

www.calvinistpicard.com

AN INTRODUCTION TO EXPOSITION

THE DEFINITION, PURPOSE,
POWER, AND DANGERS OF
PREACHING

VOLUME

AN EBOOK BY CALVINIST PICARD

AN INTRODUCTION TO EXPOSITION

THE DEFINITION, PURPOSE, POWER, AND DANGERS OF PREACHING

An e-book by Calvinist Picard

Follow me on Twitter

[@CalvinistPicard](https://twitter.com/CalvinistPicard)

Read the Captain's blog and listen to the Captain's log podcast

<http://www.calvinistpicard.com>

Contact me by email

Calvinistpicard@gmail.com

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – The Definition	2
Chapter 2 – The Purpose.....	5
Chapter 3 – The Power	8
Chapter 4 – Dangerous Trajectories	16
Chapter 5 – The Gem.....	20
Conclusion	25
References.....	26

Introduction

Is preaching an art or a science? Is it a craft or a calling? Yes, and much more. Sermons must seem alien to those outside the church, and there seems to be more opinions about their nature and definition within the church than there are people. Indeed, clarity is needed in these days of ambiguity.

Our understanding of preaching will form our expectations, and our expectations will lead to actions that shape the practice of preaching in our churches. Whether you are a student in seminary, on a pastoral search committee, or a follower of Christ seeking to get your head wrapped around what preaching really should be, this is a worthy consideration. Of course, there are many lenses from which our understanding can be viewed: culture, philosophy, tradition, religion, preference, or style. However, it is the word of God that must ultimately shape our understanding and practice of preaching.

As I sit and look at the bookshelves in front of me, there are eight books written about preaching. Some focus on the craft, some offer practical guidance, and some are a call to rethink and reform the current state of the pulpit. Of course, if my limited library contains eight works along these lines, then you can imagine the plethora of books, articles, blogs, and lectures on preaching. This actually warrants a more focused examination of introducing exposition.

The chapters that follow introduce biblical preaching through defining, examining the purpose, identifying the power, cautioning against dangerous trends, and taking a deeper look at exposition. My prayer is that we are able to sift through all the opinions and find within our possession the true gem of faithful preaching: exposition.

Chapter 1

The Definition

The definition, purpose, and power of preaching have never needed more ongoing clarification than now. In a culture (and church culture) of normative oscillation, there is a need for steadying truths. Hopefully, this will provoke thought about what preaching is, why preaching exists, and how preaching thrives.

There are at least three different vantage points from which we can draw out a definition of preaching. Some see this sacred mandate from a secular perspective, others from a religious perspective, and the third viewpoint with which we will be most concerned is the biblical position. Even within these three basic categories, there are disagreements regarding definition and purpose. Nevertheless, it will help to understand these three viewpoints and build upon the definition sculpted from the very words of God.

First, it is helpful to understand what connotation preaching takes in the mind of an unbeliever or unreligious person. It is most simply defined as delivering a religious discourse. This very vague explanation does little to inform us about the motivation, subject, or results of preaching. From this standpoint Charles Spurgeon, Billy Graham, Joel Osteen, Barack Obama, Gandhi, and even Adolf Hitler have preached. Indeed, the average person wouldn't label all these men as preachers, though they would be included based on the definition above. Such an imprecise explanation will not point us to the real purpose of preaching; however, it does serve to teach us the dangers of unclear terms. Dictators, politicians, religious figures, and pastors should not all fit into a proper perspective of this means of grace.

An unregenerate heart cannot truly understand the implications of proclaiming God's word (1 Corinthians 2:14). Since preaching is spiritual, only one who is born of the spirit can draw out a biblical definition. A secular view of preaching would paint a far more dismal picture of spiritual maturity and doctrinal competency within the church than there is; so this definition will not be used as the foundation to move forward.

Another viewpoint from which to define preaching is the religious perspective. For our purposes, we will limit the scope of this definition to the realm of Christianity, which differs from a secular standpoint because specific guidelines frame this definition. With this mindset, preaching could be defined as addressing an assembly or congregation with a spiritual theme in mind. These parameters do not consider denomination, emphasis, style, or focus. Contemporary examples that would fit this mold are T.D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, David Jeremiah, Rob Bell, Kenneth Copeland, John MacArthur, and a host of others. Notice that this list is very diverse in beliefs, though technically all categorized as Christian.

The common link that would pull all of these together, and subsequently title them as a preacher, is that they speak about God from an evangelical viewpoint.

However, an evangelical viewpoint doesn't necessarily incorporate what God's word says. To put it simply, all of these people say things about the God that the Bible mentions. They say them in different ways, with various distinctions and personalities; nevertheless, speaking about God with such unclear parameters does not adhere to the biblical definition of preaching, which is what must be built upon and accepted.

The final and most important view of preaching is the biblical view. Sadly, far too few define this high calling in biblical terms. As laid out in scripture, there are at least five phrases that point towards a biblical basis for proclaiming God's word. A Bible-based definition has several essential aspects: preaching the gospel (Mark 1:14, Luke 9:6), the preaching of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:20, Romans 16:25), preaching of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18), preaching of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, Acts 20:25, Acts 28:31), and preaching the word of the lord (Acts 8:4, Acts 15:35). These simple phrases should help to bring clarity to what it truly means to preach. From these phrases, four principles can be drawn out to form a definition.

First, from each of these phrases we should see *the centrality of Jesus*. From Genesis to Revelation, a common thread woven throughout the tapestry of the word is Jesus Christ. From Him, whose heel will bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15) to He who will return in glory, the only begotten son of God is the focal point of scripture. Jesus Himself illustrated this on the Road to Emmaus. As He walked and talked with the blinded men, the word tells us that Jesus interpreted the scriptures from Moses and all the prophets the things concerning Himself. He was the focus of His teaching. Is it any wonder that the men said later in the passage, "Did our hearts not burn within us when he opened to us the scriptures"?

Second, *the emphasis should be the finished work of Christ*. Our part in the Christian life is entirely dependent on Christ having finished His part. If He is not crucified, risen, interceding, and soon returning, then we have little hope indeed. Doing what God alone can do is the business of preaching. The good news is that Christ accomplished this.

