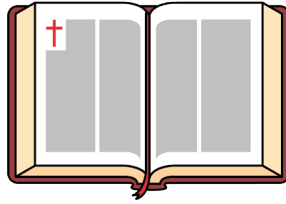


# The Whole Counsel of God



*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.*

- - - Acts 20:26-27 (ESV) All text ESV unless noted

There is a plague that has invaded our country and it started in the “Christian” churches. It is a plague that has resulted in ignorance, distortion and deficiency. What is this plague I am speaking of? It is none other than the proper preaching of God’s word.

This plague started with men and unfortunately in more recent time’s women preaching only portions of God’s word. These men (we will not mention the women again as the bible calls only men to preach) as well intended as they may have been; failed in their duty to do as Paul declared in our text today, *‘to declare to you the whole counsel of God.’*

So what is the whole counsel of God? It is the “good, the bad and the ugly” to quote a spaghetti western movie title. It is man’s sin and total inability to do good apart from God. It is God’s hatred of sin and the sinner while at the same time being fully capable of expressing love to us while we were yet in our sinful state. It is the whole Word of God not just the parts we like or understand and certainly not our pet theological topics. It is one reason I am so guarded against those who insist on topical preaching each week. That type of preaching usually leads to a lack of **“declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”**

**D. A. Carson**<sup>1</sup> explains what Paul meant this way: “When Paul attests that this is what he proclaimed to the believers in Ephesus, the Ephesian elders to whom he makes this bold asseveration know full well that he had managed this remarkable feat in only two and a half years. In other words, whatever else Paul did, he certainly did not manage to go through every verse of the Old Testament, line by line, with full-bore explanation. He simply did not have time.

What he must mean is that he taught the burden of the whole of God’s revelation, the balance of things, leaving nothing out that was of primary importance, never ducking the hard bits, helping believers to grasp the whole counsel of God that they themselves would become better equipped to read their Bibles intelligently, comprehensively.

It embraced God’s purposes in the history of redemption (truths to be believed and a God to be worshiped), an unpacking of human origin, fall, redemption, and destiny (a worldview that shapes all human understanding and a Savior without whom there is no hope), the conduct expected of God’s people (commandments to be obeyed and wisdom to be pursued, both in our individual existence and in the community of the people of God), and the pledges of transforming power both in this life and in the life to come (promises to be trusted and hope to be anticipated).”

Before we go further it is critical, that if we are calling ourselves Christians we agree that there is only one AUTHORITY and one STANDARD for which we must adhere. That is the Word of God. Are you a child of God calling yourself a Christian today?

How do we know we are a child of God? We obey His laws first and foremost. **1 John 5:2–3** *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.*

But Jesus in His earthly ministry also made is perfectly clear we are to pay tribute to those God has appointed over us. **Matthew 22:20-22** *And Jesus said to them,*

---

<sup>1</sup> —D. A. Carson, “Challenges for the Twenty-first-century Pulpit,” in Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes, ed. Leland Ryken and Todd Wilson [Crossway, 2007], pp. 177-178; bullets and italics added

*“Whose likeness and inscription is this?” 21 They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” 22 When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.*

Of course some modernist have tried to twist scripture and say the above was for taxes only but Paul in his Epistle to Titus clears that up. **Titus 3:1 (KJV)** *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work*

We are however, as Christians, are to question tasking’s by those appointed over us to insure that they are in compliance with the Word of God. **Acts 5:29 (KJV)** *Then Peter and the [other] apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men.* The Word of God always trumps the law of man. If this is your AUTHORITY and STANDARD you can proudly wear the name badge Christian.

So now let us look at a few examples that maybe we do not have the **whole counsel of God** on. Let us start with the one that has been most recently been in the headlines as the U.S. Supreme Court made it’s in my opinion unconstitutional decision.

**Homosexuality** and **Same Sex Unions** have become the rage. The liberal media has waged an all-out persecution crusade against anyone who exercises their constitutional right to freedom of religion by refusing to support these schemas. We have been fed a steady stream of lies and innuendo in order to get the minority agenda passed. Sadly even the pulpits of evangelical churches have been wrongfully preaching half-truths and or just as bad messages of hate.

