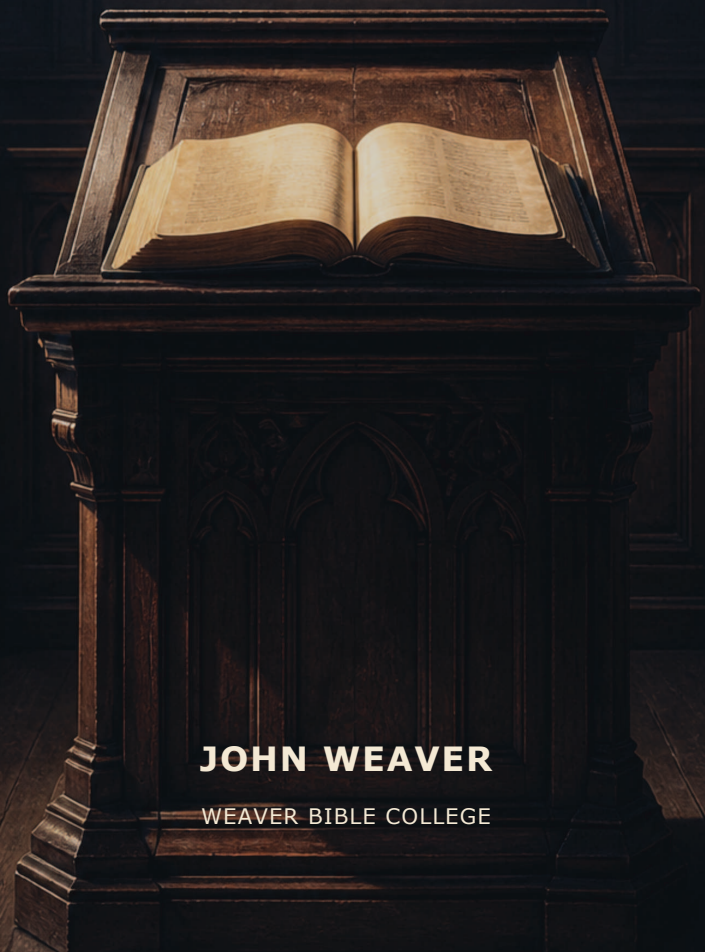
WEAVER BOOKS

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

A Biblical Perspective *on* Preaching

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

How shall they hear without a preacher?

ROMANS 10:14

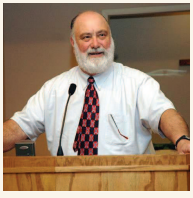
What makes preaching faithful to Scripture? In these two messages, John Weaver distinguishes exposition from reading our own ideas into the text. Drawing on Acts 10, he considers the preacher's duty to declare God's Word and the hearer's responsibility to receive it with understanding and obedience. This is a call to measure preaching by Scripture, not by entertainment or feeling.

"Exegesis is when you draw out of the Scripture what the Scripture actually says. Eisegesis is when you read into the Scripture that which you want it to say."

JOHN WEAVER

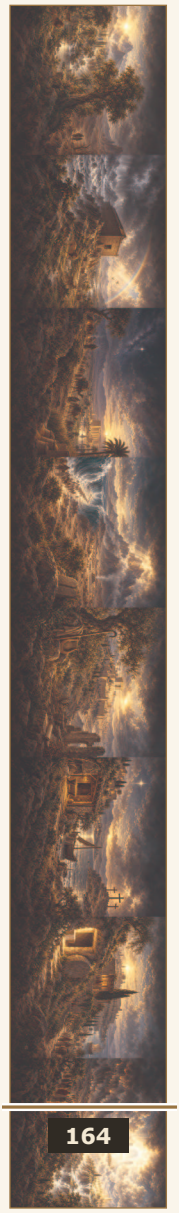
"Most Christians erroneously judge a preaching service by the false standard of their feelings, whether or not it made them feel good or not, and not whether or not the Word of God was preached."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume brings together his two-part study of biblical preaching.



164

BOOK 164

WEAVER BOOKS

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching

New Testament Studies

John Weaver

Weaver Bible College

LIBRARY BOOK 164

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching

John Weaver

Weaver Books
Weaver Bible College

Edited from the sermon corpus of John Weaver.