Third, there needs to be a *focus on the heavenly pattern and not Earthly living*. The kingdom of God doesn't point us towards practical living on Earth, but rather to the glories displayed in the realm of the divine. Therefore, preaching is not merely verbalizing morality. We must not exclude the scripture's teaching on issues of morality; however, this should not be the emphasis of the preached word.

Finally, *all proclamations should be drawn from the well of the word*. God's words alone can change, rebuke, purify, and heal. The word of God is the God-breathed means to fulfill the great commission and obey the mandate to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Our call is to read it well, study it well, interpret it well, and preach it well. Anything less is merely delivering a religious discourse.

Does defining preaching matter all that much? The stakes are eternal (Romans 10:14). All preaching must be in dependence on God, in obedience to God, and with His

ultimate glory in mind. Stating rules is not preaching. Correcting bad behavior is not preaching. Outlining scripture for data alone is not preaching. So what is it? From these principles, a biblical definition of preaching might be: proclaiming the glory, grace, and gospel of God, seen most clearly in the person of Jesus, from the word of God and by the power of God. A biblical definition leads to the biblical purpose.

Chapter 2

The Purpose

Knowing definitions and remaining clueless of foundational reasons leaves only a hollow act. With a proper meaning of preaching established, it now becomes important to understand the purpose. There are three purposes that I would like to highlight from the Word. Glorifying God is the first and most supreme goal of not only preaching but also all that we do. Can you imagine preaching without the context of glorifying God? Who would be exalted by such a sermon and what hope would it offer? Another reason for preaching is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Standing behind the pulpit alone does not mean that the gospel should be carried out alone. Lastly, scripture also teaches us that an important objective of preaching is to help believers reach spiritual maturity.

As people are born again into Christ and sip the milk of the word, preaching should whet their appetite and gradually guide them as they grow up into the full stature of Christ. Exalting God, equipping the saints, and edifying the body should all be integral parts of proclaiming the kingdom of God. When these three purposes are realized and put into practice, preaching will be much closer to its true function within the body of Christ.

To Exalt God

Whatever we do we are to do it to the glory of God and preaching is not an exception (1 Cor 10:31). However, this certainly isn't the only biblical warrant that preaching is for God's glory. The prophet Isaiah beautifully displays this thought when he speaks of the year of the Lord's favor in Isaiah 61:1-3.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Isaiah was anointed to preach, and as you trace the entire thought of this passage, you find that the end result is that God be glorified. What beautiful words Isaiah offers for the task of preaching to the meek. To exchange beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning is to contrast the worthlessness of our own selves with the worthiness of God. It might be said that the glory of something rests in the complete worthiness of all its attributes for praise. We would not call something glorious if ninety percent, a half, or even a fourth of it were faulty or mediocre. In order to achieve that status, every aspect of it would have to excel. God's manifold perfection, as revealed through His word, should always motivate deep reverence and jubilant praise. All aspects of His infinite nature are

worthy to be applauded at all times. To preach the cross of Christ is to display the mercies of God. To proclaim the resurrection of Christ is to give ear to His power. Heralding the coming judgment of God paints a picture of His justice. No matter the particular subject of a sermon, it should rightfully all boil down to who God is and this is His glory. Scottish preacher James Stewart sums this thought up quite well.

All true preaching aims to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God.

Notice that it all goes back to the central theme of who God is. From the Old Testament prophets who declared oracles of judgment or mercy to the many preachers of today, all preaching should have a clear overarching purpose of glory in view. It was done to the praise of His name through prophets of old and should continue today, not for the sake of history, but for the sake of His name.

To Equip the Saints

The glory of God is the chief purpose of preaching, but not the only one. Scripture also teaches us that preaching should equip the saints for the work of the ministry. The apostle Paul teaches this principle in Ephesians 4:11-15.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

This passage plainly states that prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are given for the perfecting of the saints in the work of the ministry. There is a certain amount of humility in recognizing that one person is incapable of accomplishing the work of the gospel. Certainly, Jesus accomplished the greatest work on Calvary, but Jesus was God incarnate. Proclaiming the counsel of God should not be merely reading the sheep bedtime stories to make them feel safe and secure, but should equip them for the battle of which they may not even be aware. Lulling congregations into comfortable positions may make for a reasonably content flock; however, sooner or later the shepherd will become physically and spiritually exhausted. How many pastors prepare three sermons, a Sunday school lesson, visit the sick, and find themselves changing light bulbs, landscaping the church grounds, and countless other tasks? Could it be that they accept this multitude of responsibilities because they have neglected the biblical responsibility of teaching others to share in the work? God's word beckons us to instruct others in lifting their hands to the eternal matters before us.

As Jesus sent out laborers at the very beginning of Luke 10, He instructed them to pray that God would send forth even more workers in the harvest. God in human form asked for and trained laborers. As we labor for the kingdom, if we find no helpers on our left or right we might want to ask ourselves if we have remembered this purpose of preaching. Working together and empowered by the spirit, we can accomplish more than playing the part of a spiritual maverick. Preaching must display for people the glories of God, and it must demonstrate for them the importance of discovering and extending Christ together. When accomplished, the gospel in all its glory can reach further. Placing the responsibility of the ministry on Christians and not merely on preachers is crucial and this should be an aim of the preacher.

To Edify the Body

Within the same context of Ephesians 4: 11-15, there is yet another reason stated for preaching. It is to help believers grow up into Christ; unto the full measure of His stature. What a full stature that is! The preaching ministry is not a ministry of indoctrinating people but teaching them how to form doctrine. Preachers should unashamedly present the doctrines of the word as their convictions, and the spirit leads them; however, they should go beyond this and model the proper study of God's word. The goal is building up the body of Christ in the knowledge of the glory of God. If we neglect this enormous task, the result will be a people who can repeat a few doctrinal phrases yet be utterly clueless of the reason behind the hope that dwells in them (1 Peter 3:15).