Let us look at the Whole Counsel of God:

a. It is a sin **Lev 18:22** *You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.* There are no mincing words here. Other words for abomination include: outrage, disgrace, horror, hatred, atrocity. Webster’s Dictionary of 1828 defines it as: “Extreme hatred; detestation”

b. Those engaged in it cannot go to heaven **1 Corinthians 6:9** *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality.* God’s

word is clear. Those who actively engage in this sin are condemning themselves to hell.

c. The cause of Homosexuality, transgenderism etc. is the evil in our hearts our own sinfulness: **Romans 1:24-27** *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.* The homosexual agenda would have you believe people are genetically wired to be that way. That is a bold face LIE. God's word again is clear it is our selfish sin.

d. What should be the Christian's Response to the Homosexual?<sup>2</sup>  
"Just because someone is a homosexual does not mean that we cannot love him (or her) or pray for him (or her). Homosexuality is a sin, and like any other sin it needs to be dealt with in the only way possible. It needs to be laid at the cross and repented of.

Christians should pray for the salvation of the homosexual the same way they would any other person in sin. They should treat homosexuals with the same dignity as they would anyone else because, like it or not, they are made in the image of God. However, this does not mean that Christians should approve of their sin. Not at all; Christians should never compromise their witness for a politically correct opinion that is shaped by guilt and fear.

In fact, the following verses should be kept in mind when dealing with homosexuals. "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person," (**Col. 4:5-6**). "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith," (**1 Tim. 1:5**).

You do not win people to the Lord by condemning them and calling them names. This is why God says to speak with wisdom, grace, and love. Let the

---

<sup>2</sup> Christianity and Homosexuality by Matt Slick <http://www.carm.org/>

love of Christ flow through you so that the homosexuals can see true love and turn to Christ instead of away from Him.”

So how do you love your homosexual neighbor without committing the other BIG controversy of our times **Judging others**. Have you noticed the one verse that both Christians and non-Christians (especially those in jail and prison) can quote is **Matthew 7:1** “*Judge not, that you be not judged.*”

The problem arises when we try and apply modern understandings to ancient Greek text. Webster’s Dictionary of 1828 (all verses KJV) gives me one of the best understandings of the word:

**a. JUDGE**, n. [L. judex, supposed to be compounded of jus, law or right, and dico, to pronounce.] This refers to the man, the one sitting on the bench or in the case of the scripture; God.

**b. JUDGE**, v.i. [L. judico.] This verb for the most part, is what bible is referring to and primarily to sub definitions #1 and #4.

**1.** To compare facts or ideas, and perceive their agreement or disagreement, and thus to distinguish truth from falsehood.

*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment* **John 7:24**

**2.** To form an opinion; to bring to issue the reasoning or deliberations of the mind.  
If I did not know the originals, I should not be able to judge, by the copies, which was Virgil and which Ovid.

**3.** To hear and determine, as in causes on trial; to pass sentence. He was present on the bench, but could not judge in the case.

*The Lord judge between thee and me.* **Gen.16:5**

**4.** To discern; to distinguish; to consider accurately for the purpose of forming an opinion or conclusion.

*“The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.”* **Psa. 37:30**

*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment* **1 Corinthians 1:10**

Read **1 Corinthians 6-1-5** we are called to judge others for someday we will judge the angels. Unless you are willing to Judge others how else can you/we fulfill the mandate in **Romans 16:17-18 Amplified Bible (AMP)***17 I appeal to you, brethren, to be on your guard concerning those who create dissensions and difficulties and cause divisions, in opposition to the doctrine (the teaching) which you have been taught. [I warn you to turn aside from them, to] avoid them.18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites and base desires, and by ingratiating and flattering speech, they beguile the hearts of the unsuspecting and simpleminded [people].* You must be able to identify, then avoid and or weed out those who are set on causing trouble in the fellowship of God. It is your duty. You cannot do that if you are unwilling to judge others.

**JUDGE**, v.t. To hear and determine a case; to examine and decide. To preside over a legal case, this rules us out. Yet that is what many have a tendency to want to do.

**JUDG'ER**, n. One who judges or passes sentence. Again only God and those whom he appoints to the bench have this authority. The rest of us only have authority to Judge as it pertains to discernment. Yet this is the one that everyone jumps on fast. We will condemn someone sure enough quick and easy without the least bit of biblical backing; just give us half a chance. This is what Christ spoke of in **Matthew 7:3** *Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?*

I recommend always judging using the following guidelines:

- 1) Judge using scripture alone. This is **RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT!!!**
- 2) If scripture is silent so should we be. Let the Elders of the church deal with the **B I G** issues.
- 3) Pray for discernment from God
- 4) Never be disrespectful or degrading
- 5) Always be truthful and merciful
- 6) Always judge yourself **FIRST**

Back to our main text I hope you can see the importance of seeking out the “**whole counsel of God.**” By picking and choosing what we want to hear, preach, study or teach we are in danger of the very sinful acts that we may be trying to avoid.

