

WHAT IS EXPOSITORY PREACHING?

I. WHAT MAKES PREACHING "EXPOSITORY"?

A. The heart of exposition is explanation

"Exposition . . . 1. a setting forth of the meaning or purpose (as of a writing) 2: discourse . . . designed to convey information or explain what is difficult to understand" [*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1983]

B. "Exposition" is built on the verb "expose," which means "to open up to view," or "to reveal"

C. Preaching is expository, then, when it seeks to make clear the teaching and the content of some portion of Scripture

II. WHAT MAKES EXPOSITION "PREACHING"?

Expository preaching is exposition PLUS

A. In addition to explanation, there must be **application**

1. Not just, "This is what it means," but also, "This is what it means to you today."

2. In addition to talking about what God DID and SAID (long ago), the preacher must speak about what God IS DOING and what we should BE DOING (now)

B. In addition to explanation there must be **appeal**

II Corinthians 5:20--"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us . . ."

III. A DEFINITION OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

A. The definition proposed

"Expository preaching is the opening up of the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that the voice of God is heard, and the rule of Christ is established in the hearts and lives of God's people."

B. The implications of this definition

1. Convictions about the Biblical text

a. It is an inspired text: *"biblical exposition is the opening up of the inspired text"*

b. It is, to some degree, a closed text: *"biblical exposition is the opening up of the inspired text."*

(1) What about the "perspicuity of Scripture"?

(2) God condescended to speak to men in human languages

c. It is a living text: *". . . so that God's voice is heard"*

(1) God still speaks through what He has spoken

"Holy Scripture . . . may truly be described as God preaching--preaching, that is, in the sense of instructing, rebuking, correcting, and directing every reader and hearer for the furthering of faith, praise, holiness, and spiritual growth. God preaches thus in and through all the various stories, sermons, soliloquies, schedules, statistics, songs, and supplications that make up the individual books of the canon. All that the Bible writers tell us about God and man, God himself tells us; for the sacred text is not just man's witness to God, but is also, and indeed primarily, God's own witness to himself, given us in this human form. . . . Only as God himself is perceived to be preaching in our sermons can they have genuine spiritual significance, and God will be perceived to speak through us only as we are enabled to make plain the fact that it is really the Bible that is doing the talking." [J.I.Packer, "Speaking for God," *Inside the Sermon*, Richard Allen Body, ed. p. 186f.]

(2) It is a sufficient Word

2. Obligations in expounding Scripture

a. "Faithfulness" to the inspired text

(1) We are bound to the message of the text

"What is Expository Preaching?" (Continued)

Donald Coggan, Archbishop of Canterbury: "The Christian preacher has a boundary set for him. When he enters the pulpit, he is not an entirely free man. There is a very real sense in which it may be said of him that the Almighty has set him bounds that he shall not pass. He is not at liberty to invent or choose his message: it has been committed to him, and it is for him to declare, expound and commend it to his hearers . . . It is a great thing to come under the magnificent tyranny of the Gospel. [*Stewards of Grace*, 1958]

"Expository preaching at its core is more a philosophy than a method. Whether or not a man can be called an expositor starts with his purpose and with his honest answer to the question: 'Do you, as a preacher, endeavor to bend your thought to the Scriptures, or do you use the Scripture to support your thought?' [Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, p. 20]

- (2) We must determine what the text meant.

"It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say." [John Calvin, preface to commentary on Romans]

- (3) This requires careful and diligent exegesis

- (4) All preaching must be expository.

The opposite of **ex**-position is **Im**-position.

- b. "*Sensitivity*" to the needs of the listeners

- c. Call for an obedient response: "*the rule of Christ is established*"

- (1) Romans 10:14-15 - What is the Good News?

- (2) Isaiah 52:7

"What is Expository Preaching?" (Continued)

- (3) Cotton Mather: "The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher [is] to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men." [*Student and Preacher, or Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry*, 1726]

"The keynote in the mouth of every prophet-preacher, whether in Isaiah's day or Jesus' day or our day, is 'Your God Reigns!' God is the King of the universe; he has absolute creator rights over this world and everyone in it. Rebellion and mutiny are on all sides, however, and his authority is scorned by millions. So the Lord sends preachers into the world to cry out that God reigns, that he will vindicate his name in great and terrible wrath. But they are also sent to cry that for now a full and free amnesty is offered to all the rebel subjects who will turn from their rebellion, call on him for mercy, bow before his throne, and swear allegiance and fealty to him forever. The amnesty is signed in the blood of his Son." [John Piper, *The Supremacy of God In Preaching*, 1990]

3. Expectations when we preach

a. "The voice of God is heard"

Because God speaks through His Word, He speaks through Biblical preaching:

I Peter 1:23,25

Romans 10:13-15

"Preaching is not just talk about a Christ of the past, but is a mouth through which the Christ of the present offers us life today" [Gustaf Wingren, *The Living Word*, quoted by Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 108

Heinrich Bullinger, Second Helvetic Confession (1566): "The preaching of the Word of God **Is** the Word of God."

b. "The rule of Christ is established in hearts and lives"

(1) Believing and obedient response is the result of the work of the Spirit

(2) Scripture justifies the expectation that at least sometimes our preaching will be productive

(3) We must pray that the Spirit will bless the preaching of the Word