

Series: Incommunicable Attributes of God #1679

Title: 1 Timothy 6.2-3

Teaching and Preaching

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Last time we asked this question, borrowed from the 17th century Christian Francis Turretin, “Is theology theoretical or practical?” That’s a very good question, and a pertinent inquiry especially when we come to certain aspects to the being of God. I want to answer this question with you now, because soon we will come to teaching on God that will strike you as being theoretical in nature. Consider what we are doing as a preface or introduction to what’s coming. Hold this in your mind, taking down some notes, so that you will remember this discussion in a few days’ time.

Now, by theology we mean the study of God. By theoretical we mean theory, an area of study rather than its practical application. And by practical we mean the actual doing or use of something rather than theory and ideas. I think this will make sense to you. Given this, let’s again ask: is theology theoretical or practical? While Turretin asks the question, I think the best answer comes from another really good theologian. His name is Petrus, or Peter, van Mastricht whom I introduced you to last time.

We’re going to follow him now from his systematic theology, a real masterpiece, by the title *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. As you can tell from just the title, van Mastricht argues that theology is *both* theoretical *and* practical. What we have when we study God is a both/and, not an either/or. Let’s recall to mind the Scripture he uses to solidify his point that theology is both theoretical and practical. That’s 1 Timothy 6, the end of verse 2 and verse 3. He will also comment on verse 4, but we will save that for later. Last time I told you about the context of this chapter and these verses. I will not repeat that, but be sure and get the last podcast so you know the setting of what Paul writes to Timothy.

Friends, this is 1 Timothy chapter 6, the end of verse 2 and verse 3, **“Teach and preach these principles. ³ If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness...”** Here, the Apostle Paul is ending his letter to the young man whom Paul mentors. His name is Timothy. And Paul is very direct and clear that Timothy is to embrace and teach true theology and he is to reject and give proofs against false theology. Concerning good theology, saying what is right and true about God, Christ, the Spirit, Scripture, and so on, Timothy is to (verse 2), “Teach and preach these principles.” The word principles is not there in the original Greek. We are better off to read this as, “Teach and preach these.”

These, or if you will these principles, are what? These are what Paul has passed along to Timothy throughout the entire course of Paul’s ministry. This is best understood in what Paul said to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, verse 27, “I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.” “These” are the whole of Christian theology. It’s not just what Paul wrote in 1 Timothy or 2 Timothy, rather everything the Apostle has been teaching concerning *true* doctrine, *true* theology. Timothy is to gather all of that up – the whole council, the whole purpose of God, and he is to keep on teaching it.

Second, the Apostle lays out at the end of verse 2 the order in which Timothy’s ministry must be done. First, “teach.” This is the Greek word *didasko* and it means to cause to learn, to instruct, to direct, to teach. Van Mastricht says this means to “inform the intellect by the expression of true [doctrine] and by the refutation of false [doctrine].” Me again. This is the theoretical part. Following in the pattern of Paul, then Timothy, all the way down to us today, first we teach. First we direct our thoughts to the intellect, to the mind, to the part of us that processes the content of what is being taught. This is why Christians must engage the intellect to know who God is.

And this goes back to what I was saying the other day. Modern day Christians or those who believe themselves to be Christian, by and large, so I am speaking about the majority – if this does not describe you, do not be defensive – and I am speaking primarily about Christians in the western world, which includes America, these are not engaging the intellect in learning how to *be* Christian. This is scary and can be discouraging: there is not a genuine and insatiable appetite for knowing God. There is rather a large appetite for getting from God what you can, some quick fixes to make life feel better.

I do not want to spend long with this, but if you want to grasp what I mean, listen to popular, contemporary Christian music. I cannot believe I am asking you to do this! Because what is most popular is devoid of biblical truth. How sadly ironic, there is not a lot of Bible in “Christian” music. Maybe I can say it this way, there is not a lot of Christ in *Christ-ian* music. Why? Two reasons: one, the singer-song writers do not apply the intellect to Bible study, they don’t study true theology, before or as they write their songs. Two, there is no market for it among the listeners. Ultimately, music is a business. Can you sell what you sing? If you cannot, then you (the artist) need to produce tunes that people will purchase, that which becomes popular as it spreads through social media and all the way around the world’s churches. And right now that is, by and large, what is therapeutic. God exists for *me*. God is there to make *me* have a better life. It is not God and Christ exalting and honoring. It is person exalting and honoring.

Well, I may have just offended *you*! Or, a slight eye roll from you, “so what does this guy listen to?” I can assure I am not a heresy hunter when, on occasion, I turn on Christian radio stations that play music. But I do notice that lack of biblical truth in the songs, yes. Well, you probably do not want a sermon today on the kind of music that delights the mind with rich theology, so I will move on. But this is, genuinely, something I am concerned about because I know the power of song to transform a person’s *thoughts*. And I do believe we, as Christians, must get back to baptizing our music in that which is doctrinally sound and, yes, musically sound as well. And just this, a great way to do this is to re-introduce the church, re-introduce this radio station that plays music, to the hymns! Because in so many of these hymns we find *the truth* about God and ourselves.

This is why spiritual leaders, pastors, teachers, ministers, professors, parents, Christian school educators, youth pastors, radio and podcast Bible teachers and the like *must* first, teach. We must engage the intellect. We must address theory, the theoretical, the theology if you will. This is why on *God Is* I first teach. That’s what Paul clearly says to Timothy and, I believe, to a man like me. I understand Paul to be speaking to Mark as he writes to Timothy. And my prayer is you expect this of me. You listen on this radio station, you download this podcast *because* you want to *know* God by learning right, true, correct doctrine. You find that your mind, or Van Mastricht’s word, your intellect is stimulated by what you get here.

1 Timothy chapter 6, the end of verse 2, “Teach and preach these.” First, *teach*. And now second, *preach*. Van Mastricht interprets this as the practical. Teaching is the theoretical. Preaching is the practical. The Greek word for preach is *parakaleo* and it means to exhort, to urge, to summon, to call, to invite. Listen to what Peter Van Mastricht says about this, quote, “He should exhort, that is by moving the will, so that what the intellect perceives is carried over into practice, for [practice] is the chief end of theology and its highest apex. The root word means to call someone to his duty. And since I chiefly call someone in order to rouse him from his lethargy, to spur him on when he is sluggish, to lead him with gentle words, or to comfort him in his grieving, so then the word frequently means ‘I exhort,’ ‘I plead,’ and ‘I comfort.’ (*Theoretical-Practical Theology*, Kindle 46%).” End of quote.

First we are to teach (that’s the theory). Second we are to preach (that’s the practical). Theology is both theoretical *and* practical. Let’s pick up with this next time on *God Is*.

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