

How to Preach in the Power of the Spirit

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the supernatural aspect of preaching, highlighting the need for preachers to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. It discusses the importance of admitting human limitations, praying for divine help, trusting in specific promises from God, acting in faith, and expressing gratitude after preaching. The goal is to see, savor, and show the truth of Christ, acknowledging that preaching is a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: John 15:5, Galatians 3:5, Psalms 119:165, Isaiah 41:10, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Philippians 4:19, 1 Peter 4:11, Isaiah 64:4

Topics: "Power of the Holy Spirit", "Faith in Preaching"

Description

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Transcript

I'm going to talk about preaching. In my mind, at least as I see it in the Bible, the act of preaching and the aim of preaching are humanly impossible. They are only possible in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So this message is about how you preach in the power that is not your own. Which is a very strange thing if you stop and think about it. What I am doing right now, the Bible calls me to do in such a way that it is not I, but He who does it.

So how do you do that? What did I do to get ready for this? What should I be doing in my head or heart right now so that that happens? That's what I'm going to talk about. I'm going to start with what I'm not going to be doing. My question is not what are the natural things that you can do or I could do as a preacher to increase natural knowledge and natural feelings? That's not my goal.

And the reason is this. This is 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.

And he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. So I'm not interested in merely doing natural things to increase natural knowledge with natural feelings. I'm just not interested.

In the end, you can do amazing things. I mean, just think of the power of human rhetoric, human oratory. Think of Churchill.

Think of John Kennedy, President Kennedy. Think of what can be done with the mouth for a nation or for a people. You can grow a big church without the Holy Spirit.

So I'm just not interested in helping you do that. I'm not interested in creating remarkable oratory, even though it can achieve things that would make you a lot of money and get you a lot of praise and look so successful. This is not my interest.

What did Paul mean by the things of the Spirit of God when he said the natural person can't even grasp them. They're just foolishness. And you know what he meant.

There's a long list of texts. I won't read them all. The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

So, right at the center of what he meant was cross. Christ crucified and risen is just unintelligible and foolishness. I have a son who has looked me in the face and said, that makes no sense.

You know what the things of the Spirit of God are that the world cannot understand. So, in my mind, the chief end of preaching is to bring people and this is impossible, to bring people to see Jesus for who He really is, to savor Him for the value that He really has, and to show Him to the world that way. That's the goal of preaching in my mind.

Seeing, savoring, showing. Three S's. Nobody can see Him.

Nobody can savor Him. Nobody can show Him humanly. It cannot be done.

So, I'm after in this message, it's almost a paradox to say it, helping you with my mouth, this is a human mouth, do what you can't do. That's the goal. Because that's what I find all over the Bible.

So what makes preaching unique is that it's a miracle. It's not just after miracles. It is.

It is a miracle. So in my book, Expository Exaltation, that's my two-word definition of preaching. Expository, you better see it in the book.

Exaltation. It's a savoring, leaping over what you've seen in the book. That can't happen by human means.

But it's got to happen. It's got to happen in the preacher. It's got to happen in the people, or we are wasting our time.

Preaching is impossible. I want to bring about the seeing, the savoring, the showing of Christ for who He really is. As valuable as He really is.

Beautiful, glorious, great as He really is. I want that to happen in me. I want it to happen in my hearers.

That's what preaching is. It doesn't happen apart from the Holy Spirit, and so the question then becomes how do you preach in the power of the Holy Spirit? When the Holy Spirit is at work, let me give you some text to show you what happens. When the Holy Spirit is mightily at work, this is God Almighty by the Spirit through the Word doing these things.

He raises the spiritually dead. Ephesians 2.5 He takes out a heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36.26 He goes beyond what flesh and blood can do and reveals the truth of Christ like He did for Peter in Matthew 16.

He shines in our heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4.6 He enlightens the eyes of the heart. Ephesians 1 He unveils our faith.

So, beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being changed from one degree of glory to the next. This comes from the Spirit who is the Lord. That's what He does.

