

Christ- Centered Preaching

Redeeming the
EXPOSITORY SERMON

S E C O N D E D I T I O N

Bryan
Chapell


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To
my wife, Kathy,
for the love, family, home, and friendship
the Lord has graced us to share

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Preface to the Second Edition

I consider this second edition of *Christ-Centered Preaching* to be a collaborative effort. In the ten years since its first publication, many pastors, students, and colleagues have offered encouragement, suggestions, and clarifications that I have incorporated into this volume.

I am particularly thankful for the aid provided by fellow homiletics instructors who so thoughtfully responded to my requests for input on making this second edition better serve the next generation of preachers. A host of homiletics colleagues responded, and I want to express my gratitude in particular to the following: Ronald Allen, a thoughtful examiner of many preaching traditions; Edmund Clowney, esteemed father of the unfolding mystery of all Scripture; Steve Brown, an uncompromising pastor-teacher of grace; Zack Eswine, my colleague of great heart for God's Word; Sidney Greidanus, dean of redemptive preaching and its finest scholar; Bill Hogan, a fellow yokeman in preparing a generation of Reformed pastors; David Larsen, a great historian and advocate of faithful exposition; Calvin Miller, a master storyteller and imagination's spokesman; Haddon Robinson, expository preaching's senior statesman; Larry Roff, a faithful listener to the music of Scripture; Robert Smith, a zealot for keeping the heart with the mind of preaching; Timothy Warren, a pastor of preachers; and Paul Scott Wilson, an insightful scholar of homiletics' scope. Thank you, friends and colleagues, for your aid and encouragement.

I am also grateful for my students. Twenty-plus years of teaching you to preach, listening to your sermons, and thrilling in the ways that God is ministering through you have refined my thought, deepened my appreciation for God's Word, and made me a better preacher. I am especially thankful for

those in class during 2003 and 2004 who helped me review and correct this manuscript. Your diligence and care ministered to me and will minister to many more through the publication of this book you helped me write.

A second edition offers the opportunity for clarification, addition, and even correction. In the ten years since the first publication, I have rethought some things, learned some things, and become more committed to preaching my Savior always. All of these aspects of discovery find expression here.

Clarifications

As to clarification, I have taken greater pains to indicate that the reason all Scripture has a Fallen Condition Focus (FCF) is so that it can expose God's redemptive purposes for his people in order to magnify his glory. Although the preeminent goal of God's glory was expressed in the first edition, recent discussions of need-based preaching caused some to read the Fallen Condition Focus as just an oblique way of speaking about human, felt needs. The main reason to ask why the Holy Spirit inspired any text is to expose what fallen aspect of the human condition needs to be addressed in order for God's glory to be properly recognized and honored. The FCF exposes the necessity of a divine solution to the human dilemma and necessarily makes God the hero of the text as he displays his redemptive provision for his people. God rescues his people from their broken nature and world by his grace alone in order for them to experience his goodness and express his glory.

Contemporary discussions about the proper motivation for Christian obedience have also led me to refine my discussion of this important aspect of preaching. "Gratitude" is a concept richly used in church history to reflect loving thankfulness for all aspects of God's redemption—past, present, and future. In some contemporary church contexts, however, the term *gratitude* has been abused, suggesting a debt for believers to repay in order to claim Christ's *past* redeeming work. Preachers may plead (or imply), "Can't you do this little act of obedience to pay back Jesus, since he did so much for you?" The creation of a "debtor's ethic" that calls for a believer's obedience primarily as a way of paying back God for his mercy fails to recognize the unconditional nature of his grace and the inadequacy of our best works to compensate God for his inestimable gift. Thus, I have sought to make plain that the historic sense of gratitude is used in this book and to make this term (as well as terms such as *thanksgiving*, *appreciation*, and *praise*) but one expression of the unfettered, freely offered, and compelling love by which the Spirit motivates believers to honor God because of their joy in all the dimensions of his matchless gift.

In numerous places of this edition, I have sought to clean up fuzzy wording, awkward phrasing, and misleading emphases. I have sought to indicate in clearer terms what may be right as well as what may be wrong with messages that encourage imitating a biblical character or practice. The “Deadly Be’s” (i.e., messages that only exhort believers to be like a biblical character, to be good, or to be more disciplined) possess deadly stings if redemptive contexts are not included.

I have attempted to clarify the redemptive context of “Christ-centered” messages in two ways. First, by indicating that the term itself is a synecdoche—standing not only for reference to Christ’s incarnation or death on the cross but for the entire matrix of God’s redemptive work, which finds its culminating expression in Christ’s person and work. Second, by indicating that a message is Christ-centered not because it makes creative mention of an aspect of Jesus’ life or death but because it discloses an aspect of God’s redeeming nature (evident in the text) that is ultimately understood, fulfilled, and/or accomplished in Christ. Messages on the atonement are certainly Christ-centered because Christ provided his sacrifice on our behalf. But messages on the establishment of the Old Testament kingdom and the new creation kingdom are also Christ-centered to the extent that they demonstrate that each is a provision of God’s grace for his people in order to glorify himself in his Son. Grace may appear in “Old Testament clothes” or “new covenant robes,” but it is always “Christ-centered” when a preacher makes it plain that God provides what his people could not and cannot provide for themselves.

Additions

In responding to numerous suggestions and requests, I have added more examples in the text: sample outlines, examples of structural do’s and don’ts, and a sample sermon. For additional clarity, I have also added more information on how to move from an exegetical to a homiletical outline. A definition of expository preaching now appears in the first chapter in addition to the more refined definition in chapter 6.

In the ten years since *Christ-Centered Preaching* was first published, narrative and inductive approaches to preaching have received a great deal of attention. The impact of technology and mass communication has also made preachers question traditional approaches to preparing sermons. In this text, I interact more with these movements—endorsing some aspects and critiquing others. I remain convinced that an expository approach is the most fruitful as the mainstay of a pulpit ministry (and I rejoice in the recent spate of books that has endorsed this biblically committed approach), but we can always learn from other communication fields how people hear

and how better to minister God's Word to them. There is not one right style of preaching any more than there is one right style of Scripture. The Word of God comes to us in propositions, poems, epistles, stories, and more. Discerning how these different expressions of God's truth are best related to God's people today is a dynamic task that is full of surprises and delight for those willing to learn how better to say what God says—the ultimate expository task.

