges and universities trying to say, well, did they really, you know, and all this, because they would just receive it. But then you compare that to the New Testament, and it's amazing.

So, this kind of ancient manuscripts that we have, I think it encourages my faith of what we have there. The other thing is just the quotes from the early church. The one thing that I've noticed, and I'll give you this slide, I'll come back.

When I started reading the early Christians, I noticed they weren't arguing about what church councils said or whatever. You see them constantly just talking about the Word of God. Always talking about the Word of God.

And look at this. Here's just a little, I'll just give a little graph here. Like, for instance, here, Justin Martyr, one of the early writers from the hundreds, had 330 Bible passages given.

Here, Origen has 17,992 passages. And so, even though Hippolytus has 1,300, Eusebius, 5,000. And so, when you look at these types of things, to me, and I'm hoping that this will bless you too, it encourages me that the church has received the Word of God.

And that Word of God has always shaped the church. And it's been something that guides us and directs us our whole life. And that gives us encouragement.

Seeing the way they discuss the Scriptures, even before those manuscripts were discovered, is a secondary source of us being able to have a confidence. So, all Scripture is God-breathed, inspired, God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. I tell you, the church that I was raised in as a young man, I remember we stood, and every single sermon, we'd say, okay, everyone stand up! You don't have to do this, but... And he said, everyone raise up your Bible.

And we'd all raise up our Bibles, and he'd say, repeat after me. I believe the Bible. It is the Word of God.

Every Word of God is true. Where the Bible differs in the way I think or I practice, I will change. We chanted that as a congregation, a huge church, and I think it was those things that were put into my heart as a young man that I said, okay, and when I found the Word of God, and it did change me.

And so, I want to really lift up. You have answers here. Don't let distractors and all the different things get you away from that.

All right. The second part of the... So, let's look at that again. The scar.

Scripture. Christocentric. So then, how are we going to interpret the Bible? The Old Testament and the New Testament.

The different things. What do you do with the wars and the genocide and the different laws of the Old Testament? What do you do with the different ways to interpret the New Testament? And I give you something very simple today. This.

Christocentric. That Scripture is interpreted through the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, both Old Testament and New Testament. Here's what I think about the whole idea of who Jesus is.

Years ago, it was a charity Bible school. Years ago. My girls were tiny.

I had them come up, and we opened up an oyster. And we opened up that oyster, and I said, okay, I want you to get this oyster, and tomorrow at the Bible school, I want you to come out, and I want you to describe it. So they went home, and they said, okay.

And I said, just write it down. I gave them some crayons, and they said, okay, write it down. So, you know what they say, like, it was wet, you know, round, icky, or whatever they said.

You know, it was the way they described it. Then I gave two of the young men that were staying at my house for Bible school the chemical equation and the description of a pearl. You know, and so I said, now, tomorrow, I want you to come to Bible school, and I want you to present the best you can one of those pearls.

So, the next day, my little girls come up, and they explain, you know, their whole thing on that. And the young men came and presented it. Now, the description that my little girls had could have been sort of juvenile, obviously.

Incomplete, certainly. But the thing is, it was a pearl. They had it.

The young men, even though they were very astute, and very, you know, trying to do a great job, the best they could do, under the best circumstances, is that what they had to present was a counterfeit. It was not real. And so, when we look it through all the Bible, and all the distractions, and all the things, Jesus Christ, you must have the real Jesus Christ.

Not a thought of Him, not a devotion of Him, not a theology of Him, but Jesus Christ within you. He is the interpretation of the Bible. He is your salvation.

Our salvation is not a creed, or a sacrament, or anything else. Our salvation is a person. And that person is Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1.15 says, He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominion, or principalities or power. All things were created through Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. And that includes the way we hold everything in our life.

Hebrews 1.3, Who being the brightness of His glory and the expressed image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. And then 1 Corinthians 1.30, we think about, again, your salvation and even your sanctification is not in theologies, but in the actual presence of Christ. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Are you struggling with holiness today? Are you struggling with purity? Are you struggling with having wisdom? Jesus is not only our salvation, He is our sanctification. He is our holiness. He is our life.

He is our doctrine. I tell you, I had a revelation once in my life, it was in one of those moments, focusing on this passage, it was actually a devotional by Andrew Murray on Life in the Vine, focusing on this passage, that my holiness is in the very person of Jesus Christ. Not a theology, not a thought, but the presence of Jesus in me, and He is our wisdom, our life, our everything.