In other words, without the sovereign, life-giving, blindness-removing, heart-illuminating, glory-revealing work of God's Spirit, preaching doesn't happen. It doesn't exist. Preaching is not a subspecies of rhetoric in the university.

It's unique in the universe. I try to unpack how that is biblically in the book, but that's my assumption right now. It is a seeing in the Word truth.

It is a savoring of that truth in accordance with its worth. And it is a showing, or in the case of preaching, a saying of that beautiful, infinitely valuable truth in such a way that the Holy Spirit through it awakens the same thing in the people. The seeing, the savoring, and then a life that shows, just like we heard from Nez this morning, to the demons and the angels and all the schemes, the wisdom of God.

That's a miracle. You can't do it. Take heart.

But you must. What in the world does that mean? So I'm asking, how can a preacher become the means by which the Holy Spirit works miracles in the people? The miracle of seeing, savoring, showing, which is another word for that is worship. Not just in the building, but a life of showing the beauty of Christ.

How do I preach so that it is not I, but Christ? Now, some of you Bible folks will recognize that phrase, not I, but Christ. You'll think of a verse. And the interesting thing about the verse is it doesn't have to do with preaching.

It has to do with everything, right? It's Galatians 2.20. I remember one time, I was so sick for three weeks in the hospital in college with mononucleosis, and the chaplain walked in. Nobody ever asked me this. I can remember he said, he started to leave and he turned around and said, Johnny, he called me in those days, Johnny, what's your life verse? I didn't have a life verse.

But I said, I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. In the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

And I had no idea what that verse would come to mean. I no longer live. Piper does not preach.

That's what it says. But Christ lives in me. And then he contradicts himself.

That's an awful, horrible thing to say about the Bible, right? It's glorious. Let's call it paradox. And the life I now live, wait a minute, you just said you don't live.

And the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave. There's an answer to the mystery there. I want to get that.

What in the world are you talking about? A life that you're not living, but Christ is living, but you are living by faith. I've got to get that. Your people have to get that.

Your new converts who've never gotten a clue about anything in the Christian life have got to get that. So that's what we're after. Oh, this is an introduction.

Like what? Are you going to get through it? You keep telling us what you're going to do. Yes, yes, I am going to get to it. By the grace of God, I am what I am.

And His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, but it was not I, but the grace of God that was with me. That's 1 Corinthians 15.10. Same as Galatians 2.20. Or 1 Corinthians 3.6. I planted, Apollos watered, God gave the growth, so neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything.

Wait a minute. You just said I planted. We've got to get this.

We've got to figure this out. These paradoxical statements in the Bible. We've got to live this.

This has to be the way we preach and the way we live. Or Philippians 2.12. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the one who is at work in you doing that willing and doing that doing. One of the most impactful papers I read from my professor in seminary when I first got there as a raving Arminian was who's doing the work, Piper? Who's doing the work? And it was just a message on Philippians 2.12. You work out your salvation because God is at work in you doing the doing, doing the willing.

I said, okay, got to get this. So how does the preacher, how do I become the means, the instrument by which the Holy Spirit works miracles in the people? So they know God did that this morning. God opened my eyes this morning.

God caused me to love Jesus this morning. God's filling me with the passion to show Jesus. That guy up there didn't do it.

That guy cannot do what just happened here. That's the way I want to preach. Now my answer to how you do that, that's what the rest of the message is, and you may have seen this somewhere and I just want to apply it to preaching.

For 40 years, give or take a year, I can't remember when the first time I came up with this, I have pursued preaching in the power of another by means of an acronym which I pronounce APTAT, A-P-T-A-T. I've written about it in numerous places, APTAT, A-P-T-A-T, A-P-T-A-T. And I'm going to walk through APTAT in relation to preaching.

Give you Bible verses to explain it, but mainly camp out on T in the middle. So A is admit you can do nothing. P is pray for the help you need.