In my own growth, I have discovered that though my writing emphasized discerning the place of each passage in the historical sweep of God's redemptive plan, my preaching has increasingly focused on the grace evident in particular passages. The more I have become aware that God's revelation of his redemptive character occurs at the micro- as well as the macro-level of Scripture, the more I have delighted to preach his redeeming character from virtually every page of the Bible. As a consequence, I have added significant sections to the final chapters that describe how God's grace is evident in "doctrinal statements" and "relational interaction" throughout Scripture. My sense is that, while academics more often write about redemptive-historical methods, those active in the pulpit frequently approach a text on its more immediate foundations. Thus, I have more fully explored how redemptive themes can be variously developed using the different periods and types of biblical literature.

My goal in further describing how the gold of grace can be mined from each passage is to have students worry less about whether they have to preach Genesis to Revelation in every sermon and to have scholars debate less who has the right master metaphor for the science of biblical theology. The result may be that many more will experience the joy of preaching the myriad ways that God makes his redemption known and will encounter the fellowship with him that each text encourages and enables. While we cannot and should not ignore the cognitive dimensions of a text, we should remember the relational aims that are its purpose. By consistent adulation of the mercy of God in Christ, preachers fuel the love for the Savior that is his people's greatest motivation and power for glorifying him in all of life.

The ultimate aim of Christ-centered preaching is not to burden preachers with a new science of interpretation but to release them to preach the grace of all Scripture that secures and enables relationship with the Savior—making preaching a joy to our hearts and strength to God's people. The ultimate purpose of preaching is the promotion of this union with Christ, which is our hope, joy, strength, and peace. Through the truths of the text, God intends to bring forth the fruit of our union with him and with one another for his glory. To ensure that we do not think of our union only in personal terms, I have also taken greater care to underscore the community dimensions of preaching that unite believers with the Savior of the world.

Corrections

Of the making of edits there is no end. Although I have attempted to catch typos, tweak figures, and correct footnotes, I am sure that the updated material in this edition will contain enough glitches and bugs to torment me until there is a future edition. Our world remains fallen, and correction of the work of my hands will continue until that great day when the Savior comes and perfects all things. Until that day, I pray to live under the correction of God's Word so that I may continually know the necessity of all the mercies of his Book that are intended for my delight. May the apprehension of that joy be in me and in those who read this work such a fountain of blessing that we will boldly profess what convicts of sin and powerfully proclaim what convinces of grace with the authority of God's Word and for his glory.

Preface to the First Edition

The two words around which the whole of this work could be wrapped are *authority* and *redemption*.

In our day, two opposing forces challenge the effective exposition of the Word of God. The first well-documented foe of the gospel is the erosion of authority. The philosophies of subjectivism have joined hands with the skeptics of transcendent truth to create a cultural climate antagonistic toward any authority. Yet as the apostle Paul saw long ago, this release from biblical standards inevitably makes persons slaves to their own passions and victims of one another's selfishness (Rom. 6:19–22).

Our culture and the church are desperate for dependable truths that address the brokenness of the world, which this loss of authority has made more acute. Not all answers the church supplies through its preachers herald good news. Some preachers simply have abandoned any hope of finding a source of eternal truth or of being able to communicate it to a diverse world. Others who sense our culture's antipathy for all who dare to contend that they have definite, value- and behavior-binding answers have chosen to preach without authority. Though they retain a desire to heal, such pastors too often settle for a mere repackaging of counseling or management theories in religious-sounding words. By offering the comfort of merely human answers that are due to change with the next wave of best-selling books, such preaching masks rather than heals the pain of the soul (1 Cor. 2:4–5; 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 4:3).

Expository preaching that explains precisely what the Word of God says for the issues of our day, the concerns of our lives, and the destiny of our souls provides an alternative. In keeping with the mandates of Scripture, such

preaching offers a voice of authority not of human origin and not subject to cultural vagaries (Isa. 40:8; 1 Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:15). As obvious as this solution may seem, its widespread adoption faces large challenges. Over the last two generations, the expository sermon has been stigmatized (not always unfairly) as a style of preaching that degenerates into dry recitations of biblical trivia or that arrogates into dogmatic defenses of doctrinal distinctives removed from ordinary life. This challenge has become even more acute as all forms of preaching have increasingly been accused of being anachronistic communication tools incapable of addressing the tastes and needs of a culture attuned to the aids and innovations of modern technology.

The time has come for redeeming the expository sermon—not only reclaiming a needed voice of biblical authority for our day but also rescuing the expository approach from practitioners unaware of (or unconcerned about) cultural forces, communication requirements, and biblical principles that cause their sermons to be disconnected from God’s power and people. This book attempts to provide one approach to such a reclamation and rescue. Initially, this text offers practical instruction that binds the expository sermon to Scripture’s truths while releasing it from tradition-bound attitudes and communication-naïve practices that can needlessly deny both pulpit and pew the power and the hope of an accessible message from God’s Word.

Along with practical instruction, this book also attempts to confront a second foe of the effective communication of the gospel. This foe too often arises as an unrecognized side effect of a well-intended quest for authority. Evangelical preachers reacting to the secularization of both culture and church can mistakenly make moral instruction or societal reform the *primary* focus of their messages. No one can blame these preachers for wanting to challenge the evils of the day. When sin closes in, faithful preachers have a desire, a right, and a responsibility to say, “Stop it!”

However, if these preachers’ actual or perceived cure for sin’s sickness is human behavior change, then they inadvertently present a message contrary to the gospel. The Bible does not tell us how *we* can improve ourselves to gain God’s acceptance or reform our world (Gal. 2:15–20). Fundamentally and pervasively, the Scriptures teach the inadequacy of any purely human effort to achieve divine approval or purposes. We are entirely dependent on the mercy and power provided through our Savior to be what he desires and to do what he requires. Grace rules—as both the most powerful motivation and the only true means of Christian obedience!