So how do we read the Bible then? How are you going to interpret? So I'm going to give you a principle, Christocentric. So everyone's looked at binoculars, and everyone knows what happens when you turn the binoculars the wrong way, right? So instead of everything getting big, everything gets kind of little. And so, having the right way, the right focus, is very important when you're using binoculars, right? Well, it's the same thing with the Word of God.

We can look through different ways, and things have to be, we're supposed to rightly divide the Word of God. You have to look at this Old Testament passage and this New Testament passage, these things and the other things. Which knobs do you turn down here and turn down there, and how do you interpret this? And through history, there's been all kinds of people who want to get away a little following of trying to get you to turn down different things.

Let Jesus Christ interpret those things. So, the Old Testament. We must read the Old Testament through the teachings and life of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 8, 13 says, in that he says a new covenant, he has made the first obsolete. Now, what is becoming obsolete is growing old and ready to vanish away. Now, Jesus said very clearly, he didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it.

But in that idea, so the Old Testament sacrifices, the Old Testament laws and those different things, it is interpreted in looking at the life of Jesus Christ. We have the different practices and different things. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all those things.

And it works when we look at his teachings in particular. When you open up the Sermon on the Mount, six times in the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins his radical changes with this statement. You have heard that it has been said, but now I say, or you have heard that it has been said of times of old.

And here's where I want to get practical with you. That stuff is intended to be practiced. And he's trying to show us that I have a cure for humanity.

I have a cure for this, and I have a new way that I want you to do this battle. The battle cry, if you're in the military, and this is the whole sermon today, is the battle plans. If you take, the general gives you a battle plan from last battle, and you say, well, I'm using the old battle plans.

And you would either get court-martialed or killed or die in battle or whatever. Jesus has a new way for us to live, and he gives this to us in his teachings. And so we interpret the Old Testament through the life of Jesus.

It's the same thing with the New Testament. The New Testament is also given to us in reflection of Jesus. Jesus is the interpreter.

He is the life. He is the ultimate example of Christianity. Our salvation is in the person of Jesus Christ.

And so even when we read the Old Testament, I've got this passage here just to see the way even the Apostle Paul would make a distinguishing, like when he's discussing marriage and divorce in 1 Corinthians 7. He said, I have no commandment from the Lord, yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in his mercy has made trustworthy. A little later he says, according to my judgment, and I think I also have the spirit of God. Yes, he does.

I like that the Holy Spirit actually put that last statement in. All the Bible is the word of God. Don't dare explain away one single word.

But as we look for a Bible interpretive principle, we interpret it all through the life and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Here's something that I want you to think of. Many of you have probably heard sermons and maybe given sermons on the attributes of God, right? Now the thing about the attributes of God is this, is that when we preach about God being holy or having love or this type of a thing, the people who preach on, like A.W. Tozer speaks on the different things, God doesn't try to be holy.

It's not an effort for him. He's not trying to have love. It is his attribute.

It is who he is. It's a character. It's just God is love.

God is holy, holy, holy, and these different things. The teachings of Jesus are not to be looked at like we would look at other teachers. Jesus cannot be removed from his word any more than he can be removed from his attributes.

When he sat and he gave us his teaching, it comes from who he is. It's Jesus, and this is the answer to humanity. And we can't put this on some theological little thing.

For me, that revelation changed my life when I asked this question. Changed everything. Tonya and I were happy soldiers in the army and living in Germany, and I started to read through the word of God, and I said, what if these teachings of Jesus are not just meditations, not just things to think about, but he literally expects and he wants us to follow these things.

What if Jesus really meant every word he said? How would that change you? I tell you, if there's anything I can get from the whole Bible school, if I can put within you that little question in your mind that what if Jesus actually meant every word he said, it will mess you up in a good way. It'll change you and turn your world upside down and get you on a trajectory to follow him. He's given us a way to cure humanity.

He's giving us a charge to go to the ends of the earth. He's given us how and what to do when we get to the ends of the earth. He's given us the church.

He's given us salvation. He's given us these things, and we need to take it very practically. We go through the Bible.

I just took some pictures from my Bible. We have some teachings on marriage, that marriage is permanent. Praise God.

So when we bring that, this is the teachings. Marriage is permanent. He speaks against divorce.