This type of Christian is what I like to call a "pull-string Christian." You can probably picture a childhood toy that uttered phrases once the string was pulled. When asking this type of believer a question you metaphorically pull their string and await a preprogrammed response. The high calling of ministering the word of God is not merely to equip congregants with a few profound phrases, but to educate them in grappling with the Bible. Let us labor to edify the church through proclamation and demonstration of personal study. Then the people of God will form deep convictions and not mimicked messages.

Our goal is not and should not be biblical shallowness. Furthermore, spiritual immaturity causes the fragility of faith. If the storms of adversity blow, the roots of someone else's beliefs will not hold; but oh how strong are the roots that personally sink into the word of God. Preaching should display the worth of the father, draw in workers for the kingdom, and deepen the wisdom of God's people. Preaching must be biblically defined and delineated. The consequences of neglecting to do so are too dire.

Definitions help in understanding, purpose aids in believing, and power enables action. It is vital to know the source of preaching's power. Is it empowered through some mystical gem or perhaps some new clever strategy? Certainly, there is a source which preaching must pull from to carry out its purposes fully.

Chapter 3

The Power

Having already examined the definition and purpose of preaching, the power of preaching is now the focus. In one word, the power of preaching is God. In at least five ways, God is the true source, which makes preaching possible. He sends, supplies, and sustains preachers through the Holy Spirit, prayer, the word of God, the gospel, and the joy of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit

Some may wonder why the salvation of sinners has not yet appeared in the definition or purposes of preaching. The purposes of preaching did not address salvation because I firmly believe that this is an act of sovereign grace and a purpose of God. He is glorified when sinners repent and throw themselves on the mercies of Christ. What effect would preaching a sermon have in the absence of the Holy Spirit? We must be careful not to create a human formula for salvation and leave out the one vital element. No one can come to the father unless they are drawn (John 6:44). Sinners need to hear the preaching of God's word, and preachers must understand that the spirit alone can regenerate a hard heart.

God is sovereign over His creation. No cunning or craftiness of man can accomplish the glad purposes of God. He alone saves, and He alone sanctifies. Salvation is God wrought, blood-bought, and spirit caught. Sanctification is no different. Paul illustrates this in Philippians 2:12-13.

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Most assuredly, salvation is by faith alone and nothing we can do. Therefore, this cannot be a working to merit salvation. It is living out what God has worked within. God works in us through the person of the Holy Spirit to change our will and to guide our lives, internally shaping our actions. Preaching is an instrument through which God works this inner miracle and causes His children to grow closer to Him. However, even the most educated, well-spoken, and dynamic preacher will be powerless without the Holy Spirit to minister to the heart of the listener.

We understand that the Spirit works regeneration, but we tend to leave new converts to live the rest of their lives with only human exertion to aid them. The God who saves also sanctifies. He plants the comforter in our hearts that our hearts might be changed to align with His. In this way, God continually draws us nearer to Himself through the Holy Spirit. To further illustrate the crucial role of the spirit I think we must

grasp grace. Paul writes to the Colossians and helps us in comprehending the fruit producing effects of understanding grace.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth. (Colossians 1:4-6)

How can we bear fruit and grow or in other words, how does sanctification take place? This is perhaps one of the central questions every Christian ponders and one of the key goals of the body of Christ. I believe these three verses give an extremely overlooked answer. The word of truth (the gospel) bore fruit and caused growth when people heard it and understood the grace of God in truth! God's grace is vital to growth. Have we come so far from grace that we seriously believe all of our strategy and all of our tactics can outperform the miraculous hand of God? Grace means we freely receive by the hand of the Lord what is completely undeserved. It is the sovereign work of the father enabling and bestowing upon fallen man that which he is unworthy of and utterly incapable of accomplishing.

When we understand God is ultimately responsible and when we know how far beneath the mark of holiness we are, we take the first steps to bear fruit and grow. Grace understood aright would be of more benefit than a thousand evangelical growth seminars. Perceiving divine power always outweighs implementing human tactics. Do you want to grow and bear fruit? Ponder Grace! Whether preaching to win the lost or preaching to feed the sheep, the spirit must not be overlooked because it is one of the powers of preaching. Let sermons issue forth from every direction and let us understand well that without the spirit every sermon will fall on deaf ears.

The Word of God

Another equally important power of preaching is the well from which we must draw the water of life to carry to a spiritually dehydrated world. The well is the word of God. Many disciples turned back from following Jesus on one occasion, and He turned to the twelve and asked if they wished to turn away as well. Peter spoke words that clue us into the power of the words of God. "Where else could we go? You have the words of eternal life", Peter said (John 6: 66-69). Let us consider this same question. Where else can we go for the words of eternal life? Imagine a teacher of mathematics using a history book to instruct their class. The students would probably learn a few things, but they wouldn't learn the prescribed knowledge. The big danger in leaning on resources other than God's infallible word is providing people with information that is temporarily beneficial, but eternally insignificant. Only God has eternal words. Any words we add to this are mere shadows to the fullness of His stature. When defining preaching earlier through various biblical phrases, one phrase that continued to manifest itself was preaching the word. Again Peter sums this up for us in 1 Peter 1:23-25.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

We are born again by the word, which lives and abides forever. Man's flesh and man's glory in all their Earthly effort cannot stand perpetually, but the words of the Lord, through which the gospel is preached, lives and endures. Any attempt of man to supplement the infinite worth of divine inspiration is at best a withering blade of grass and a falling flower. In a world of such depravity, can we afford to stand up and hold forth the blossom of fleeting hope? There could be an initial attraction to the gospel of wilting flowers; for even withering flowers have their day of beauty. However, that day soon passes, and hope passes with it.

Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman on one occasion and taught us what truly satisfies. The Samaritan woman ventured out to draw water from the well and instead found a Jewish man claiming to be living water and able to quench her thirst eternally. Not very long into the dialogue, she discovered that this was not simply a Jewish man and that the water He spoke of was not merely a combination of hydrogen and oxygen. As the scene opens, we see this woman bringing her water jar to get a drink. After her conversation with Christ, she doesn't seem concerned at all with water and leaves her jar behind (John 4:28). Could it be that she came to a well of water and actually found the well of eternity? She arrived at the well hoping to refresh her parched lips and found what could renew her parched soul.