T is trust the promise of God to give you what you need in the moment of crisis, preaching or whatever. A, act in that faith. And T, when you're done, thank Him.

I don't know of anything better. I don't know any other way to do this. So I'm going to walk you through that and make it as absolutely practical for preaching as I can.

And the rest of you who are not preachers will find it very easy to transpose what I'm saying to preachers into your daily challenge, okay? This is not, you don't need to say, oh, well, here he goes off on preachers. This is not for us. Oh, oh, it is for you.

Because preaching is just an act of all the acts that we are called to do in the power of another. All of life is to be, I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live.

All of life, not just preaching. Okay, so here we go. It is now two minutes before I preach.

I'm giving you a typical Sunday morning for 33 years at Bethlehem Baptist Church, me sitting on the front pew. Although for the first 10 years, we sat back here in one of these giant chairs and looked like kings, right? And the chairs were designed to look like thrones. But after we built the new sanctuary, we all sat down.

So here I am on the front pew. It's two minutes before I stand in the pulpit to open God's word for 45 minutes for these folks that I love. What do you do? Now, you understand, don't you, that Friday and Saturday, mega hours have been spent on this message.

I'm not talking about that right now. That's another sermon and another conference. We can come back and do that another time.

How do you prepare your sermon? That's not what this is about. This is about the moment when the miracle has to happen, right? The moment when the miracle must happen or it doesn't happen. Okay, so apt at.

It's two minutes. The text is probably being read by one of our interns or an elder. And I'm on the front pew doing this.

A, admit. I say quietly, I admit, Father. And I did this 20 minutes ago.

I admit, Father, that I am utterly dependent on you now. Now, as I step into this pulpit. Without your providence, I would not have life or breath or anything.

Acts 17, 25. I don't tell the Lord where the text is found. Without your supernatural help as I preach, no one in this room will be converted to Christ.

No one will be raised from spiritual death. No one will have the heart of stone taken out and a heart of flesh put in. No one will discern the true meaning of this text.

No one will see spiritual beauty. No one will savor your infinite worth. No one will be transformed into your likeness.

I admit this utterly and willingly, Father. I can't do any of that. And I embrace the word of the Lord Jesus from John 15, five.

Apart from me, you can do. Nothing. That's my textual warrant for A, A. Now, I gave you, what was that? About a 45 second version.

I never do all that. I don't have time. I've only got a minute or two.

This collapses into five seconds. I admit. And I'll just say some element of my weakness, some element of my dependence.

I'll just tell him out loud in my head, I can't do what I'm about to do. Seems to me, if it's not us who do it, but Christ, we better just say to the Lord right off the bat, do you use that phrase? Probably not. Probably doesn't work in cricket.

I don't know. It's a baseball phrase. Right away, I can't do it.

P, A, P. So I'm going short on the first two and we're gonna linger over T. But here's P. I pray. That is, I ask Him for what I need at that moment. I'll give you some summaries here and then I'll come back and say how it works practically.

So I pray. I might just say, help me. Just help me.

That's all. Two seconds. Help me.

But usually, I feel some particular burden or challenge or weakness or need. Something has happened in the morning. Something is about my health.

Something about the family. Something about the church. Something is making me feel I've got a very special, peculiar this morning need.

And I ask for help with that. So for example, Father, grant me the miracle of self-forgetfulness. Right now, even as I say the word, I'm losing it, right? You get that? The fact that I'm telling you right now that I should be self-forgetful at this moment wrecks the whole thing.

But I'm pausing and I'm okay with that for a minute or so, so that you know that is one of the main needs that a preacher has. Because if you're thinking about yourself as you preach and hoping that it's coming across well, you're not preaching. You're disconnected.

You're watching yourself preach. And you're hoping he's doing a good job. And when you're split like that and you're watching yourself preach and saying, that's not coming across or they're not liking me.

Or as soon as you're in that mode, it's over. Then you gotta pray yourself out of that mode quick. So pray for me right now that I wouldn't get stuck here.