**John Piper**<sup>3</sup> has an excellent article on the subject: in it he says: I see three unmistakable implications from this verse:

**“1. Knowing the Whole Counsel of God** Knowing the whole counsel of God helps people get to heaven. Look carefully at this and you'll see why I say it like that. You cannot say from verse 27 that a person has to know the whole counsel of God in order to be saved. A person doesn't have to know it! What you can say is that if an elder doesn't teach the whole counsel of God, he may be an accomplice in someone's destruction. And if a person MAY fall short of heaven because of an elder's neglect in teaching the whole counsel of God, then knowing the whole counsel of God helps people get to heaven....

*Why did God elect his bride the church before the foundation of the world? Why did he create the universe and mankind in his image? Why did he permit the fall into sin? Why did he choose the nation of Israel? Why did he give them the law? Why did he have animal sacrifices and a tabernacle? Why did Jesus come into the world? Why did he preach the kingdom of God? Why did he die and rise again. Why did the Holy Spirit come? How is God fulfilling his purpose and counsel today by calling and regenerating and justifying and sanctifying a church from every people and tribe and tongue and nation? How will he bring this age to a close? How should we then live? What is the unified, whole counsel of God that holds all this together and gives it meaning?*

*That is what we ought to be teaching our children—faithfully, systematically, and with so much life and power that the beauty of it shines for them.*

*The first thing to say from verse 27, then, is that knowing the whole counsel of God helps people get to heaven. Otherwise Paul would not have said that he is innocent of their blood because he taught them this whole counsel.*

---

<sup>3</sup> John Piper The Guilt of Giving Part of God's Counsel, April 16, 1989 ©2015 Desiring God Foundation. Website: [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)

**2. Wanting to Learn the Whole Counsel of God** The second thing to say from verse 27 is that people should want to learn the whole counsel of God. Biblical Christians hunger to know the whole counsel of God.

*This text clearly teaches that elders are deficient and may be guilty of someone's destruction to the degree that they do not declare the whole counsel of God. It must follow that the people of the church are also guilty to the degree that they are not interested in the whole counsel of God. If not teaching it is a sin, then not wanting to be taught it is a sin.*

*So the text clearly implies that Christians should long for the whole counsel of God the way a baby longs for milk. Once you understand this verse, disinterest in the whole counsel of God implies disinterest in the means of salvation. Because the text says that Paul will be innocent if someone fails to be saved, because he gave the fullest means of salvation—the whole counsel of God.*

**3. Courageously Teaching the Whole Counsel of God** Finally, the last thing to say about verse 27 is that elders should be courageous in teaching the whole counsel of God.

*This idea of courage is implied in the phrase, "I did not shrink from declaring to you . . ." This means that there are parts of the whole, unified counsel of God that might make an elder want to shrink back from teaching them. They might be hard to understand. Or they might be uncomplimentary to human pride. Or they might demand radical obedience. And so the elders might be tempted to declare only part of God's counsel—the part that is easy and that they know people especially like. But that would be a shrinking back from declaring the whole counsel of God. It would be cowardice not courage.*

*And that brings us back to the point made at the beginning—obedient life—courageous life in this case—is just as important as accurate doctrine. For Paul the two were inseparable: I did not shrink back—that is, I am a certain kind of person. I declared the WHOLE counsel of God—that is, I taught a certain kind of doctrine. That's what we must aim at together: a courageously obedient kind of person, and a unified, whole counsel of God."*



Piper is so right. It is what the pulpits across America today need, men of courage and conviction to **'to declare to you the whole counsel of God.'** He is also quite correct in his assessment of what is needed in the pews across America. It is men and women not just **"Wanting to Learn the Whole Counsel of God"** I dare say **DEMANDING** to learn the whole counsel of God.

My friends we hear so much about being "fed by the spirit" when folks go looking for a church. As if it is some emotional sensation they must experience each time they are at church building. That is hog wash. There may be a spirit moving upon these churches but it might be the Holy Spirit.

The duty of the Church first and fore most is plainly stated in the Bible. It is to PREACH the Gospel. **Romans 10:14** (AMP) But how are people to call upon Him Whom they have not believed [in Whom they have no faith, on Whom they have no reliance]? And how are they to believe in Him [adhere to, trust in, and rely upon Him] of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?

As we have just learned those standing in the pulpit must be preaching the whole counsel of God if the plague that has resulted in ignorance, distortion and deficiency is to be reversed. Is your church **"declaring to you the whole counsel of God?"** If it is not you need to find another church.

In HIS Service

Mike