

# Staying on the Line

## Deuteronomy 4:2

**Introduction** It was a great privilege to attend the Workshop on Biblical Exposition this week past. We were encouraged and equipped and infused with a greater passion for preaching God’s Word. I have decided this evening to present one of the expositions we heard. Pastor David Helm of Holy Trinity Church in Chicago stirred all of us through this instruction/exposition. Using his outline, I want to do three things:

- To call the elders to greater fidelity on staying on the line of Scripture;
- To challenge all our teachers and counselors to stay on the line of Scripture;
- To cause every member of our congregation to have a passion for it and to expect it from us.

Enter a court as a witness and you are sworn to:  
Tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

This is what staying on the	+	Add to the word
line means	-	Take from the word

### Biblical Imperative

### Deuteronomy 4:2

Not add to and thus go above the line...

Not take away and thus go below the line...

The effect is to lose the line, our obedience to God’s Word.

### Biblical Illustrations

#### New Testament

#### Mark 7:1-13

- (v.1-5) Pharisees are above the line with legalism. They have added all their traditions to the Word of God.
- (v.6-8) Turns ministry into vanity and hypocrisy.
- (v.9-12) Nullifies the Word.

## Old Testament

## Genesis 3:1-7

Illustrates the effects of not holding to the line. Here, holding the line is needed even before the fall. Not holding the line of the Word of God leads to the disobedience of the fall. What is needed here is someone who will preach or counsel *on the line*.

SATAN – below the line (v.1) through his questioning and use of “any”. He therefore begins with taking away from the Word of God.

EVE – above the line (v.3a) through adding to the word of God by adding “touch”. She therefore responds with adding to the Word of God.

Satan’s misuse is intentional, malevolent and slanderous. It introduces rebellion into the world where I take away from God’s Word. This is where we think the Word is incomplete, insufficient, inaccurate or inadequate to please and obey our God. Satan turned a loving Sovereign-subject relationship into a self-sufficient, self-interpreting peer position.

Eve’s misuse is casual, careless and ignorant. It introduces religion into the world where I add to God’s Word. Religion and legalism is when we make additional rules to guard obedience. Eve turned a Word-mediated relationship into a rules/works oriented religion.

What was needed was someone to stand up with God’s Word and stay on the line; to preach and counsel with the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

- A preacher is needed who will tell Satan to stop taking away from God’s Word by questioning it and by making it less than it is. Someone who would hold up the command of God for its great graciousness and strict demands and never, ever deviate.
- A preacher is needed who will tell Eve to not to add to God’s Word; to quote and apply it as it is. To call her to so trust the Words of Her Ruler that she will relate to Him through it and not live by religion’s additional rules.

In God’s providence, there was a preacher, a counselor, a husband there. Look carefully at verse 6. You see, the man who received the Word from God and was responsible to teach the Word of God was right there. And he failed. How did he fail? Did he fail by taking away from God’s Word? Did he fail by adding to God’s Word?

No, God’s ordained man failed by simply being silent. He watched what was happening and uttered not one word, whether a word of instruction or a word of correction or a word of warning. His silence is stunning, culpable and eventually, participatory.

Regardless of whether we are above the line of God’s Word or below the line of God’s Word or simply standing silently by, the effect is the same. SIN. The Fall. The horrible calamity of the one act of disobedience in all the wondrous and glorious and grand provisions by God.

## Biblical Theology of Staying on the Line

So a theme, a Biblical theology of the Word is launched in the Scripture.

## **No Preacher in the World**

From Adam through the Patriarchs, a preacher is rare, occasional and the exception. The Word comes to Enoch and Noah who preach. But all through the Patriarchs, the Word comes but is not clearly proclaimed.

## **A Prophet of the Word**

## **Moses**

Then we come to Mt. Sinai and Moses. There he receives the Word of God and passes it on to God's people. Here is the man of God who holds the line and gives it straight.

But then Numbers 20:1-13, the prophet doesn't hold the line. He receives the Word of God to strike the rock once. In his anger he strikes the rock twice and loses his privilege of entering the Promised Land.

## **A Priest under the Word**

## **Levites**

Here are men who minister under the Word. Their service before the alter and in the tabernacle is defined and governed by the Word. They are doing the Word in sign-language. They do the Word before the people so they will have faith in God.

Then the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, in Leviticus 10, don't hold the line of the Word. Taking away from it and not taking it seriously, they offer strange fire before the Lord and are struck and killed.

## **A King by the Word**

## **Saul**

God had dwelt on His throne, the Ark of the Tabernacle, among His people. They rejected Him and hankered after a king like the nations around them. God gave them their king, a man tall and handsome, a man vain and full of folly and jealousy.

In 1 Samuel 15:1-23, this king doesn't hold the line. He takes away on one hand and adds to on another. He functions in both rebellion and religion – he rejects the Word of God that he is live and govern by. He brings in religion by intruding into the priesthood. Since he has rejected God, God rejects him.

## **The Word in Flesh**

## **Lord Jesus Christ**

In John 1, we have the Word in the flesh. The very Word of God is dwelling among His people.

In Matthew 4, Jesus holds the line.

- He holds the line as prophet (v.4)... and refuses to subvert the Word for His own purposes.
- He holds the line as priest (v.5-6)... and from the Temple refuses to listen to Satan's misuse of the Word and presume on God.
- He holds the line as King (v.7-10)... and refuses to bow to Satan's agenda and holds to the line of God's plan and purpose.

In Matthew 19, Jesus holds the line.

- (v.5) The truth – He quotes the text taking them back to the first Word on marriage.
- (v.6) The whole truth – He interprets the text as God intended.
- (v.6b) Nothing but the truth - He applies the text not adding to it, not taking away from, but right on the line.

So he does not permit them to misuse the Scripture in order to deny the line. He holds them to the line!

### **The Ministers of the Word**

So God has now given us the ministry of the Word.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 – keep it pure. Reject and renounce anything that corrupts, adulterates, weakens and tampers with the Word. Keep it pure and trust it to the work God intends.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 – cut it straight. Work hard and work well at getting it right and getting it across as accountable to God.

So brother and sisters, hold the line.

### **Conclusion**

There is both a great need and a great price. Illustrate: Rev. David Short's stand against approving homosexuality in the Anglican church.

So, elders and pastors, hold the line.

Teaches hold the line.

Husbands and parents hold the line.

All of you, keep it pure, cut it straight – never add to the Word; never take away from the Word, stay on the line.