He says he doesn't want us to practice lawsuits. He says we should have radical use of our money and use for the kingdom of God. He says in that we should seek the kingdom of God and not our own lives and our own ambitions and things like that.

He tells us that we should love our enemies, not just our neighbors, but our enemies. When I was reading this, when I was a young man your age, I was some of your age, and I was looking through this, I remember thinking the question, well, this is crazy. If I were to go through all the teachings of Jesus and actually create for me a church that does completely the opposite of everything Jesus commanded, in other words, if he commanded to have radical finances, well, then I would have, I don't know, some sort of trust fund or something.

Or if I would have love your enemies, well, I don't know, I would have communion on the battlefield. Or if I would have divorce, you know, there's a teaching on divorce, then I would have, and I started thinking if I did everything the opposite, I would end up with a modern American church. And that bothers me.

And so I began to ask the question, well, how do I put these very simple, not a big, great theological thing to practice the teachings of Jesus Christ? I think many times, and in many distractions, that we frequently waste a lot of time getting the right answers to the wrong questions. Jesus wants us to follow him. And although I love theological discussions, I honestly think that a lot of these theological discussions in heaven, or maybe in heaven, but if we could sit down with the Apostle Paul or Peter or whatever and say, what do you think about this little tangent of this theological point? They would look at me and say, what? That, but yet in this, we discard and we lose the simple teachings that are found in the Bible that are meant to be very practical and to very practically guide our life.

That's Christocentric. The next, the third one is antiquities. We're looking at the quadrilateral scripture, Christocentric and antiquity.

Many young people come to me and ask me, so Brother Dean, what do I do to start to really study in the scriptures? I wanna get deep. I wanna go beyond just the superficial, shallow preachers that I'm listening to, and I want to get deep to something that's lasting. I bring them to the ancient and the historic faith.

Again, this is just my principles and all this, and it needs to be balanced with everything else, but I honestly think that if there's anything that's addressing you, everything now with all the distractions, is that you kinda just keep on the surface and never go deep with these things. I mean, do you realize the resources that you have? I remember when I started studying the early church, and for Greek and Hebrew, I had one of those Greek Hebrew Bibles, and I would dig through, and it had like a key, and I would try to look through different things and find the Greek and the Hebrew and study that, and for the early church, there was nothing. I remember when Briseau, I was there at the church with Briseau when I got out of the army, and I was there, and he would give a teaching, and I'd go, huh, let me go check this out.

Tonya and I would get in the car, and we would drive two hours from Tyler to Dallas, go to the seminary there, get out of the Antonizing Fathers, take it and look at it, and say, okay, and then we'd copy it for 20 cents a copy, and then take it home and study it. Now, I have all the volumes and many more just as a, on

the part of my Logos app and my phone. All these resources are available to you in an amazing way, and yet, it can just be another thing to play with, another thing.

You have so much given to you. It is like a, you're living in a tsunami of information, and that's good and bad, and yes, you've heard a lot about the bad, but there is some awesome stuff. I mean, really good, meaty, deep stuff that you could come to me and say, what should I start reading? I could give you just a year's worth of reading from nothing but just free stuff that you could pull off right on your phone.

There is depth there that you can get to, and so I want you to drink deep into the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. So, my take on antiquity. The doctrine and practice should endeavor.

Notice I use the word endeavor. I don't care what Justin Martyr said. I don't care what Origen said, or anyone else.

If it differs from the word of God, the word of God is the only thing that can be used to us for life, practice, and salvation. But yet, in my interpretation, I at least endeavor to try to find supported by the early church. Notice that the scriptures actually say, therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or by epistle.

So, we have the epistles, but in an effort to try to wring out what those early martyrs of the church and those that gave us the scripture and fought for the faith, what did they think, and how did they walk with the scriptures? I'm hoping that I can put at least a little splinter in your mind, a little something there that you can say there's something deeper than just the superficial things that are constantly around us all of our life, and there's deep wells that you can drink from. So, I think that also there's something to remember about these ancient martyrs of the church and these ancient people who wrestled with these things. Remember the discussion about the marriage and that type of a thing, and Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, or was it the Sadducees, and he said in Matthew 22, 29, Jesus answered and said to them, you're mistaken, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God, and he gives them his correction, but then he says, watch this now.