The words of Christ had refreshed her spirit as only they could. If the pulpit echoes forth with the latest helpful tips on finances or fiancés, yet sidebars the living word of God, then short-term benefits may be gleaned but the fruit of eternity will not be harvested. God's word is the well of eternity that will never run dry as it satisfies the souls of all who would dare to drink. Hearers must not be sent to drink from any other source, and the preacher must drink deeply from it himself.

Prayer

If the spirit and the word are essential, then our dependence upon God in both of these through prayer is equally as important. The heart's desire of Paul in Romans 10:1 is that Israel might be saved and this is evidenced in his prayer to God for them. He is concerned for their salvation; he realizes that only God can accomplish this, and so he makes much of earnest prayer on their behalf. The apostle relied on prayer not only in this way, but he also called for the Ephesians to make supplication for all saints and for himself as he boldly proclaimed the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:18-19). This gives us a twofold approach to praying for the lost.

Surely, we must pray for the conversion of sinners, but we must also issue a call for others to pray for preachers that the mystery of the gospel might be embraced in the

hearts of its hearers. As prayers ascend to the very throne of God, He notices His people's cries of dependence and graciously manifests His presence. Phil Keaggy has penned song lyrics, which perfectly sum up this point.

There is an eye that never sleeps beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts when sink the beams of light.
There is an arm that never tires when human strength gives way,
There is a love that never fails when earthly loves decay.
But there's a power which man can wield when mortal aid is vain.
That eye, that arm, that love to reach, the listening ear to gain.
That power is prayer which soars on high, through Jesus to the throne, which
moves the hand, which moves the world to bring salvation down, bring salvation
down

If the Holy Spirit is the power to convert sinners, then prayer is the beseeching of God to unleash His power in this way. Man's condition and God's power are puzzle pieces that cannot fit without Christ. Should we consider, even for a moment, the lost nature of humanity, the eternal fate of unbelievers, the hope made possible through Christ, and the inability of man to connect all these puzzle pieces, we would enter the prayer closet before finishing this sentence.

An amazing thought that has struck me on various occasions is that the Son of God prayed. It may seem fairly common, but I think we should feel the weight of it. He shared deity with the father and yet He made supplication to the father. It almost seems paradoxical. My intercessor knelt and communed with God. He wept over spiritual blindness and called out for strength from on high. If ever there was a minister of the gospel it was the savior. He talked, walked, breathed, and lived the gospel. He was the gospel, yet in all of His glory, He did not forego prayer.

Two particular instances rise to the forefront of my mind. The first takes place in the garden of Gethsemane. I always imagine the Lord kneeling with unknown depths of sorrow in His soul. His sweat was as great drops of blood, and His heart was heavily troubled. He was experiencing the full spectrum of stress and sorrow. It was there and in this condition that He lifted up His voice to the father and uttered the seven words that only He could have uttered at a time such as that, "not my will, but thine be done." Can you feel the tremendous force behind such a statement? The creator of the universe called out in humble submission to the sovereign God. Not only did He pray, He also instructed His disciples to pray as well that they might not enter into temptation. If God's son, the only perfect preacher ever to exist, prayed and commanded His followers to do the same can we not also see the absolute necessity of prayer?

A second prayer of Jesus came from the cruel cross. As they nailed His hands and feet, offered Him sour drink, and mocked Him; He returned their disdain with prayer. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," he muttered from parched lips. Still praying redemptively for a people who scorned Him, Jesus sets the example. He fully knew that only God could grant forgiveness and repentance in the human heart. I

can't think of a more direct call to prayer in preaching than the living gospel's dying example.

Another avenue of prayer, which should take priority for the preacher, is praying in order to see scripture supremely. The heart has many distractions, and the heart of the preacher or even the man after God's own heart is no different. David teaches us this very important point. David prays and asks God to open his eyes to see wondrous things in the word (Psalm 119:18). There is a great need for ministers to see more than facts, morals, or sermons in God's word. To open the bible and behold wondrous things is a miracle wrought in our hearts through the spirit and accomplished through prayer, as demonstrated by David. A few short verses later, David prays and asks that God incline his Heart to His testimonies (Psalm 119:36). The point is prayer moves the hand that rearranges the affections of our heart, and we must constantly make this supplication before our creator.

If the word of God is a power of preaching, we must pray that it might grip us. Imagine going to a thirsty people with only the dryness of morality or perhaps the dullness of philosophy. It would be as if we walked up to the well of living waters, passed it by, filled our cups with the sand beneath our feet, and then offered others to drink from our cup. Until we are moved by the word we will not be effective, and we will not be moved by the word unless we are moved by God's sovereign hand. Let us pray!

The Gospel

Previously, in clarifying definitions, one of the major phrases that surfaced was preaching the gospel. So what is the gospel? How should the gospel be presented? These two questions are incredibly urgent and are often brushed aside. Paul writes to the Corinthians, refusing to tamper with the word of God, and gives a concise meaning of the gospel.

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)

As seen in this passage, the gospel could be defined as light which is the glory of Christ who is the image of God. Some would object to this simple definition saying that an accurate explanation of the gospel must include Christ's virgin birth, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. This is true of course, but I wish to point out that the Gospel

is not merely facts. It is plausible that a person could accept the above list of facts as true and not truly accept the gospel in its saving power. Even Satan and his demons believe the aforementioned points. The gospel must not simply be statements about Christ, but the heralding of the glory of Christ who is the image of God! How then will this difference in definition change how the gospel is presented? If the gospel is characterized only by mere facts, it will be presented similarly. For example, preaching that sinners should repent and accept Christ because one day they will see their loved ones again does not point towards the glory of Christ, but towards a benefit of the glory of Christ. The danger is in substituting side effects of glory for glory. The gospel should never be stated as merely escaping hell, reuniting with loved ones, better marriages, or golden streets. All these things are true and good, but they are only glimmers of the glory of Christ.

Careful thought must be given to how to proclaim the gospel. If the pulpit is to have divine power ushering from behind it, then the gospel preached must be the gospel of God's glory. This ensures that the preacher understands the spirit is solely responsible for souls and that God is in all ways given glory for every aspect of ministry. Neglecting the gospel means forsaking the very substance of the message. If the gospel is compromised, you can be sure that pulpits will be powerless.