So I'm asking, help me to get rid of, help me to have self-forgetfulness. Another name for that is humility. Grant me clarity of mind and expression.

Grant me freedom from my manuscript here. Don't let me get lost and confused. Last Sunday, I preached at Hamilton Road Press in Ireland in, what was the name of the town? Bangor.

And there was a little crisis right over there. It's a big congregation and I was looking out here and all the aisles went down there. I don't know what they do here.

I don't know what Irish people do when this happens. And I'm off balance. I pray, I mean, the Lord rescued me.

I almost stopped. I thought, if somebody's dying, I gotta stop and pray. I mean, that could be happening.

An old lady might have collapsed. She's dying of a heart attack. We gotta pray.

And I almost stopped and I didn't stop. I don't know why I didn't stop. It was so discombobulating for me.

If that's another word, I don't know. Afterwards, I discovered it's so good that I didn't stop. It was not a crisis.

Some, I think, mentally problem person who is there regularly, it's not a big deal. And if I had stopped, a lot of people would have been embarrassed. God rescued me, but I was struggling to get back to my preaching.

And so I pray, God, please protect me, help me not to lose my thought, my train. Bring to my mind, I don't know if you're charismatic enough to pray like, God, give me the gift of prophecy. If I were to pray that, which I do, I would mean, grant that you would bring to my mind as I preach, fresh words, thoughts, insights that are not in this text that somebody in the third pew, four seats over, needs at that moment that I wouldn't have thought to say except you brought it to my mind and it pierces like an arrow to that person's heart.

I pray for things like that. I pray for, grant me joy in the truth. Help me to have affections that correspond with this.

Oh, what a horrible contradiction when you're saying things about hell and you're smiling or you're saying things about heaven and you're frowning. You're just all wrong. There's no correspondence between yourself and the truth, affectionately.

So I pray about that. I pray for compassion. I don't feel like I'm a naturally compassionate person.

I plead, help me to love these people. Help me to care about whether they live or die. Help me to care about their marriages and their parenting and their jobs.

And help me, make me real. That's an example, just a sample of the kind of things I might pray. And again, you know, I'm only gonna give 10 seconds to this.

Maybe 20 as I pray because this, I'm gonna get up there in 10, 15 seconds. So I'm just praying. Now here's the one that I wanna linger over the rest of our time pretty much.

T, A-P-T. So admit, I can do nothing. And P, pray for whatever you need.

Ask and you will receive. Pray it. And now T, trust.

This is all important. Why do I say it's all important? Why isn't A all important or P all important? Because trust is the act through which God has promised to pour his Holy Spirit explicitly. I'm gonna read you Galatians chapter three, verses two through five, and show you why it's been one of the most important texts in the Bible for me to understand the Christian life and preaching.

Because remember, our question is, how do I become a channel or an instrument through which the Spirit of God does miracles? That's my goal as a preacher. Here's what it says, Galatians three, verse two. Let me ask you only this.

Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? And he expects them to be able to answer. Well, it wasn't by works. It was by hearing with faith.

Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now being perfected in the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain if indeed it is in vain? And here comes the key verse, verse five. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith? That is important. Because I want to know how is the Holy Spirit supplied to me such that miracles are wrought in this church like raising the dead? And he tells us, he tells us, is it by works of the law? Answer, no.

Well, what is it by then? It's by, and keep these two together because keeping them together will give you a practical handle. Hearing with faith. Faith-filled hearing.

Hearing accompanied by faith. You hear something and you believe it. What? Well, in the context it would be the gospel of justification by faith.

That's what he's arguing about here. You hear the message of the gospel and in the hearing of it, faith is awakened such that you know the Holy Spirit is here. He's being supplied.

Now, how does that relate to preaching? Does he who supplies the Spirit to you, does he who supplies the Spirit to you as you preach and works miracles through you as you preach do so by works of the law? That is, self-reliant obedience to the commandments. No, he does so by hearing a precious blood-bought promise of God. Just a little parenthesis here.