However well-intended and biblically rooted a sermon’s instruction may be, if the message does not incorporate the motivation and enablement inherent in proper apprehension of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the preacher proclaims mere Pharisaism. Preaching that is faithful to the whole of Scripture not only establishes God’s requirements but also highlights the redemptive truths that make holiness possible. The task may seem impos-

sible. How can we make all Scripture center on Christ's work when vast portions make no mention of him? The answer lies in learning to see all of God's Word as a unified message of human need and divine provision (Luke 24:27; Rom. 15:4).

By exploring how this gospel of redemption pervades all of Scripture, this book also establishes theological principles for redeeming the expository sermon from the well-intended but ill-conceived legalism that characterizes too much evangelical preaching. Christ-centered preaching replaces futile harangues for human striving with exhortations to obey God as a loving response to the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and in thankful dependence on the divine enablement of his Spirit. True holiness, loving obedience, spiritual strength, and lasting joy flow from this precise and powerful form of biblical exposition (1 Tim. 2:1; Titus 2:11–15).

Acknowledgments

I write this book with deep appreciation for those whose contributions to my own thought and life have been significant.

Thanks are especially owed to Robert G. Rayburn, my homiletics professor, who settled for nothing less than excellence while consistently teaching that God's glory has to be the sole focus of the preaching task, and to John Sanderson, professor of biblical theology, who opened my eyes to the necessity of Christ focus in all faithful exposition.

I am greatly indebted to the Rayburn family, especially LaVerne Rayburn and her son, Robert S. Rayburn, for allowing me access to Robert G. Rayburn's unpublished writings and notes. Being entrusted with sharing some of my mentor's insights is a great privilege.

Although the research and thought behind the two editions of this work have spanned three decades, I did most of the writing during sabbaticals provided by Covenant Theological Seminary. I want to express my thanks to the board of trustees for granting me these wonderful writing opportunities. Working at an institution governed by godly principles is a blessing for which I am daily thankful.

I am especially grateful to Paul Kooistra, who preceded me in the presidency of Covenant Seminary and whose encouragement, ministry, and many hours of conversation along our jogging path about the role of grace in preaching sharpened and strengthened my thought.

I am thankful for the ministry and friendship of James Meek, whose faithfulness as associate dean for academics at Covenant Seminary during my first writing sabbatical allowed me to complete the first edition of this work, and for Donald Guthrie and Wayne Copeland, who expanded their vice presidential duties so that I could write this second edition.

As always, I owe more than words can express to the untiring and joyful service of June Dare and Kathy Woodard, whose secretarial skills have made me look better than I have any right to expect.

PART 1

Principles
for Expository
Preaching

C O N T E N T S O F C H A P T E R I

- The Nobility of Preaching
- The Power in the Word
 - The Power of God Inherent in the Word
 - The Power of the Word Manifested in Christ
 - The Power of the Word Applied in Preaching
 - Expository Preaching Presents the Power of the Word
 - Expository Preaching Presents the Authority of the Word
 - Expository Preaching Presents the Work of the Spirit
- The Effectiveness of Testimony
 - Classical Distinctions
 - Scriptural Corroboration
 - 1 Thessalonians 2:3–8 and 11–12
 - 2 Timothy 2:15–16 and 22–24
 - Titus 2:7–8
 - 2 Corinthians 6:3–4
 - James 1:26–27
 - James 3:13
 - Ethos* Implications
 - Guard Your Character
 - Love Grace
 - Be a Great Preacher

G O A L O F C H A P T E R I

*To communicate how important preaching is and
what is really important in preaching*

1

Word and Witness

The Nobility of Preaching

I am “asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding . . . in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.” The prayer of every preacher who loves God’s Word and God’s people echoes this prayer of the apostle Paul for the Colossian church (Col. 1:9–10). We pray that God will also use our preaching to produce such a knowledge of God’s will that others will live to please him and will produce spiritual fruit, resulting in an ever growing knowledge of their God. These priorities indicate that the goal of preaching is not merely to impart information but to provide the means of transformation ordained by a sovereign God that will affect the lives and destinies of eternal souls committed to a preacher’s spiritual care.

English preacher Ian Tait quips that those who study the Bible only to gain more information may believe their minds are expanding when, in fact, only their heads are swelling. Knowledge purely for knowledge’s sake “puffeth up” (1 Cor. 8:1 *kjv*). The riches of God’s Word are no one’s private treasure, and when we share its wealth, we participate in its highest purposes. Whether your studies take place through a seminary, a Bible college, or a program of personal reading, they will be more rewarding when you realize how each element prepares you to preach with accuracy and authority for the sake of others’ growth in grace. Every biblical discipline reaches a

pinnacle purpose when we use it not merely to expand our minds but also to further the priorities of the gospel. That is why, for more than a quarter century, Robert G. Rayburn taught seminary students, “Christ is the only King of your studies, but homiletics is the queen.”¹

Elevating preaching to such a royal pedestal can intimidate even the most committed student of Scripture. Probably no conscientious preacher has failed to question whether this lofty task is greater than the lowly servant who dares to step behind a pulpit. When we face real people with eternal souls balanced between heaven and hell, the nobility of preaching both awes us and makes us more aware of our inadequacies (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3). We know our skills are insufficient for an activity with such vast consequences. We recognize that our hearts are too lacking in purity to lead others to holiness. Honest evaluation inevitably causes us to conclude that we do not have sufficient eloquence, wisdom, or character to be capable of turning others from spiritual death to eternal life. Such a realization can cause young preachers to run from their first preaching assignment and experienced pastors to despair in their pulpits.