But concerning the resurrection of the dead, you have not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

In other words, these people are part of the church now. There's something, if we look at it in like a traditionalist way, and like we have to go back and we have to do it that way and all that, no, that's not what I'm saying. But they are still part of the church.

And as we walk in this deep faith, I wanna try to offer you something today that's beyond just a superficial understanding of Christianity, but go to deeper. And here's also a humility that I hope to bring to you in all this. Many through church history and everything, there's been a lot of really smart men and women that have drawn for themselves teachers.

I think in your age, it's going to be growing even more and more and more. But here's my point that I like to say. You may be smarter than everyone in the room, but you're not smarter, you're probably not smarter than everyone in the room.

And you're certainly not smarter than everyone in every room. And as the different teachers that have come in through the different centuries, and the different teachers that are alive today, and they draw

together, and they want to do a little faction or a cult or something, or some new doctrine or some new thing, and you're gonna be tempted and tried to all these newfangled theologies, there's a depth there and a humility that rests in the ancient faith. And I think that this can be encouraging for you.

I think this can be something you can hold on to. I love this quote that I ran across years ago by Pelican. He says this, Tradition is the living faith of the dead.

Traditionalism is the dead faith of the living. Do you get the difference there? Being a traditionalist or whatever, he says traditionalism is the dead faith of the living, but tradition, walking in the faith, the canons of scripture, the teachings of the church, and these types of things are something that can guide us and give us a depth that's beyond just the superficiality of this world. And be careful, and be humble as we look to the church.

My beautiful wife was talking about this desire for unity. I really have this. And I see that too many times factious thinking have divided the body of Christ and drawn off little factions and schisms and heresies.

And here's one of my other sayings that I like to say. If an argument has lasted more than 500 years, it's probably not stupid. Some of these big thoughts that have been batted around on grace and faith and atonement and sovereignty of God and all these types of things are really big, meaty discussions.

And I encourage you as you look into them not just to belittle these big thoughts and just to say that's stupid, that's ridiculous, that's awful. Dive into the deeper thinking of God and say, you know, I want to understand why they were saying this. And I think if you do that, it'll help with you having a more sense of the unity of the body of Christ and it'll give you a more solid grounding to drink from the deep thinking people of God.

And it also will give you a warning for this new age. Alistair McGrath, a historian, gives this that he calls the understanding this can be like a filter. He says, Tradition is like a filter which allows us to identify suspect teachings immediately, to protest that we've never believed this way before.

The past here acts as both a resource and a safeguard, checking unhelpful and unorthodox doctrinal developments by demanding that they support and explain their historical and theological credentials. Now this is not to say that the Holy Spirit doesn't want you to take something new for today. That's the traditionalist, or traditionalism.

We're not saying that, I'm not saying that, okay, the way this was done in the 1950s, it's got to be done that way today. In your generation, you're going to have to take the word of God and put it into practice for your generation. You can't do it the way that I did it.

It has to be alive for you. However, as you walk forward, to walk forward with humility and depth, is going to just save you from so many different problems. I ran across this meme the other day, I'll read it to you.

So here's a chart, someone's in a Bible class, and this is the tree of church history and all this kind of thing, and this teacher is here and he goes, okay, so this is where our movement came along and finally got the Bible right. And so, this is sometimes a little too close to home. And then this little guy here says, Jesus is so lucky to have us.

So, this understanding can bring us many times, I'm afraid, you could spend your entire life in some little tangent of theology, and what I use the term, it's a reductionism. You don't have the whole faith of the

historic faith of Christianity, and you can end up in some tangent. I've seen it in my lifetime, and it happens, and you end up with these different pendulum swings.

I can think of, even amongst myself, so thinking of different expressions of different things, and as you have extremes that are going, and we will go through those different things, come on to something that's stable. For instance, I can think of years ago, there was a big push to sort of re-baptize everybody if they didn't quite have a crisis conversion, kind of like my conversion. You know, it needs to be just like this, so there'd be a tendency to re-baptize everybody with that, and it gathered up a group.

Then the extreme, I think today, almost goes towards like an old order baptism. We're gonna re-baptize you if you didn't have a certain thing that you did after your baptism and all this, and different extremes and theologies, and what are they are, I think can hurt and divide the body of Christ. Jesus is our salvation.

Jesus is our way, and we have a historic faith that I think can help you. So if you're looking for different things to read, I love to read the church of the martyrs, the church of the early Christians, and to go forward with that, and I think there's a robust way to read the word of God in that way. And then finally, in the quadrilateral is real.