The Joy of the Lord

Suppose a preacher understands the previously mentioned sources of power and yet something is still missing. He preaches in dependence on the spirit, directly from the scripture, praying continuously, and proclaiming the unadjusted gospel; but something is still out of place. Another power of preaching is the joy of the Lord. In at least three ways the word teaches us that preachers who do not possess joy are ineffective. From the outset, it must be clear that this is not a general joy, but a joy rooted only In God. In other words, following the last four powers of preaching cannot be going through the motions, but an earnest seeking of the presence and power of God.

Ministering without joy is like driving without wheels. The engine will start, but chances are you won't be getting very far. Joyless preaching is futile preaching. The author of Hebrews gives us an insight into this truth.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. (Hebrews 13:17)

The followers of Christ are urged to submit to their God-appointed leaders. This submission is precisely to help leaders do their task with joy and without grief. It is hard to imagine a pastor being content if his people are unruly. According to this text, if the pastor's contentment wavers, then his ministry will be unprofitable for the people. Was this not the very plight of Moses as he struck the rock? For forty years they had wandered in the wilderness, and he was the ear for the complaints of the Israelites. It was the end of his journey to the Promised Land.

It is an ever-constant battle to stay focused on the Lord and to let the grievances of the people remain in God's hands. Preachers are not merely problem solvers; they only direct people to the person who has already dealt with all true problems. Just as the people of God are commanded to be obedient for their own benefit, the servants of God must remember that serving cannot be insincere. Scripture emphasizes this point in a very solemn manner in Deuteronomy 27:47-48.

Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he has destroyed thee.

God's requirement is not action alone. The very character of God is displayed in this truth. He does not desire service that is undesired. There must be joy motivating what we do in order for what we do to bring God glory. What image would we present of God if we labored continuously for Him out of mere duty? Christianity and more specifically the role of the preacher should not adopt the philosophy of Nike. By this I mean we are not to, "just do it." We are to follow the commands of God, proclaim the word of God, and minister to the people of God from a heart ravished by God. Ministering in any other manner will only convince the people that it's pointless to follow Jesus. If we are to preach with power, we must preach with an undeniable passion for God. The apostle Peter teaches this principle in his first epistle.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

For a pastor to be fruitful, he must labor without compulsion or constraint and with joy. His service must not flow from a sense of obligation, but from a sense of delight in God. People are not ignorant of the real motives of their leaders. Fervency cannot be faked indefinitely. Sooner or later, the reality of the heart will surface in word and deed.

Through brokenness, David knew that the joy of the lord was a prerequisite for teaching and seeing sinners converted. The background to his heartfelt repentance in Psalm 51 is his sin against God. He was confronted by the prophet Nathan, became indignant with his story, and soon realized that Nathan's parable was directed at him. Face to face with his iniquity, he cried out in repentance. In the throes of his penitence, he realized that only through restoration could ministry happen again. David pleaded, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psalm 51:12-13). The order here is exactly right. Teaching transgressors the ways of God and seeing

sinner converted unto the living Christ can only come to pass if we first possess the joy of salvation. How quickly it can be lost in the stresses and strains of ministry and quicker still to the deadly pangs of sin. Within this same passage, David teaches us that God is not pleased with going through the motions of earnestness. God had ordained a process for forgiveness in the Old Testament through the sacrificial system under the law, but here in Psalm 51, we are taught that God requires more.

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar. (Psalm 51:16-19)

The desire of God is not that we perform the ritual of service, but that we honor him with real sacrifice. The sacrifices He desires are a broken spirit and a heart that is contrite. When we are humbled to the place of contrition, we are ready to have the deepest joy of our hearts restored. Once we possess that joy, then we are prepared to continue in the ministry that God has ordained for us.

These essential powers of preaching must not be ignored. They are all interconnected in ways that we cannot fathom, but they are also independently imperative to the preacher. Neglecting these powers of preaching is to pursue ministry in your own strength. In so doing, the glory of God is relegated, and this is no laughing matter. Ignoring 1 Peter 4:11 will only result in "pseudo-ministry."

Chapter 4

Dangerous Trajectories

With the foundation laid, the focus is now shifted to sifting through all the different types of preaching to determine which meet the biblical standards. This might be described as panning for a precious jewel. We will begin with a pan full of sediment and shake until all the dirt sifts away and we are left with the prize of our consideration. By God's grace, we will let all preaching that does not meet His divine standard fall away and find within our possession the one true gem.

As we begin to search, I want to distinguish between two very different realms of preaching that exist. The most basic division of preaching is biblical and unbiblical. Preaching which is biblically lacking must be cast aside, and that which is biblical must be accepted as the model to set forth for preachers. However, it would not be beneficial to label and dismiss preaching types without warrant. Neither would it aid us to accept other types of preaching without justification. In order to fully sift through the good and bad, we must place each kind up to the biblical definition, purposes, and powers already laid out for comparison. As we move forward through these various types, it will be made clear that only one will stand up to the standards laid out in God's word.

The first category that must be dealt with is biblically lacking proclamations of God's word. Unfortunately, current trends tend to travel down this path. It does not necessarily mean that the bible is outrightly denied; however, it does mean that at least some level the Bible is neglected. Understanding the falsities of certain types of preaching will help us find greater assurance in standing on the firm foundation of God's word.

Prosperity Preaching

Particularly in America, there is a cultural mindset of prosperity. The pursuit of the American dream is engrained in nearly every facet of our society. Alarmingly, this mindset has reared its head within evangelicalism. There is a message going forth that Christianity makes you healthy and wealthy. Naturally, the human heart is quite comfortable with this message. Regardless of the comfort level of the human heart, there is a question we must ask: can this type of preaching stand based on the biblical definition, purposes, and powers already presented? The great tragedy of this message is that it masquerades as biblical. Scripture references are cited and the Son of God is quoted; yet the theme of scripture as it was initially intended is forsaken. My intention is not to become overly critical of individuals; however, I do want us to be aware of the fallacies that currently exist under the guise of Christian preaching. There probably aren't many households that haven't heard the name Joel Osteen. He is pastor of one of the nation's largest churches and impacts millions through books, television, and the internet. In his book, *Your Best Life Now*, Osteen gives us a glimpse into the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel.