The Power in the Word

What we require in the face of the limits of our personal effectiveness and in an age that increasingly questions the validity of preaching² is a reminder of God’s design for spiritual transformation. Ultimately, preaching accomplishes its spiritual purposes not because of the skills or the wisdom of a preacher but because of the power of the Scripture proclaimed (1 Cor. 2:4–5). Preachers minister with greater zeal, confidence, and freedom when they realize that God has taken from their backs the monkey of spiritual manipulation. God is not relying on the sufficiency of our craft or character to accomplish his purposes (2 Cor. 3:5). God certainly can use eloquence and desires lives befitting the sanctity of our subject matter, but his Spirit uses the Word itself to fulfill his saving and sanctifying purposes. The human efforts of the greatest preachers are still too weak and sin-tainted to be responsible for others’ eternal destinies. For this reason, God infuses his Word with his own spiritual power. The efficacy of the truths in God’s message rather than any virtue in the messenger transforms hearts.

1. Robert G. Rayburn was the founding president of Covenant Theological Seminary and its primary homiletics professor from 1956 to 1984. The quotation is from his unpublished class notes.

2. David L. Larsen, *The Anatomy of Preaching: Identifying the Issues in Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 11–12; and Byron Val Johnson, “A Media Selection Model for Use with a Homiletical Taxonomy” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1982), 215.

The Power of God Inherent in the Word

Precisely how the Holy Spirit uses scriptural truth to convert souls and change lives we cannot say, but we must sense the dynamics that give us hope when we preach God's Word. The Bible makes it clear that the Word is not merely powerful; it is without peer or dependence. The Word of God

creates: "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3).
"For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm"
(Ps. 33:9).

controls: "He sends his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. He hurls down his hail like pebbles. . . . He sends his word and melts them" (Ps. 147:15–18).

convicts: "Let the one who has my word speak it faithfully . . ." declares the LORD. "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:28–29).

performs his purposes: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth . . . so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:10–11).

overrides human weakness: While in prison the apostle Paul rejoiced that when others preach the Word with "false motives or true," the work of God still moves forward (Phil. 1:18).

Scripture's portrayal of its own potency challenges us always to remember that the Word preached, rather than the *preaching* of the Word, accomplishes heaven's purposes. Preaching that is true to Scripture converts, convicts, and eternally changes the souls of men and women because God's Word is the instrument of divine compulsion, not because preachers have any power in themselves to stimulate such godly transformations (although human powers can certainly bring about all kinds of worldly changes, including those that masquerade as the products of heaven).

The Power of the Word Manifested in Christ

God fully reveals the dynamic power of his Word in the New Testament, where he identifies his Son as the divine *Logos*, or Word (John 1:1). By identifying Jesus as his Word, God indicates that his message and his person are inseparable. The Word embodies him. This is not to say that the letters and the paper of a Bible are divine but that the truths Scripture holds are God's means of making his person and his presence real to his people.

God's Word is powerful because he chooses to exercise his power through it and to be present in it. By his word God brought the world into being (Gen. 1), and Jesus is the Word by whom "all things were made" (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16) and who continues "sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb. 1:3). The Word uses his word to reveal his person and to carry out all his purposes.

Christ's redemptive power and the power of his Word coalesce in the New Testament, with *Logos* (the incarnation of God) and *logos* (the message about God) becoming so reflexive as to form a conceptual identity. As the work of the original creation comes through the spoken word of God, so the work of new creation (i.e., redemption) comes through the living Word of God. James says, "He [the Father] chose to give us birth through the word of truth" (James 1:18). The phrase "word of truth" reflects the message about salvation and the One who gives the new birth. The same play on words is used by Peter: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23). In these passages, the message about Jesus and Christ himself are unified. Both are the "living and enduring [W]ord of God" by which we have been born again.

Thus, it is not merely prosaic to insist that a faithful preacher should serve the text.³ Since the Word is the mediate presence of Christ, service is due. Paul rightly instructs the young pastor Timothy to be a workman "who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15) because the Word of God is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). Scriptural truth is not a passive object for examination and presentation. The Word examines us. "It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (4:12). Christ remains active in his Word, performing divine tasks that one presenting the Word has no right or ability personally to assume.

These perspectives on the Word of God culminate in the ministry of the apostle Paul. The bookish missionary who was not known for his pulpit expertise nonetheless wrote, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for . . . everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). As students of elementary Greek soon learn, the word for "power" in this verse is *du-namis*, from which we get the English word *dynamite*. The gospel's force lies beyond the power of the preacher. Paul preaches without shame in his delivery skills because he trusts that the Spirit of God will use the Word the apostle proclaims to shatter the hardness of the human heart in ways no stage technique or philosophical construct can rival.

In some ways, the entire process seems ridiculous. Common sense rebels against claims that eternal destinies will change simply because we voice thoughts from an ancient text. When Paul commends the foolishness of

3. Herbert H. Farmer, *The Servant of the Word* (New York: Scribner's, 1942), 16-17.

preaching—not foolish preaching—he acknowledges the apparent senselessness of trying to transform attitudes, lifestyles, philosophical perspectives, and faith commitments with mere words about a once crucified rabbi (see 1 Cor. 1:21). Yet preaching endures and the gospel spreads because the Holy Spirit uses puny human efforts as the conduit for the force of his own Word. By the blessing of God’s Spirit, the Word yet transforms (i.e., causes our hearts to love God and our wills to seek his will).

Each year I recount for new seminary students a time when the reality of the Word’s power struck me with exceptional force. The Lord’s work overwhelmed me when I walked into a new members’ class of our church. Sitting together on the front row were three young women—all cousins. Though they had promised to come to the class, the reality of their being there still shook me.

In the previous year, each of these women had approached our church for help with serious problems. I got acquainted with the first after she left her husband because of his alcoholism. As an Easter-only member of our church, he had previously expressed little use for “religion,” but he came seeking help when she left. He said he was willing to do anything to get her to return. They came together for counseling. He dealt with his drinking. They reunited, and now she wanted to become part of our faith family.