This is the fluffiest one. You certainly can't start with this one, but here's what I mean with this. Here's what I mean.

Real, the doctrine and practice should endeavor to be supported by genuine practice alive today and throughout church history. We must recognize that it's the Holy Spirit that has guided the church, that's kept it alive, that it's alive today, and in that you kind of just have a humility as you look through church life and looking at it. I tell you this, it's what I call, I'm very skeptical of what I call coffee table revivals.

A coffee table revival is the way I would explain is this, so you get a bunch of us guys and we drink a little too much coffee and we're sitting around a table and we come up with all the cures that are gonna ail the church, and we're gonna say, okay, this church is wrong and that church is wrong and this is this, and we get everything together and our poor ministers, we go then unload this all to them. This is what's wrong with the church. And you end up with this thought that doesn't really exist.

And here's my warning to you. As a confession from a visionary, myself, that where we can really mess up is this, the problem with visionaries is that they can exist in their vision when it doesn't even actually exist. I was talking with someone a while back and we were talking about this and they were explaining and critical about this different church and they do this wrong and they do that wrong and all this and the other and I said, yeah, but there's one thing different that they have that you don't have.

They said, what's that? They exist. They are there. We tend to, watch this, we tend, particularly visionaries, we have this problem, we judge ourselves by what we dream we're creating.

We judge everybody else by what they actually are. We don't give them the benefit of what they want to be creating. So we judge ourselves, ah, I'm gonna do this and I'm gonna be a missionary to that and I'm gonna do all this, but you guys, you don't do any of that.

But I haven't even started. I haven't even started. And so be careful that we are real.

Probably can't see it from there, but it's just, today it's even more so in that sense. I found this little meme also, it says, it's just a short survey, sir. How would you describe your faith? Well, I'm a post-evangelical, proto-church-going, interfaith explorer, pro-ecumenical, neo-pilgrim.

So she says, well, do you believe in Jesus? Jesus who? And so it's a, unfortunately, this is, I think, something that can be affecting you even more so today. There's something that we call in just general sociology or something, you know, that we are in this post-modern era. And one of the concepts of post-modern era is we no longer have staunch positions of faith that we have like micro-tribes.

In some ways, this is helping us because people say, oh, you can have your little, you know, thing here. And everybody has their little micro-tribes and everything, but they almost look at us like, you know, people are worshipping Santa Claus or something, that these little micro-tribes. But you have to be careful that you don't get into this post-modern tribalism that you're just kind of off with these little scattered different things and, again, just live in a lack of the depth of the church.

And again, I think that what we can end up with is reductionism. What I mean by reductionism, you know what I mean by that? That you just stay on the surface. And all the blogs and internets and different YouTube videos and everything that want to have new ways to talk about grace and salvation and the atonement and sacraments and all these different things can weigh us down and make us just stay on the surface for too long.

All right, so I'm coming to the end of just a couple more slides. All right, so I'm going to give you a little guide. I came across this article and I'll give it to you if you'd like.

And it's written by a neo-Calvinist and he was a good teacher, really good teacher. His name is Kevin J. Van Hooser. And this, particularly this article is actually, I've only read a few of his books.

But in this article, he gives, apparently somebody was writing him questions about being a budding theologian. And he gives kind of this sort of pastoral rebuke of how to think about yourself as a theologian. So here we all are.

Today's my academic day. And you're budding people who want to study the word of God properly. And he gives them lots of warnings.

But there's some point here that I want you to get and I think it will help. Take it or leave it. He says finally, after he gives them several different rebukes, he says finally, with whom should you do theology? This is going to be a challenge.

I would say, I will give you a trigger alert to this. So, but watch what he says and see, you don't have to accept it, but watch it. And he has an interesting point that is lost on your generation.

Finally, with whom should we do theology? In the old days, many of my students identified with a particular confessional tradition. This is no longer the case. We often hear that millennials are more interested in spirituality than organized religion.

Hence the decline in denominationalism. I know you expressed interest in being a free range theologian. That's my turn, I know.

But it's better than you're a lone ranger, which I fear comes close to the way church historians often describe heretics. Recall what I said above about the importance of reading the scripture and communion with the saints. I understand your consternation about being forced to act like a consumer and deciding which particular communion to join.