There's a great gospel-centered awakening in the last 20, 30 years, right? The Gospel Coalition in America and in various places is gospel-centered and you hear people over and over again say, preach the gospel to yourself all day long. Believe the gospel. It says though, that's the key right here.

I just wanna say, that's glorious. However, the term gospel can become a mantra without content. And my, I mean, I built a huge portion of the book Expository Exhortation saying, the goal of preaching is not to go to a text and make a beeline to the gospel.

The goal of preaching is to go to the text and make a beeline from the gospel to a thousand promises that will help you live your life every moment of every day that have been bought by the blood of Jesus. And I fear that this centripetal emphasis on go to the gospel, go to the gospel, means go to the simple sentence, Christ died for your sins. Well, you know what? When He died for your sins, I'll give you two texts.

This is all in the parenthesis here. He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, will He not with Him freely give us all things? That's the glory of the gospel. When Christ died, He bought preaching.

He bought conversions. He bought healed marriages. He bought relief from addictions.

And if you just constantly just use the mantra, the specificity and the power and the nitty gritty effectiveness of all the things that He bought, won't hit home. The other text is 2 Corinthians 1.20. All the promises of God are yes in Him. Surely that means when you have Christ through the gospel, guess what you have? Every promise for you in the Bible.

Enjoy the Psalms. Enjoy Kings. Enjoy Genesis.

They're full of promises. And guess what? Gentile though you be, they're yours, bought by the blood of Jesus. That's what gospel means for me.

But I don't want to just mantra the phrase, believe the gospel, believe God, preach the gospel to yourself. I want to get specific. So, here we are, and I'm going to give you three habits that I do with tea.

Because I'm arguing here now that the way you preach so that the Spirit is supplied, Galatians 3.5, the Spirit is supplied and works miracles among you is by hearing a promise with faith. I'm sticking the word promise in, right? The text just says hearing with faith. And I'm saying contextually, it's mainly gospel.

And I'm saying the gospel bought every promise and therefore you can put in the word, you hear a promise, you believe it, and you speak, and the Spirit is moving. So, here are my three habits. Habit number one, we're gathered downstairs in the prayer room a half an hour before the service.

We did this every Lord's Day for 30 years. A prayer meeting for poor John Piper who so desperately needed to be prayed over by elders and others. 15, 20 people were gathered, they're laying their hands on me, they're pleading, pleading.

And you know what text they quoted most often? First Peter 4.11. Actually, it starts back in verse 10. Let him who speaks, speak as the oracles of God. And then comes this one.

Let him who serves. I can hear the text just breaking over me. Let him who serves, serve in the strength that God supplies so that in everything God may get the glory.

You see the connection between the one who supplies the power gets the glory for the sermon. And that's crucial. We want God to get glory.

So, if we want God to get glory, we gotta figure out what it means to serve in the strength that God supplies. So, habit number one is in the hour leading up to that two minutes before the preaching, I am being prayed over with the truth, you can't do this in your own strength. You must rely upon the power of another.

If you don't, he won't get the glory, you will. And that will be failure. I don't care how big this church is.

Right? So, that's habit number one. Habit number two, in that moment, I need a storehouse of promises memorized. It isn't just because I'm 73, though I would like to make excuses about memory that way.

All my life, I have had in my mind hundreds of Bible verses memorized. And at any given moment, can't think of one. Why? One reason, I mean, there are a lot of reasons.

Some of them are demonic. And some of them are just practical. One practical reason is, when you're searching for something on your hard drive, you gotta tag it, you gotta name it, you gotta put in a letter, just a letter.

And boom, several options come up. You gotta tag the promises. How else? I mean, if you've got a hundred in your mind and they're not tagged, they're all just swirling around and I'm saying Bible verse, Bible verse, and the computer's saying, what's the tag? I've got, let's just take four.

Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will help you.

I will strengthen you. I'll hold you up with my victorious right hand. And that is tagged in my brain.