The second cousin also had fled her marriage and had come seeking help at the first cousin’s suggestion. She was the victim of spousal abuse and had sought solace with another man outside her marriage. Although neither man sought God, our ministry to this woman warmed her heart toward Christ. Even after her husband turned to other women, she left her lover and submitted her life to God’s will.

The last cousin was also married, but she worked as a traveling salesperson and was living with several men as though each were her husband. An accident that injured a young nephew brought our church into her life. As she witnessed the care of Christians for the child and for her (despite her initial hostility toward us), she found a love that her sexual encounters had not supplied. Now she, too, came to be a part of the family of God.

The presence of these three cousins in a church membership class was a miracle. How foolish it would be to think that mere words I had said—some consonants and vowels pushed out of the mouth by a little burst of air—could account for their decisions. No amount of human convincing could have turned them from their selfish, pleasure-seeking, or self-destructive lifestyles to an eternal commitment to Jesus Christ. Hearts hostile to God’s Word now wanted fellowship with him simply because Christians had lovingly and faithfully expressed its truth.

God plucked three souls from a hellish swirl of family confusion, spousal betrayal, and personal sin by the means of his Word. Yet as unlikely as these events seem, they are readily explained. The Lord uses the truth of his Word

to change hearts. In the terms of Scripture, these cousins “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven” not because of any preacher’s skills but because of the Word’s own power (1 Thess. 1:9–10).

When preachers perceive the power that the Word holds, confidence in their calling grows even as pride in their performance withers. We need not fear our ineffectiveness when we speak truths God has empowered to perform his purposes. At the same time, acting as though our talents are responsible for spiritual change is like a messenger claiming credit for ending a war because he delivered the peace documents. The messenger has a noble task to perform, but he jeopardizes his mission and belittles the true victor with claims of personal achievement. Credit, honor, and glory for preaching’s effects belong to Christ alone because his Word alone saves and transforms.

The Power of the Word Applied in Preaching

EXPOSITORY PREACHING PRESENTS THE POWER OF THE WORD

The fact that the power for spiritual change resides in God’s Word argues the case for *expository* preaching. Expository preaching attempts to present and apply the truths of a specific biblical passage.⁴ Other types of preaching that proclaim biblical truth are certainly valid and valuable, but for the beginning preacher and for a regular congregational diet, no preaching type is more important than expository.

Biblical exposition binds the preacher and the people to the only source of true spiritual change. Because hearts are transformed when people are confronted with the Word of God, expository preachers are committed to saying what God says.⁵ The expository preacher opens the Bible before God’s people and dares to say, “I will explain to you what this passage means.” The words are not meant to convey one’s own authority but rather humbly to confess that the preacher has no better word than God’s Word. Thus, the preacher’s mission and calling is to explain to God’s people what the Bible means.

The most dependable way of explaining what the Bible means is to select a biblical text prayerfully, divide it according to its significant thoughts and features, and then explain the nature and implications of each. Explaining the text according to the intent of the author also requires that we not skip portions of the passage or neglect features of its context that must be un-

4. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 21. See further the definition below and in chap. 6.

5. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 15.

derstood in order for the principles the passage is teaching to be grasped. *An expository sermon may be defined as a message whose structure and thought are derived from a biblical text, that covers the scope of the text, and that explains the features and context of the text in order to disclose the enduring principles for faithful thinking, living, and worship intended by the Spirit, who inspired the text.* The expository sermon uses the features of the text and its context to explain what that portion of the Bible means.

As expository preachers, our ultimate goal is not to communicate the value of our opinions, others' philosophies, or speculative meditations but rather to show how God's Word discloses his will for those united to him through his Son. Truths of God proclaimed in such a way that people can see that the concepts derive from Scripture and apply to their lives preoccupy the expository preacher's efforts. Such preaching puts people in immediate contact with the power of the Word.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING PRESENTS THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD

Preaching addresses the perpetual human quest for authority and meaning. Though we live in an age hostile to authority, everyday struggles for significance, security, and acceptance force every individual to ask, "Who has the right to tell me what to do?" This question, typically posed as a challenge, is really a plea for help. Without an ultimate authority for truth, all human striving has no ultimate value, and life itself becomes futile. Modern trends in preaching that deny the authority of the Word⁶ in the name of intellectual sophistication lead to a despairing subjectivism in which people do what is right in their own eyes—a state whose futility Scripture has clearly articulated (Judg. 21:25).

The answer to the radical relativism of our culture and its accompanying uncertainties is the Bible's claim of authority. Paul commended the Thessalonian Christians because they accepted his message "not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). The claim of Scripture and the premise of expository preaching is that God has spoken in his Word. Long ago Augustine simply summarized, "When the Bible speaks, God speaks." Thus, the expository preaching task is to communicate what God committed to Scripture in order to give God's people his truth for their time. Such effort is not blind adherence to fundamentalist dogma but rather a commitment to a source that both faith and reason confirm is the only basis of human hope—for without a source of transcendence and certitude, all foundations for society, identity, and sanity vanish.

6. David Buttrick, *Homiletic: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 408.

Without the authority of the Word, preaching becomes an endless search for topics, therapies, and techniques that will win approval, promote acceptance, advance a cause, or soothe worry. Human reason, social agendas, popular consensus, and personal moral convictions become the resources of preaching that lacks “the historic conviction that what Scripture says, God says.”⁷ The opinions and emotions that formulate the content of preaching that lacks biblical authority are the same forces that can deny the validity of those concepts in a changed culture, a subsequent generation, or a rebellious heart. Expository preaching avoids this shifting sand by committing a preacher to the foundation of God’s Word.

When we preach, God is the true audience of our efforts. Just as true but perhaps more humbling and emboldening is the conviction that when we speak the truths of God’s Word, God speaks (cf. Luke 10:16). The Second Helvetic Confession of the Protestant Reformation says, “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.” The idea that what comes out of our mouths is the word of God initially sounds arrogant if not blasphemous. Yet the humility implicit in such a confession is that we have nothing of importance, merit, or authority to say comparable to what God has said. When we speak, therefore, we design our messages to express the truths of the eternal Word so that the church may be the “mouth house” of God that Martin Luther described.