But consider, just as there was no contradiction between belonging to one of the tribes, the 12 tribes, and belonging to Israel, so there is no necessary contradiction between being local, or even confessional, and Catholic. That's Catholic with a small C. Jesus says, in my Father's house there are many dwelling places. There is much to be gained by inhabiting a particular theological tradition, a dwelling place.

But confinement to a single room, or as some translate it, a mansion, can be suffocating. He realizes that. The important point is this, that whichever room you occupy, you should aspire to building up the whole house, preserving the integrity of its witness, orienting its worship, and increasing in its wisdom.

So here's the thing. Be a churchman. Be part of your church.

And even if I would dare say, understand that not only your church, but who's the churches that you would be somewhat related to. So here, big trigger alert, and all minophobes, put your ears together. So as I look at some of the things, and you hear this word Anabaptist thrown around, all these guys would claim to be Anabaptists.

And you probably don't know some of them. But it's interesting, one of the things, the way I use a tradition, is not because I think we did everything right, or a tradition did everything right. It's because the things we did wrong.

The Anabaptists in particular, in two years, are going to come up to the 500th anniversary. And there's been a lot, a lot, a lot of things done wrong in that tradition. But in that you learn.

And unfortunately, as we just keep reinventing things over and over again, we end up superficial, superficial, superficial. So I think taking Van Hooser's advice, and walking a tradition, is something that I think is good for you. And then finally, the fear of God.

And all that you do as you study the word of God, please handle it carefully, with the fear of God. I love this debate that went on in the early church, by Cyprian, and they were arguing over what to do with heretics that come out of heresies into the church. They got in a big debate with Stephen and Roman, and Cyprian and Carthage.

And the fear that they take over their dialogue, is impressive to me. And I think as we look at our blogs, and our Facebooks, and all of our different things, we've got to be careful to treat it this way. He said this, and I only have about two slides left.

You have my letter, and I yours. In the day of judgment, before the tribunal of Christ, both will be read. Be careful.

As we write, and we discuss, and we talk with other saints, and we discuss with people, have a humility, and a carefulness that you have, about those things. And then my verse that I have on my wall in my room, is this. Have salt within yourself, and peace with one another.

I love this passage. The context is in Mark chapter 9. If you recall, it's when guys were getting, that were demon possessed, were getting exorcised from their demons, and then coming to Jesus to complain. These guys are getting their demons cast out without us.

Which is crazy. And it thinks about how factious we can think, that you'd rather have people be demon possessed, than not do it your way. That's a problem.

Jesus said he was not against me, it's for me. But at the very end of that passage, at the very end of the chapter, he says something to me that's life changing, and I leave this with you. He says have salt within yourself, and peace with one another.

Salt. The way I interpret this, is be fully convinced, and even if you were edgy, if you could, be very serious about where you stand. This is where I think Van Hooser's point he's trying to make.

That understand where you are, in your theology, and your understanding of the Bible, to be salty with it. And then at the end of the day, have peace with one another. If he would have just said have peace with one another, it'd be kind of like modern post-modernism.

Just kind of accept everybody and all this type of a thing, and that would be if he just said that. If he would have just said have salt within yourself, it'd be kind of like modern Phariseeism, but the combination is brilliant and beautiful. Have salt within yourself.

Know what you believe. Stand on it fully, and walk in the integrity of your heart. Study, go deep, and be convinced.

And then, have peace with one another. Have humility. You probably don't have the whole picture, and there's other people who could help you along the way.

So that's it, the apostolic quadrilateral that I hope that I can give to you. I want to lift up today in this academic day of our Bible school, of looking at the way to read the Scripture. I look at Scripture that nothing can be received of you.

I don't care what Menno Simon said, or Justin Martyr, or anybody. Nothing can be required of you which is not written in the Word of God. Christocentric.

Read the Scriptures from both Old Testament and New Testament through the life of Jesus. Antiquity. Find, if you can, a practice in the early church, and reel.

Get out of your own head, and make it a reality in your life. So, let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You, Lord, for Your Word.

We thank You for the church that has existed throughout all times. That You started from the foundations of the earth to fulfill Your purposes. And I pray, God, that You would allow us to sense that great cloud of witnesses that are going before us, cheering us on to walk in the faith.

And over these young people, that they would have a depth to go beyond just the superficial understanding of the faith and to go deep into the deep wells of the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. And give them stability, inspiration, and a life that's victorious following You. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

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