

SECTION 9

A Theological Mandate for Preaching

A THEOLOGICAL MANDATE FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim. 3:16)

“The only logical response to inerrant Scripture ... is to preach it expositionally. By expositionally, I mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented entirely and exactly as it was intended by God.” (John MacArthur, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 35)

“It is not the job of the Christian preacher to give people moral or psychological pep talks about how to get along in the world; someone else can do that... most of our people have no one in the world to tell them, week in and week out, about the supreme beauty and majesty of God.” (John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 12)

I. Weakness in Contemporary Preaching.

Preaching at the turn of the century is facing something of a crisis. Several significant teachers of the Word have addressed the issue. Don Carson of Trinity Seminary notes ***“Eight Reasons Why Preaching Is In Decline Among Us.”***

1. The large scale loss of spiritual vitality in the Western Church.
2. We live in a time of post Enlightenment rush toward secularism.
3. There is a terrible loss of confidence in the gospel and the Scriptures.
4. Low expectations have become self-fulfilling and a wretched cycle has been engendered.
5. The great gods of our day are pluralism and relativism.
6. Changing roles of the clergy.
- 7 The role of television and other mass media has engendered an expectation of entertainment and puffy professionalism. [Note the significant work by Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business.*]
8. The problem of broken lives and a breaking culture.

Joel Gregory, former pastor and professor of preaching believes there are at least ***Four Reasons for the Decline of Preaching in the Last Half of the 20th Century:***

1. Anti-authoritarian mood – 1960’s
2. Cybernetic Revolution – 1970’s & 1980’s
(The Technology & Communication Explosion)
3. Loss of Confidence in Biblical Revelation – (the result of 1 & 2 & other factors)
4. Postmodern Mindset Regarding Truth

David Allen, a pastor for over 15 years and now the W. A. Criswell Professor of Preaching at Criswell College, also senses the challenge confronting the contemporary preacher of God's Word. He notes “**Seven Weaknesses in Contemporary Preaching**” that builds on the observations of Carson and Gregory.

Weaknesses In Contemporary Preaching

1. LACKS AUTHORITY - A low view of Scripture erodes authority.

There is a difference between “Authoritative” & “Authoritarian” (1 Peter 5:3).

2. LACKS CONTENT - Many do not know the basics of homiletic preparation.
Many lack spirituality.
Many are lazy.
Many are too busy to study.

Things that eat up your time as a Pastor:

1. Interruptions
2. Counseling
3. Administration
4. Poorly organized schedule
5. Putting out fires!
6. Unnecessary phone conversations

Allen’s Suggestions:

Set up a definite study time - prefer AM
Do all visitation, counseling, etc., in afternoon

3. LACKS UNCTION - this is that intangible ingredient that enables the preacher’s words to be sharp, pointed, effective. This distinguishes preaching from all other methods of communication. Unction places God in the sermon and on the preacher (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

4. LACKS EXCITEMENT - Dull & Boring!

Suggestions:

1. Speak in the language of the people
2. Deliver message with enthusiasm
3. Utilize descriptive vocabulary - Mark Twain said: “the difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and the lightning bug!” (God spoke and stars scurried to their orbits like sparks off an anvil ...)

5. LACKS RELEVANCE - Many modern preachers tend to answer questions no one is asking!

Begin with the biblical, historical context, but move to current issues.

6. LACKS EVANGELISTIC APPEAL - Tie everything to the cross!

Martyn Lloyd-Jones – “every believer needs to be exposed to the basic gospel regularly.” WE are preaching for souls!

7. LACKS ADEQUATE PREPARATION - Church people are being fed spiritual junk food.

Two things to be a success: 1. **READ**
 2. **WRITE**

Ought to spend 20 hours a week on sermon preparation.

Haddon Robinson likewise addresses, “*The Devaluation of Preaching*” noting four causes:

1. The preacher is no longer regarded as the intellectual or even the spiritual leader in the community.
2. Preaching takes place in an over communicated society. (Ex. mass media, television, radio).

3. The man in the pulpit feels robbed of an authoritative message. The preacher suspects that the audience places more faith in science texts than in preaching texts.
4. Social action appeals more to a segment of the church than talking or listening.

II. What is Biblical Preaching?

1. Some definitions:

“The bringing of truth from the mind of God to the mind of man through human personality for the purpose of renewal and transformation.” -- Phillips Brooks

“Biblical exposition is persuasively and urgently communicating the exact and full meaning of a text of Scripture in terms of our contemporary culture, with the specific goal of helping people to understand and obey the truth of God.” -- Howard Hendricks

“Expository Preaching is the communication of a biblical concept derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.” -- Haddon Robinson

“Expository Preaching is preaching subject matter which emerges directly and demonstrably from a passage or passages of scripture.” -D. A. Carson

2. Some Basic Observations:

1. Preaching begins with God. It is truth in the mind of God which is its starting point.
2. God’s revelation of this truth has been delivered in history. 1 Cor. 2:6-13

**You did not create the message.
You do, however, create the sermon.**

3. God's revelation has been recorded and preserved in the Bible.

II Tim. 3:16

II Peter 1:19-21

4. Scripture is to be exegeted.

5. A message is to be delivered.

6. Effective biblical preaching takes place when you get the Word out of the "then" and into the "now." Life-changing preaching happens when you move from the world of "was" into the world of "is," taking the principles of God's Word "out of Jerusalem and into the zip codes of your city."