When preachers approach the Bible as God’s very Word, questions about what we have a right to say vanish. God can tell his people what they should believe and do, and he has. Scripture obligates preachers to make sure others understand what God says. We have no biblical authority to say anything else. It is true that our expressions are culturally conditioned, but the transcendence of God’s truth and the divine image-bearing privileges of our nature make it possible for us to receive and communicate his Word.

Only preachers committed to proclaiming what God says have the Bible’s imprimatur on their preaching. Thus, expository preaching endeavors to discover and convey the precise meaning of the Word. Scripture determines what expositors preach because they unfold what it says. *The meaning of the passage is the message of the sermon.* The text governs the preacher. Expository preachers do not expect others to honor their opinions. Such ministers adhere to Scripture’s truths and expect their listeners to heed the same.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING PRESENTS THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

The expectations of expository preachers are themselves based on the truths of the Bible. If no amount of eloquence and oratory can account for spiritual transformation, who alone can change hearts? Leaders of the Protestant Reformation answered, “The Holy Spirit working by and with

7. J. I. Packer, *God Speaks to Man: Revelation and the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 18.

the Word in our hearts.”⁸ The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17; cf. Acts 10:44; Eph. 1:13). The extraordinary but regular means by which God transforms lives is through his Word, which is accompanied by the regenerating, convicting, and enabling power of his Spirit.

When we proclaim the Word, we bring the work of the Holy Spirit to bear on others’ lives. No truth grants greater encouragement in our preaching and gives us more cause to expect results from our efforts. The work of the Spirit is as inextricably linked to preaching as heat is to the light a bulb emits. When we present the light of God’s Word, his Spirit performs his purposes of warming, melting, and conforming hearts to his will.

The Holy Spirit uses our words, but his work, not ours, affects the hidden recesses of the human will. Paul wrote, “God . . . made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Cor. 4:6–7). The glory of preaching is that God accomplishes his will through it, but we are always humbled and occasionally comforted by the knowledge that he works beyond our human limitations. Ours is only the second sermon; the first and last are those of the Holy Spirit, who first gave his Word and quickens it in the hearts of hearers.

These truths challenge all preachers to approach their task with a deep sense of dependence on the Spirit of God. Public ministry true to God’s purposes requires devoted private prayer. We should not expect our words to acquaint others with the power of the Spirit if we have not met with him. Faithful preachers plead for God to work as well as for their own accuracy, integrity, and skill in proclaiming his Word. Success in the pulpit can be the force that leads a preacher from prayerful dependence on the Spirit. Congregational accolades for pulpit excellence may tempt one to put too much confidence in personal gifts, acquired skills, or a particular method of preaching. Succumbing to such a temptation is evidenced not so much by a change in belief as by a change in practice. Neglect of prayer signals serious deficiencies in a ministry even if other signs of success have not diminished. We must always remember that popular acclaim is not necessarily the same as spiritual effectiveness.

The spiritual dimensions of preaching undercut much of what you may be tempted to believe about this book—that if you learn to speak well enough, you can be a great preacher. Not true! Do not let the necessary emphases of this book, the comments of others, or the desires of your own heart mislead you. Great gifts do not necessarily make for great preaching. The technical excellence of a message may rest on your skills, but the spiritual efficacy of your message resides with God.

8. Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.5.

The Effectiveness of Testimony

Faith in the working of God's Word and Spirit does not mean that you are without responsibility. Early American pastor John Shaw once preached at an ordination:

It's true as one observes, God can work by what means He will; by a scandalous, domineering, self-seeking preacher, but it is not His usual way. Foxes and wolves are not nature's instrument to generate sheep. Whoever knew much good done to souls by any pastors but such as preached and lived in the power of love, working by a clear, convincing light, and both managed by a holy, lively seriousness? You must bring fire to kindle fire.⁹

There is no need to presume upon the goodness of God. Although the power inherent in the Word can work despite our weaknesses, there is no reason to put hurdles in its path. Good preaching in one sense involves getting out of the way so that the Word can do its work. Shaw's comments remind us what clearing the path usually means: preaching and living in such a way as to make the Word plain and credible.

Classical Distinctions

The apostle Paul taught of the inherent efficacy of the Word, but he also related his personal resolve to put no stumbling block to the gospel in anyone's path (2 Cor. 6:3). Aristotle's classic rhetorical distinctions, though not inspired, can help us understand the basic components of every message we preach so that we do not needlessly cause others to stumble over what or how we speak.

In classical rhetoric, three elements compose every persuasive message:

logos: the verbal content of the message, including its craft and logic

pathos: the emotive features of a message, including the passion, fervor, and feeling that a speaker conveys and the listeners experience

ethos: the perceived character of the speaker, determined most significantly by the concern expressed for the listeners' welfare. Aristotle's belief (confirmed in countless modern studies) was that *ethos* is the most powerful component of persuasion.

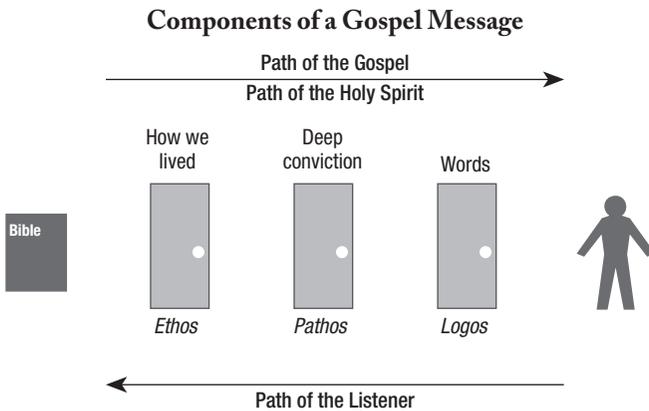
Listeners automatically evaluate each of these elements of persuasion in sermons in order to weigh the truths that the preacher presents. This realization should convince preachers who want to create clear access to the Word

9. John Shaw, "The Character of a Pastor according to God's Heart" (Ligonier, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1992), 3-4.

to strive to make each aspect of their messages a door and not a barrier. For instance, it may be hard for men in this culture of John Wayne, Denzel Washington, and Aragorn heroes to express emotion when they preach. Yet failing to speak with conviction appropriate to one’s subject and personality about the truths of eternity—to appear to be unmoved or unaffected by the joy of salvation or the plight of the lost—actually miscommunicates Scripture’s meaning.