That is my default. That's the gears that work in my head when I'm in neutral. Fear not, fear not.

So that's tagged with F, fear not. God is able to do exceeding beyond all that we ask or think. Or God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work, including this sermon that you're about to preach.

That's A, that's tagged with A, able, able, able. God is able. Or who is a God like you who works for those who wait for him? Isaiah 64, four.

He just works for those who wait, tagged with a double U. And God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory. Those are four texts, Philippians 4, 19. Four texts that are more or less tagged, ready, and available at any moment for any challenge, especially the challenge of preaching.

And the question is, will I believe them? If God says to you through Isaiah 41.10, because you are his child, and you can appropriate Isaiah 41.10 through the blood of Jesus, because it says you can in 2 Corinthians 1.20, all the promises of God are yes in him. If that's your promise, if that's spoken to you as a child of God, 30 seconds before you preach, the issue is, will you believe it? Will you stand up and say, it's gonna happen. He's gonna help me because he just said he would help me.

So that's my second habit. Form a small group of memorized, precious, universally applicable promises that you can lay hold on to believe he's going to help me. He's going to give me the strength.

He's going to protect me. He's not gonna let his word come back empty. You can believe because it's through that believing, hearing with faith that the Holy Spirit flows.

Habit number three. I get up early on Sunday morning. I used to get up about 4.45, I think.

And I would, everybody's asleep. And I would go to my study. I have a little nook, which is my prayer nook.

And I would go over the word. I would put the word on my prayer bench and I would start reading my appointed text for the day. I'll try to read through the Bible every year.

So I've got four chapters appointed and I'd start reading. And what I'm doing is ransacking this text for a specific promise to help me this morning. I might not find it.

I might be in Leviticus. And it's just all about the colors of the curtains. And this is not gonna cut it.

At least typologically, I don't know how to make it work. So if it's not there in the appointed text, I go elsewhere. Because this is different from my second habit.

The second habit says always have a stock of standard, faithful, universally applicable verses or promises ready to go in case he doesn't give you a specific one that morning. But I want one. I want one that morning.

And so I'm looking for one. Because I want to take that promise, specially given by my reading to me and walk into the pulpit with God talking to me. With a personal pronoun, I will help you this morning.

My appointed text was the next to last paragraph of Psalm 119. And Psalm 119, 165 says, if I can remember it, because I've never memorized it before, but I've been quoting it to myself through the

morning. Nothing, great peace have those who love your law.

Nothing can make them stumble. And I had it. I had it.

I had what I needed for the last three hours. I've got it right now. I love God's word.

I do. And before God, I tell you, I love God's word. So, I'm not gonna stumble.

Now, I'm not sure what that means. At least it means this. I won't stumble utterly.

Jesus prayed for Peter before he denied him that he would not stumble. And he didn't stumble utterly, irretrievably. Because Jesus said, when you turn, strengthen your brothers.

You're coming down, but I've prayed for you. So, I might really blow it in this message. I mean, I might say something really unhelpful, but I'm banking on Psalm 119, 165 to give me peace because I got a phone call last night that got me awake at 3.45 this morning.

And by the way, did you know that it's bright daylight in Scotland at 3.45? I did not know that. And that was not helpful. But that phone call got me up anxious at 3.45. And I had to get that off my chest.

I can't preach when I'm all consumed with what that phone call was about. That's what these verses are for. That's how it works.

So, habit number three is ransack the text for specific promises. Let me lean on that for just a minute, that issue of something happens right before you preach and you'll see how unbelievably practical this is. Let's suppose, here's my wife sitting down here, Noelle.

Let's suppose that Noelle and I have had a very difficult, strange, controversial week. We've not communicated well. We've said things that are hurtful.

And I'm, as a man of this family, feeling I have not handled this well. I've tried to make it right. I feel rotten right now.

I feel like a failure as a husband. The kids are not doing well and I have to preach the word of God in about an hour or 30 seconds. What do you do? You don't have the option of saying, 30 minutes before the sermon, associate, take over.