But Victoria had more faith than I did, and she would not give up. We stood out in front of that house for thirty minutes and debated. She told me all the reasons why it could happen. I told her all the reasons why I doubted. She said, "No, Joel I feel it deep inside. It is going to happen." She was so filled with joy I didn't want to burst her bubble, so I let the matter drop. But Victoria didn't! Over the next several months, she kept speaking words of faith and victory, and she finally talked me into it. She convinced me that we could live in an elegant home like the one we saw. I got rid of my limited thinking, and I started agreeing with her. I started believing that somehow, some way, God could bring it to pass. We kept believing it, seeing it, and speaking it. (Osteen 7)

There is no denial of God, Jesus, or the Bible; but there is contortion to fit the mold of material gain. Does this bring glory to God, equip the saints for ministry, or draw us into the full stature of Christ? Surely we have not come so far as to believe, and to preach to others, that Jesus' sacrifice was to secure elegant housing for us. This seems a stark contrast to the biblical exhortation to follow Jesus who had not a place to lay his head (Matthew 8:20). Has faith in God's house been reduced to nothing more than trusting God for a two-story home?

Faith is focused upon, and God is mentioned, but to what avail in the kingdom? The premise of the book is to list seven keys to unlock your best life now. This notion is the antithesis to the biblical proposition in 1 Corinthians 15:19. Paul writes, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Osteen calls us to live our best life now, and the apostle teaches that if this current life is all we have to look forward to, then we are pitiable. God works for our *eternal* good; therefore, prosperity preaching is preposterous.

Moral Reform Preaching

The health, wealth, and prosperity gospel is easily identified and generally dismissed in conservative circles of Christianity; however, there is a tendency within the world of preaching to show disregard for the glory of God in an incredibly indirect way. It is preaching that focuses on morality. In this type of preaching, the Bible is set forth as authoritative and is even usually used in context according to certain hermeneutical principles. Congregations, denominations, and even seminaries approve preaching for moral reform. There is definitely room and cause for practical application in sermons; however, we must not reduce the Bible to a set of regulations. The Bible is not a glorified rulebook; it is the revelation of our God. In his book, *Brothers We are Not Professionals*, John Piper illustrates how overemphasizing morality undermines God's glory.

Wherever happy confidence in the sovereign power of God for our own lives and the lives of others grows weak; legalism creeps in. We inevitably try to compensate for the loss of dynamic faith by increased moral resolve and the addition of humanmade regulations. But wherever joyful confidence in the power of God is waning the flesh is waxing. Which means the morality we hoped would save ourselves and the regulations we hoped would purify our church fall victim

to the massive power of the flesh and become its instruments of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. (Piper 155)

Adhering to principles apart from God-given grace exalts man as able to conquer sin. I hope to sound a solemn warning to any who think that God's word educates us in "checklist Christianity." The cross was not a means for us to live a good life; it is the path that leads us to a redeemed life. Preachers are not called to reform people's behavior, but to minister and trust the Holy Spirit to supernaturally cause transformation. Jesus directs us to a higher standard. Of course, we know the law forbids us to murder, and yet Jesus says that hatred towards a brother is murder in the heart. The word informs us that adultery is unacceptable and the Son of God informs us that to look upon a woman with lustful intent is to commit adultery in the soul. Even if we could follow the law physically, who apart from God could wholly obey with their motives? Ministering in such a way that we point people towards goodness and not holiness completely misses the mark of biblical preaching. It circumvents God's glory by measuring success against a preconceived notion of righteousness instead of the measure of true majesty.

Legalism is certainly a threat if preachers rely only on practicality from the pulpit; however, relevancy is also a threat to the sacred task if it is overemphasized. Preaching patterns are emerging which hone in on the specific details of life. Sermons are increasingly becoming only tips for improving ourselves. Steps to a better marriage or principles for financial security are extremely pertinent, but they lack eternal power. If a pastor's message is packed full of helpful hints and void of the glorious gospel, then redemption will be sacrificed at the price of relevance. What could be more practical than the good news of Christ crucified, risen, and interceding at the right hand of the father? Purely practical preaching can create two extremes. It will either produce legalism and dead works or relevancy and managed lives. Neither can hold up under a biblical theology of preaching.

Motivational Preaching

Certainly, everyone needs motivating from time to time. From the person who feels down in the dumps to the soul that is broken in two, we all have times of discouragement. The necessity for encouragement is not the problem with motivational preaching. We must distinguish between biblical motivation and the mindset of secular motivation. Biblical motivation draws people into the gospel and lets them peer into the greatness of God to be lifted. Secular motivation instructs people to look within and find the strength to bring about positive change. Churches are adrift in literature and teaching that motivates through human determination and perseverance. In his book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, John Maxwell helps us see a fatal flaw in secular motivation.

As you begin changing your thinking, start immediately to change your behavior. Begin to act the part of the person you would like to become. Take action on the behavior you admire by making it your behavior. Too many people want to feel then take action. This never works. (Maxwell 110)

This stance is biblically unwarranted. It shifts all power to cause change into human hands. According to this reasoning, we can modify our thinking as well as our behavior and should take action without internal motivation. This message is not new. It is an age-old concept that turns the meaning of Philippians 4:13 on its head. It whispers to the human heart that it can do all things, editing out the words that bring everlasting motivation: that we can do all things *through Christ*. Can you imagine Saul trying to convince himself to become a missionary, preacher, and apostle through sheer willpower? Could a killer of Christians try to act the part of the person he would like to become and then force that behavior upon himself?

The assumption that we can make ourselves feel a certain way apart from divine intervention is flawed. God requires from us what only He can produce within us. Only when we understand this can we be truly motivated by seeking God, having our motives rearranged and then letting our actions flow from transformed hearts. Motivational preaching in the secular sense of the term belittles God's role in the human heart, dismantles the gospel, and abuses God's word. Let us motivate through humbling ourselves to the point of pleading for God to work the miracle of hope in us as well as others.