Paul reflects the importance of each of the components of persuasion in his first letter to the Thessalonians (see fig. 1.1). Although his terms are not Aristotle’s, they echo features of the classic rhetor’s categories and remind us that craft cannot make a message powerful if one’s heart and character do not validate its truths. Paul makes it clear that though the Holy Spirit forges the path of the gospel, listeners advance to confrontation with the Word through doors the preacher opens with the message. Significantly, Paul cites his own life as affecting the reception of the message, thus giving scriptural credence to the notion that *ethos* is a powerful force in the ordinary process of spiritual persuasion.

Figure 1.1



“Our gospel came to you not simply with **words** [*logos*], but also **with power, and with deep conviction** [*pathos*]. You **know how we lived** [*ethos*] among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:5).

Paul cites his conduct and his compassion not only as evidences of his “deep conviction” but also as integral sources of his message’s “power.” Although this book of homiletical method necessarily focuses on the elements of *logos* and *pathos* in preaching, the Bible’s own emphases remind us that pastoral character remains the foundation of ministry. Preaching’s earthly glory may be eloquence, but its eternal heartbeat is faithfulness.

Phillips Brooks's oft-cited observation that preaching is "truth poured through personality" reflects biblical principle as well as common sense. Our fathers taught, "Your actions speak so loudly I can't hear what you say." Today's young people tell us, "Don't talk the talk if you don't walk the walk." Each maxim merely reflects a higher wisdom that urges Christian leaders to "conduct [themselves] in a manner worthy of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). Our preaching should reflect the uniqueness of our personalities, but our lives should reflect Christ in order for his message to spread unhindered.

Scriptural Corroboration

There is no scarcity of Scripture passages that confirm the importance of *ethos* for effective proclamation. Beginning with the preeminent passages on pastoral theology, with emphases added, the following texts link the quality of preaching with the quality of a preacher's character and conduct.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:3-8 AND 11-12

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that *we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well*, because you had become so dear to us.

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15-16 AND 22-24

Do your best to present yourself to God as *one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed* and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

TITUS 2:7-8

In everything set them an *example* by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-4

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God *we commend ourselves in every way*.

JAMES 1:26-27

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

JAMES 3:13

Who is wise and understanding among you? *Let him show it* by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Ethos Implications

GUARD YOUR CHARACTER

The influence of a preacher's testimony on the acceptance of a sermon requires that one's life be under the rule of Scripture. With unblinking candor, John Wesley once explained to a struggling protégé why his ministry lacked power: "Your temper is uneven; you lack love for your neighbors. You grow angry too easily; your tongue is too sharp—thus, the people will not hear you."¹⁰ Wesley's honesty reflects Scripture's admonition and challenges each of us to guard our character if we desire effectiveness with the Word.

True character cannot be hidden, although it can be temporarily masked. Character oozes out of us in our messages. Just as people reveal themselves in conversations by their words and mannerisms, we constantly reveal ourselves to others in our preaching. Over time our word choices, topics, examples, and tone unveil our hearts regardless of how well we think we have cordoned off deeper truths from public display. The inside is always on view. People sense more than they can prove by the way we present ourselves in the most inadvertent ways.

With the insight of many years of preaching experience, Haddon Robinson summarizes:

As much as we might wish it otherwise, we cannot be separated from the message. Who has not heard some devout brother or sister pray in antcipa-

10. Quoted in James L. Golden, Goodwin F. Berquist, and William Coleman, *The Rhetoric of Western Thought*, 3rd ed. (Dubuque: Kendall-Hunt, 1978), 297.

tion of a sermon, “Hide our pastor behind the cross so that we may see not him but Jesus only.” We commend the spirit of such a prayer. . . . Yet no place exists where a preacher may hide. Even a large pulpit cannot conceal us from view. . . . We affect our message. We may be mouthing a scriptural idea yet we can remain as impersonal as a telephone recording, as superficial as a radio commercial, or as manipulative as a con man. The audience does not hear a sermon, they hear a person—they hear you.¹¹

No truth calls louder for pastoral holiness than the link between a preacher’s character and a sermon’s reception.

If I were to return to churches I have pastored, it is unlikely that people would remember many specifics from my previous sermons. They might remember a particularly vivid illustration, the way a verse had a telling effect at a crisis moment in their lives, or the impression a particular message left on their minds. Yet not one person would remember a dozen words of the thousands I spoke throughout the years. People may not remember what we say, but they will remember *us* and whether our lives gave credence to the message of Scripture. The impressions that others have of our lives are the videos they will replay in their minds to discern whether the truths of the gospel we proclaim are real for us—and therefore can be real for them.

Effective ministry corresponds so much with the character of a minister that theologian John Sanderson advised people to play softball with pastoral candidates interviewing for a position. “Then on a close play at second base,” Sanderson said (with his tongue *mostly* in cheek), “call him out when he is really safe. Then see what happens!”¹²

Of course, no one reflects Christ’s character as purely as he or she desires. That is why God does not make the effects of his Word dependent on our actions. But as the eighteenth-century minister George Campbell said, “When our practice conforms to our theory, our effectiveness trebles.”¹³ This does not deny the extraordinary power inherent in God’s Word but affirms that it is the ordinary pattern of the Holy Spirit to affirm and further the purposes of his Word by the testimony of our lives. It is the joy of the Christian minister to serve God in this way. Yet it is also a comfort to recognize that if the Spirit must leapfrog over human frailty to reach the heart of others with the sufficiency of the Word, then he can certainly do so. In the course of our ministries, it will often be necessary for him to do so.