That's not an option. You've got to do it. And you feel very unworthy.

You feel emotionally distracted. You feel depressed and discouraged. The Lord will take you.

I say this from experience. He will take you to a text. For example, this one he has taken me to often.

Psalm 25, eight. Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way. I mean, could there be anything sweeter for a preacher to hear 30 seconds before the sermon when all he's thinking about is what a sinful husband he is? How can you go forward? You've said you're sorry. You've done what the Bible calls you to do.

But emotionally, it's just like a rock. And this text says, good and upright is the Lord. Therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads them through the sermon. And you take heart. And you believe it.

You believe it. And in that believing what you just heard, the spirit moves. That's true in so many different ways.

And you could just list them off. If you're anxious, you lay hold on the promise. Cast your burdens on the Lord.

He'll sustain you. Or I've got a long list here. And I won't go through them all because I wanna save time for questions in a few minutes.

But if God, God will give you what you need as you look to him for help from specific promises in his words. So there I sit on the front pew. Let's wrap this up.

There I sit. I've walked through. I admit I can do nothing.

You've told me I can't do anything without you. I pray for help. I pray for love.

I pray for compassion. I pray for soul-converting power. I pray for everything I feel I need and don't have.

And now I have laid hold on a promise. It might be Isaiah 41 10. Fear not for I am with you.

And the text is now done reading and I stand up. And as I walk the few steps into the pulpit, I say them to myself, I'll help you. I love, you know, Spurgeon said he loves the I shalls and I wills of God.

I mean, there are a lot of generalities, a lot of pastors who don't know Apat, know the essence of the Christian life, right? But make the mistake, I think, of not getting specific with God. Everything hangs as a kind of generality. God is good.

God is gracious. God is kind. God is helpful.

And you sort of have an amorphous feeling of faith. Oh, there's more. How much better to hear God say, I will help you in 30 seconds.

I will strengthen you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Or to say, my word will not come back to me empty.

I will accomplish what I have appointed for it to do. The I's of God, the I wills and the I shalls of God. And you take hold of one of them and you believe it.

And in that believing, the spirit flows. And then you act. A-P-T-A is act.

You act in that faith. And while you're acting, you're not very self-conscious. You're not quoting that promise to yourself.

You're focused on the text God has given you. You're opening it. You're loving it.

You're delivering it. And when you're done, and you pray and you go down out of the pulpit, best not to try to compute whether anything happened by looking at faces. They're very misleading.

Sometimes people will look like they have been converted and it's not true. Others will look like they're disappointed and they're loving every word you said. Be careful that you do not pass judgment on the work of God quickly.

But you go down there and as the last song is sung, you say, thank you. Thank you. Thank you for this incredible privilege.

Thank you for sustaining me and giving me breath, giving me a mind, giving me a heart, for giving me insight into the text. Thank you. Now God, oh God, please breathe on what was said there.

And as I walk home across the 11th Avenue Bridge, my house is about a seven minute walk from the church. That bridge is a revelatory bridge on the way to church. And it's a Thanksgiving bridge on the way home.

And I thank him. So let me close by summing it up like this. My conviction has been that preaching is a supernatural miracle becoming a means of miracles.

The miracle is the preachers seeing what's here and savoring what's here. That's called exaltation, expository exaltation, and then saying or showing what's here. And the other miracle is the people seeing with the eyes of their hearts, the truth of Christ and savoring his worth with their heart and then living a life that shows the beauty and greatness and value of Christ.

And all of it is a work of the Holy Spirit. And we pursue it by admitting that we can do nothing without him, praying for his help and all that we need, trusting specific blood bought promises because he comes through what is heard in faith, and then acting in that faith and thanking him when we are done. It's been a very, very precious walk.

Father, I pray now for all of us, but especially preachers, that we would discover the miracle of preaching in the strength that you supply so that in everything you get the glory. I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Ei9zIWM8m9E.mp4>

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