Political Preaching

Our attention now shifts to the secularization of the pulpit in the spectrum of politics. Religion tends to be a hot topic in the media whenever elections roll around, and political agendas find their way into many sermons as well. Too often pastors believe that making societal changes starts with the grassroots preaching of political ideology. Perhaps these pastors have not considered how passionately proclaiming the gospel might bring about worldwide revolution. Mychal Massie states this thought eloquently, "What does it profit a preacher to gather unto himself White House visits while watching his congregants go astray for lack of biblical teaching?" Jesus has impacted the world for over two thousand years, and His words always abounded in the gospel. His own words pointed to Himself as the catalyst of radical change. When Pilate asked the son of God if He realized that His life was in his hands, Jesus replied by pointing out that Heavenly authority trumps Earthly authority. He averted the focus back to His father.

The greatest political power the preacher has is to preach and teach by calling attention to the great potter and allowing Him to mold and shape His instruments of clay. Cutting remarks at the expense of political candidates will not uplift or educate the body of Christ. Neither does bolstering the image of a candidate. The pulpit is not the medium for making political advances, it is one of God's ordained methods for advancing the kingdom, and in this manner, the world of politics will feel the effects. The gospel is a mighty tidal wave of wonder, and when it is heralded, it will ripple to the furthest reaches of the globe. Political preaching supposes that preachers can make national reforms and forgets that God is already at work reforming the world. While this is by no means an exhaustive list of unbiblical preaching types, these categories represent pertinent and dangerous trajectories within Christendom. However, negating is not sufficient. We must consider biblical preaching and its practical fulfillment.

Chapter 5

The Gem

So far, we have discovered the vitality of exposition by considering the definitions, purposes, powers, and dangers. Clarification is needed before examining the different types of preaching in light of exposition. My aim is to show that expository preaching meets the standards that scripture sets forth for this sacred task. All preaching should and can be expository. Every type of preaching that follows may not be labeled expository; however, they can be expository in nature.

We will begin with the type that defines all other forms of preaching. Many different people have defined expository preaching, in many different times, and in many different ways. I will offer several definitions for consideration and use the defining thoughts from previous chapters to set forth the gem of exposition.

Haddon Robinson in his work, *Biblical Preaching*, defines the term in a way that includes spiritual and practical elements.

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 the preacher, applies to the hearers. (Robinson 21)

Robinson states that exposition occurs when the preacher sets forth a text through careful study and the empowering of the spirit. Hermeneutics and the Holy Ghost join forces to equip the preacher for exposition. What a powerful combination.

Power in the Pulpit is a comprehensive guide to preparing and delivering expository sermons by Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix. They define an expository sermon more technically.

A discourse that expounds a passage of scripture organizes it around a central theme and main divisions, which issue forth from the given text, and then decisively applies its message to the listeners. (Shaddix and Vines 29)

This definition emphasizes the importance of the text and the organizational structure of an expository sermon. The word expound captures the meaning of exposition very accurately. The text, not vice versa, shapes all points.

In his book, *9 Marks of a Healthy Church*, Mark Dever places expository preaching as the first and foremost mark of a thriving church. He summarizes the central necessity of expository preaching.

Expositional preaching is preaching in service to the word. It presumes a belief in the authority of scripture – that the Bible is actually God's word; but it is

something much more than that. A commitment to expositional preaching is a commitment to hear God's word – not just to affirm it is God's word but to actually submit yourself to it.

A common thread within these definitions is the dependence on the word of God. I shout Amen to each of these; however, I would like to endeavor to clarify a bit further using premises I have already established. Expository preaching is having your heart divinely inclined towards the word of God, deriving the message or sermon from the scripture, proclaiming this word in dependence on the Holy Spirit, and doing all of this to God's glory. Can there be another type of preaching? Must not every sermon walk this path if it is to be biblical, God-honoring, and edifying to the body? If we wish to see sinners saved, saints sanctified, and God glorified there is no other way. The trends and times will undoubtedly change, but the word of the Lord remains forever.

Each type of preaching that follows will have nuances, which set them apart but they can and should each be expository at heart. The style or structure of the sermon is adaptable, but the foundation upon which it stands is immovable. I will briefly define each type and demonstrate that each can be expository and therefore meet the qualifications of a biblical definition, purpose, and power.

Topical Preaching

Topics are appealing by nature. They give us something to talk about, but the call to preach is not just a call to speak. A sermon with a topical format takes up one particular subject and cites texts that address it. The notion itself is not in error; however, extreme caution must be taken when applying this method to the scriptures. The great temptation is to use the scripture as evidence to support the opinion of the speaker on any given matter. In the classic homiletics text, *The Preacher and His Preaching*, Alfred P. Gibbs defines topical preaching as “choosing a certain subject or topic, and then searching through all the scriptures to discover what light can be thrown on the subject under consideration (Gibbs 268).” The underlying danger is turning the preaching ministry into a book report format where we tell the people what “the book” says about certain things. If the preacher comes to the word with a specific topic pressed upon his heart, labors in the word in dependence on the spirit, submits himself to the clear teaching of scripture, and then preaches from submitted dependence, then topical preaching can be expositional. This type of preaching can praise the Father and empower the people of God.

Narrative Preaching

Everyone likes to hear a good story, especially one that captivates the imagination and draws the hearer into the very life of the characters.

Narrative preaching has traditionally been considered as a sermon based upon a narrative text. In recent days, however, homileticians have defined it by sermonic form instead of literary genre. Thus, contemporary narrative sermons frequently

encompass those messages that bind the entire message to a single plot as a theme from the outset to the conclusion. Such a sermon may be better described as a story sermon. (Shaddix/Vines 30)

The potential problem with this approach is to transition the call to preach to a call to tell stories. The bible is not merely a collection of stories; it is the inspired word of God. Nonetheless, this type of preaching can be expository as well. For example, to take the narrative plot of the journey of Jesus to Calvary can certainly meet the aforementioned qualifications. As we narrate the scenes of the word, we must take extreme precaution to present God as the main character and everyone else as supporting roles. If we preach narrative sermons in this mindset, we will present the plots of the word in an expository way and subsequently honor the Father and help the church.