7. Preaching that makes an impact in the lives of people today bring balance to sermon preparation and delivery.

a. The world is looking for an authoritative Gospel in a humble personality.

b. Something unique in communication takes place when preaching to a specific congregation occurs.

c. Effective preaching avoids the "ologies" and "isms" and translates the Word of God into the language of the person on the street.

III. The How of Biblical/Expository Preaching.

Haddon Robinson's *Classic Definition of Expository Preaching* is worth repeating:

"Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers."

Growing out of his definition, Robinson makes several significant points:

1. An expositor thinks in three areas.
 - a. The thought of the biblical writer determines the substance of an expository sermon. [authorial intent must be honored].
 - b. The preacher cannot be separated from the message.
The audience does not hear a sermon, they hear a man.
 - c. The preacher ponders what God wants to say to his congregation.
2. An interpreter must be willing to reexamine his doctrinal convictions and to reject the judgements of his most respected teachers.
3. Simplicity and sophistication both are required.
4. In approaching the Bible, we are concerned with what the biblical writer means through his use of words. [historical/grammatical interpretation].
5. The authority behind preaching resides not in the preacher but in the biblical text.
6. Many preachers fail as Christians because:
 - a. They do not think biblically.
 - b. The verses of Scripture can become launching pads for the preacher's own opinions.
7. Application gives expository preaching purpose.

IV. The Aim of Biblical Expository Preaching.

Charles Koller says the aim of the message is to persuade its hearers to conform to the will of God. Its goal is reconciliation and fellowship of humanity with its loving Creator. The message also has other objectives once salvation has been secured. Koller lists seven:

1. Consecration - commitment to living for Christ.
2. Indoctrination - to learn the way of Christ.

3. Inspiration - to promote the spirit of praise and thanksgiving.
4. Comfort - the imperative to repent and acknowledge God's forgiveness.
5. Strengthening - confirmed and fortified in the faith.
6. Conviction - share the truth of God with other needy people.
7. Action - to become “doers of the Word.”

Preaching’s aim is to communicate the Word of God to all people where they are.

Key Passages Relevant To A Theology Of Preaching

1. Ezra 7:10

Ezra had set his heart to:

- 1) study the law of the Lord - Hebrew (*darash*) – “to seek with care, to inquire”
- 2) practice the law of the Lord
- 3) teach his statutes and ordinances

2. Nehemiah 8:7, 8

“explained” - v. 7 “to instruct by explaining the meaning”
 “translating” - v. 8 “to make clear by translation or explanation”

3. Acts 19:8, 9

“reasoning” - to discuss or conduct a discussion
 “persuading” - to convince

4. Acts 20:18-25

“serving the Lord”
 “do not shrink from declaring anything that was profitable” “teaching you publicly and from house to house” “testifying of repentance toward God and faith in Christ”

5. Romans 10:6-17

“how shall they hear without a preacher”

“faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”

6. I Corinthians 1:17-2:5

7. II Corinthians 5:11-21

8. Ephesians 4:11-13

9. Colossians 1:28

10. I Thessalonians 1:5; 2:1-13

11. 2 Timothy 4:1-5

V. **Why do Expository Preaching?**

D. A. Carson:

1. Method least likely to stray from scripture.
2. Teaches people how to read their Bible.
3. Gives confidence to preachers and authorizes the message.
4. It meets the need for relevance without allowing the clamor for relevance to dictate the message.
5. It forces the preacher to handle the tough passages.
6. It enables the preacher to most systematically expound the whole counsel of God if sufficient chunks are handled.

Peter Adam:

1. First, expository sermons help us to let God set the agenda for our lives.
2. Secondly, expository preaching treats the Bible as God treated it, respecting the particular contexts, history and style of the human authors.
5. Thirdly, this kind of preaching gives ample time for us to make clear the context of the Bible passage from which we are preaching.
6. Fourthly, expository preaching helps up to take each text in context, as God caused it to be written.