Perhaps most of us have experienced the influence of pastoral character on a sermon when we have visited a church at a friend’s request to hear the preacher’s “marvelous messages” and have heard mediocrity instead. Our friend’s love and trust of the pastor generated regard for the sermon and

11. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 25–26.

12. From classroom lecture notes at Covenant Seminary, St. Louis, 1978.

13. Golden, Berquist, and Coleman, *Rhetoric of Western Thought*, 295.

obscured its weaknesses. The character and compassion of a minister more than the characteristics of the message preached determine the quality of the message heard.

LOVE GRACE

Emphasis on the character of a preacher is futile and errant without underscoring the grace that molds one's character and message according to God's will. Human effort is engaged in holy living but does not itself produce holiness. Selfless righteousness and sacrificial love are never self-induced. Attempts to conform our character to God's requirements by the sufficiency of our actions are as arrogant as efforts to save souls by our talents. Powerful preachers must become well-acquainted with the grace their character requires.

Emphasis on the power of *ethos* without dependence on God's mercy has the potential to drive preachers either to arrogance or to despair. While it is certainly true that a life of consistently hidden or unrepentant sin makes a poor vehicle for the gospel, it is equally true that pride in one's moral superiority is damaging to the communication of faith in Christ alone. In contrast, some preachers are so conscience-stricken by their inability to live faultlessly that they cannot enter the pulpit without stumbling over mountains of self-accusation. By such over-conscientiousness, which parades in the soul as spiritual zeal, many preachers actually deny to themselves and others a deep and authentic understanding of the efficacy and sufficiency of Christ's blood.

You must know grace to preach it. No matter how great your skill or accolades, you are unlikely to lead others closer to God if your heart does not reflect the continuing work of the Savior in your life. A testimony that reinforces the message of the gospel is not merely a matter of public conduct. It is a product of consistent private meditation on the gospel that character daily requires.

Grace-focused ministers recognize the daily repentance that private prayers must include, confess to others the divine aid that grants them the strength of their resolutions, obey God in loving thankfulness for the forgiveness and future Christ supplies, model the humility appropriate for a fellow sinner, express the courage and authority of one confident of the Savior's provision, exude the joy of salvation by faith alone, reflect the love that claims their souls, and perform their service without any claim of personal merit.¹⁴

Preaching without a grace focus concentrates on means of earning divine acceptance, proofs of personal righteousness, and contrasts with those less holy. Preaching with a grace focus concentrates on responding to God's

14. Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 130–35.

mercy with loving thankfulness, joyful worship, humble service, and a caring witness to the Savior's love.

The necessity of grace in balanced preaching inevitably points both preacher and parishioner to the work of Christ as the only proper center of a sermon. Christ-centered preaching is not merely evangelistic, nor is it confined to a few gospel accounts. It perceives the whole of Scripture as revelatory of God's redemptive plan and sees every passage within this context—a pattern Jesus himself introduced (Luke 24:27). More will be said about this later. What is critical at this point as we begin to consider the structural components of a sermon is to understand that our union with Christ is the end and the means of all biblical obedience (Rom. 6:1–14; Phil. 2:1–5). Thus, the Bible requires that we construct our messages in such a way as to reveal the grace that is the ultimate foundation of every text, the ultimate enablement for every instruction, and the only source of true holiness.

Without understanding our daily dependence on grace, we have little hope of reflecting the character that endorses the integrity of our messages. Discovering the redemptive context of every text allows us to use the entire Bible to discern the grace we need to preach and to live so as to lead others to closer fellowship with the Lord. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, a nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister and the father of Woodrow Wilson, advised, "Become what you preach and then preach Christ in you."¹⁵ His words remind us that the sanctifying Redeemer who unites and conforms us to himself to endorse his message cannot be neglected in our sermons. Word and witness are inextricably linked in preaching worthy of Christ's gospel.

Without a redemptive focus, we may believe we have exegeted Scripture when in fact we have simply translated its parts and parsed its pieces without reference to the role they have in God's eternal plan. John Calvin said, "God has ordained his Word as the instrument by which Jesus Christ, with all His graces, is dispensed to us."¹⁶ No such process occurs when passages of the Word are ripped from their redemptive context and are seen as mere moral examples and behavioral guidelines. Grace keeps our character true to God, our messages true to Scripture, and our efforts true to Christ's will. Reliance on this grace results in sermons that are empowered by God (despite our knowledge of our sin and inadequacy), for he alone is responsible for the holiness and truth that fuel preaching's spiritual force.

15. Joseph Ruggles Wilson, "In What Sense Are Preachers to Preach Themselves?" *Southern Presbyterian Review* 25 (1874): 360.

16. Quoted in Larsen, *Anatomy of Preaching*, 19. Compare John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.9.1; 4.1.6.

BE A GREAT PREACHER

Consciousness of God's enablement should encourage all preachers (including beginning preachers) to throw themselves wholeheartedly into their calling. Although the degree of homiletical skill will vary, God promises to perform his purposes through all who faithfully proclaim his truth. Even if your words barely crawl over the edge of the pulpit, love of God's Word and his people ensures an effective spiritual ministry. You may never hear the applause of the world or pastor a church of thousands, but a life of godliness combined with clear explanations of Scripture's saving and sanctifying grace will engage the power of the Spirit for the glory of God.

If your goal is Christ's honor, you *can* be a great preacher through faithfulness to him and his message. Paul offers this same encouragement to Timothy with promises that yet apply to you:

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. . . .

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 4:12–13, 15–16

Questions for Review and Discussion

1. Why are expository preachers committed to making the meaning of the passage the message of the sermon?
2. Who or what alone has the power to change hearts eternally?
3. What are *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*? Which most affects the persuasiveness of a message?
4. Why should every sermon have a redemptive focus?
5. On what does great preaching most depend?

Exercises

1. Locate and comment on biblical passages that confirm the inherent power of the Word.
2. Locate and comment on biblical passages that link the character of the messenger to the effects of the message.