Biographical Sermons

There are a host of biographies out examining the lives of countless individuals: some achieving great feats of honor and some humbly accepting the lot laid out for them in life. The bible is filled with people possessing struggles, strengths, and noble characteristics, which we can easily identify with today. Often messages seek to put on display the people of the Bible to bring out life lessons for the modern Christian. The biographical sermon:

Consists of the study of a person's life and the lessons to be learned from it; how we may be warned by his failures and encouraged by his successes. It is really the study of a person's character, which, in turn, determines his career. (Gibbs 283)

Great care must be applied as we seek to employ this method of preaching. We must not call God's people to the model of Moses, David, Daniel, Elijah, Paul, or any other person within the word. Ponder for a moment how ineffective it is to direct people to imitate the behavior of those who have run their race and finished their course. Do you think it plausible that Moses was so close to God because he was directed to be more like his forefathers? Could David's courage be rooted in the biographical sketches of those who went before him? Why point believers to David's courage when the source of David's courage, God, is the actual power to transform? If we study the character of a man and forego seeing the characteristics of God, we cease to be expository. A biography is a powerful tool to the preacher if he sees the deeper biography of God in each biblical character.

By no means is this a comprehensive summary of every type of preaching. However, the same process of evaluation should be applied to any type of preaching to ensure that it is sound. Over time preaching has changed. New models and precedents have been set, and this will undoubtedly continue. Regardless of the innovative strategies to affect the pulpit, we must be certain to be faithful to God and His word. The breeze of the Holy Spirit continuously renews hearts, minds, and the methods of preaching, but it will never change the fundamental foundation of God's word and glory.

As this introduction concludes, I'd like to make a final push to advocate for expository preaching. It has been demonstrated that even different styles of organizing sermons can be expository, but is this too strict a guideline? I do not believe so if we consider the true meaning of proclaiming God's word. The abandonment of exposition is widespread and the pull on faithful expositors to adapt to changing culture is strong.

Those in the pulpit face the pressing temptation to deliver some message other than that of the scriptures – a political system (either right wing or left wing), a theory of economics, a new religious philosophy, old religious slogans, or a trend in psychology. Ministers can proclaim anything in a stained-glass voice at 11:30 on Sunday morning following the singing of hymns yet when they fail to preach the scriptures, they abandon their authority (Robinson 20)

Tarry for a while on the thought that the opposite of exposition is interposition. In other words, if we do not draw out from the text its original intent, the only other alternative is that we read into the text what we want it to say. We are all guilty of longing for grey areas to find a balance between what we know is right and the wrong that is comfortable. There is no such grey area in preaching. To interpose human philosophy, psychology, intuition, or intellect into the word of God in the slightest is to forsake exposition. We are called to let the word of God form our philosophies, psychologies, intuitions, and intellects. All ministers of the word will fall into one of the two categories, and my prayer is that by God's grace more and more would find strength in the exposition of scripture.

The call to preach is a call to proclaim the entirety of the word. The preacher is charged with equipping the saints and ministering for the purpose of spiritual maturity. He is furthermore held to a higher standard for the responsibility entrusted to him by God. Surely no minister will want to stand before the king of kings one day and explain why he neglected to feed the sheep, preach the word, or depend on the spirit. The apostle Paul again instructs us on the seriousness of this calling from on high.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20: 24-28)

The gospel, grace, the kingdom of God, and dependence on God saturates his preaching; therefore, he can say that he is innocent of the blood of all men to whom he has proclaimed the word. Feel the urgency of declaring the whole counsel of God. Be expositors of the word and lead people to salvation, sanctification, and glorification.

Let us not labor in the vanity of a wordless proclamation, but by God's grace let us answer the call to the exposition of scripture. May the word be proclaimed, the people be edified, and by all means, let God be glorified!

Conclusion

Consider the implications of an unclear understanding or unbiblical practice of preaching. We might live in a Christian culture where motivational speaking, the prosperity gospel, practical tips for living, and mere religious discourse are regarded as the appropriate paradigm for preaching. In fact, we do live in such a Christian culture.

We live in an age of nebulous theology and biblical illiteracy and we can no longer take for granted that expository preaching is valued or understood. Furthermore, we can no longer fail to interject new works to contribute to the ongoing conversation. It is easy to rely on how other writers, theologians, or pastors have addressed it and move on to other things. This is especially easy in a field where theological truth and tradition are as rich as in Christianity. Nonetheless, fresh consideration and interaction with timeless truths is essential.

Although this introduction to exposition originally began as a series of blog posts, this format is better suited to achieving the purpose of defining and arguing for a biblical understanding of preaching. Other works go into more detail or include elements of hermeneutics, homiletics, or exegesis, but hopefully this has paved the way for further study. After all, that is what an introduction is supposed to do.

References

- Berkely, James D. "Leadership Handbook of Preaching and Worship." 7th edition, Christianity today, Baker Book House Company, 1992.
- Broadus, John A. "On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons." 4th edition, New York, Harper SanFrancisco, 1979.
- Dever, Mark. "9 Marks of a Healthy Church." Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2004.
- Gibbs, Alfred P. "The Preacher and His Preaching". 6th edition, Kansas City, Walterick Publishers.
- Keaggy, Phil, "Way Back Home", 2nd edition, Sparrow Records
- Massie, Mychal. "Preaching Politics, Ignoring the Bible." July 11 2006,
http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=50999
- Maxwell, John C. "Developing the Leader Within You." Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993.
- Osteen, Joel. "Your Best Life Now." New York, Boston, Nashville, Faith Words Publishers, 2004.
- Piper, John. "Brothers We are not Professionals." Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2002.
- Piper, John. "The Supremacy of God in Preaching." Revised Edition, Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2004.
- Robinson, Haddon W. "Biblical Preaching." 2nd Edition, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2001.
- Vines, Jerry and Jim Shaddix. "Power in the Pulpit. Chicago." Moody Press, 1999.



Listed to the podcast of Calvinist Picard on Itunes or at
www.calvinistpicard.com