Haddon Robinson:

1. It gives him truth to preach.
2. Expository preaching provides the preacher with many types of sermons (single verse, a passage, a topic or doctrine, biography).
3. Expository preaching also develops the preacher into a mature Christian.
4. The basic purpose of expository preaching is the basic purpose of the Bible. It takes place so that through it the Holy Spirit may change men's lives and destinies.
7. When a preacher fails to preach the Scriptures, he abandons his authority. God is not in most modern preaching.
6. God speaks through the Bible.
7. Through preaching 1) God encounters men and women to bring them to salvation (II Timothy 3:15), and 2) God enriches and ripens Christian character (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Joel Gregory:

1. Biblical preaching provides greater resources for proclamation and gives endless material from which to preach.
2. You guard against preaching only according to your own interests and topics.
3. You preach a well-rounded message of the Bible and its issues.
4. You cannot dodge the difficult subjects if you are a contemporary biblical preacher.
5. The congregation will come expecting a Word from God.
6. Your preaching will meet the needs of the people sitting in the pew.
7. People are encouraged to apply the Bible as the preacher applies the Bible.

David Allen:

1. Preaching is central to God's plan of salvation - I Corinthians 1:21.
2. Preaching is critical as to the means of salvation.

Romans 10:5-15 v. 14, 15 - chain with 5 links

Calling - Believing - Hearing - Preaching - Sending

1. How can they call on him whom they have not believed?
 2. How can they believe on him whom they have not heard?
 3. How will they hear without someone preaching?
(*kerrusontos*)
 4. How shall they preach (*keruxsosing*) unless they have been sent?
(*apostalosin*)
3. Preaching is crucial for the healthy growth of the Church - Col. 1:28-29

Message preached by Paul (25b-28a):

- 1) Word of God - 25b
- 2) Proclamation - 28 (*katanggellomen*) - (public proclamation)

Method used by Paul (28b)

- 1) “Warning” - (lost)
- 2) “Teaching” – (saved)

Aim of Paul’s preaching - (28c-29) – “to present (bringing into God's presence) every person complete (maturity in faith & character) in Christ (by virtue of the believer's union with Christ).”

Conclusion: What have great preachers of the Bible said about this awesome assignment?

The supreme test of all preaching is: what happens in the pew? To John the Baptist there was accorded the highest tribute that could ever come to a minister of the gospel: when they had heard John, “they followed Jesus!” (Charles Koller, *Expository Preaching Without Notes*, 19).

The “chief responsibility of the pastor who ‘tends’ his sheep is to ‘feed’ them.” (John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 118).

Simply put, preaching is a great honor and should not be taken lightly as just another of many pastoral duties. *Humans are insufficient to practice an activity with such vast consequences.* We possess neither the purity or the ability to perform this great task. Ultimately, preaching is called upon to turn people from death to life. (Bryan Chappell, *Christ Centered Preaching*).

It is no secret that Christ’s Church is not at all in good health in many places of the world. She has been languishing because she has been fed... “junk food.”... The Biblical text is often no more than a slogan or refrain in the message.... Biblical exposition has become a lost art in contemporary preaching. The most neglected of all biblical sections is the Old Testament-over three-fourths of divine revelation! ... Motto preaching may please the masses in that it is filled with a lot of epigrammatic or proverbial slogans and interesting anecdotes, but it will always be a powerless word lacking the authority and validation of Scripture. (Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], 7, 19, 37, 191).

True Christian preaching (by which I mean “biblical” or “expository” preaching, as I shall argue later) is extremely rare in today’s Church. Thoughtful young people in many countries are asking for it, but cannot find it. Why is this? The major reason must be a lack of conviction about its importance. (John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 92).

So it is with preachers today: they have a word from the Lord, but only if they speak the *Lord's* word. The only norm we have today for judging whether preachers speak the word of the Lord is the Bible. (Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Test: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*, 2, 9)

When a preacher fails to preach the Scriptures, he abandons his authority. He confronts his hearers no longer with a word from God but only with another word from men. (Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*)

A sermon comes with far greater power to the consciences of the hearers when it is plainly the very Word of God - not a lecture about the Scripture, but Scripture itself opened up and enforced...I will further recommend you to hold to the *ipsissima verba*, the very Words of the Holy Ghost ... those sermons which expound the exact words of the Holy Spirit are the most useful and most agreeable to the major part of our congregations. They love to have the words themselves explained and expounded. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954], 73).

John Calvin – “God has ordained his Word as the instrument by which Jesus Christ, with all his graces, is dispensed to us.” (Quoted in Bryan Chappell, *Christ Centered Preaching*)

THE BELIEVER AND HIS BIBLE

2 Timothy 3:14-17

- I. The Word of God is Precious. 3:14-15
 - 1. We should continue in it. 3:14
 - 2. We should have confidence in it. 3:14
 - 3. We are converted by it. 3:15
- II. The Word of God is Perfect. 3:16
 - 1. It is completely inspired.
 - 2. It is verbally inspired.
 - 3. It is divinely inspired.
- III. The Word of God is Profitable. 3:16
 - 1. It is beneficial for doctrine (teaching).
 - 2. It is beneficial for discernment (rebuking).
 - 3. It is beneficial for direction (correcting).
 - 4. It is beneficial for discipline (training).
- IV. The Word of God is Powerful. 3:17
 - 1. It produces maturity.
 - 2. It prepares for ministry.