Contents

Chapter 1: A Biblical Perspective on Preaching - Part One 5

Introduction and Text 5

The Deterioration of Preaching and Listening 6

Three Types of Preaching 7

Expository Preaching and the Whole Counsel of God 11

The Nature of True Preaching: Exposition, Explanation, Application 13

The Efficacy of God's Word and God's Sovereignty 15

Applications and Conclusion 21

Chapter 2: A Biblical Perspective on Preaching - Part Two 23

Introduction and Review 24

Providential Preparation 25

A Providential Perspective on Preaching 33

Providential Perspective 33

Providential Preaching 40

Applications 44

Topical Index 49

Scripture Index 51

Study Guide Link 55

CHAPTER 1

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching

Part One

Introduction and Text

Open your Bibles to Acts chapter 10. As you turn there, understand that today's message is an introduction to next Sunday's message. It will take all of this time simply to reach the place I want to reach. The title of the message is “A Biblical Perspective on Preaching.” A biblical perspective on preaching. The main message will come next week, Lord willing. Let us look at Acts 10 and read just a few verses, and then I will give you the text and we will go from there. Acts 10, verse 1: “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian Band, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision, evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming to him and saying unto him, Cornelius.”

"And when he looked on him, he was afraid and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa to call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

Now, if you would skip down, you know the entire story. Let us begin with verse 30. "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house. Behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter, who is lodged in the house of one Simon the Tanner by the seaside."

"Who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee." Verse 33: "Immediately therefore I sent to thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." This is the text that I will be dealing with mainly next Lord's Day. I believe that I could accurately say, and everyone who hears my voice would agree with me, that preaching has deteriorated greatly over the last 150 years.

The Deterioration of Preaching and Listening

In order to comprehend this deterioration, all one has to do is ask, where are the Charles Haddon Spurgeons, the George Whitefields, or the John Wesleys? When you stop and think of the preachers preaching today, where are the great men who expound the Word of God? I must admit that there are very few, if any, great preachers today. I know a few men who I believe are very capable preachers, but there are very few indeed.

A parallel to this truth is that, just as preaching has deteriorated, equally so has the ability to listen to preaching deteriorated. Consider the qualifications of a pastor in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. If you take those qualifications and trace them through Scripture, I could show you that every qualification except one is required of every Christian. Every qualification of a preacher in 1 Timothy chapter 3 is required of every Christian. Are you not required to be

hospitable? Yes. Are you not required to be sober? Yes. Are you not required to be a lover of good men? Yes.

These things ought to be preeminent in a pastor, but the one thing that makes the pastor different from all others, according to Scripture, is that he must be apt to teach.

If God requires preachers to be apt to teach, is it not also necessary to conclude that He requires Christians to be apt to hear? Just as preaching has deteriorated, listening to preaching has deteriorated as well. A simple way to comprehend the deterioration in preaching today is to grasp this fact: there is very little expository preaching today. Do you realize the average preaching service consists of a fifteen- or twenty-minute sermonette to Christianettes who are more concerned with their TV sets than they are the Word of God?

I can demonstrate this. Alice and I, years ago, were down in Tampa, Florida, and went by a Baptist church. On the sign out front was this: "Come to our early service. In by 8, out by 8:30."

Let me tell you what he was trying to do. He was trying to pacify the people's consciences as they were on their way to spend the day at the beach. Plus, get a few extra shekels.

If you have an opening song or two, a prayer, or a Scripture reading, and then a closing hymn or prayer, at the most you will have only fifteen minutes for preaching. At the very most. So the average preacher today really does not preach and teach expositionally. Since preachers do not preach expositionally, most Christians do not even know what an expository sermon is. I would hope some of you know, and I would really and truly hope all of you know. But let me break it down simply.

Basically speaking, or traditionally speaking, there are three types of preaching: topical preaching, textual preaching, and expository preaching. Topical preaching is the most prominent type today because it is the easiest to do and requires the least study and effort.

Three Types of Preaching

I am not condemning all topical preaching. Topical preaching may be done, in one sense of the word, in an expository manner, if you

choose the topic and then go to the Scriptures and expound and explain those topics. But it is usually not done that way. Topical preaching is simply when one takes a topic—for instance, salvation, justification, the Holy Spirit, or election—and deals with that topic. What mainly constitutes topical preaching is that you choose your topic, throw in a few Scriptures, and then say what you think or believe about it. Very little study is required, and you can preach just about any subject without difficulty, because all you need is a few Scriptures and a few of your own ideas. However, if you choose the topic and then go to the Scriptures, exegete them, and explain them, that is far better preaching, though usually it is not done that way.

Let me give you one of the silliest and saddest illustrations I know concerning topical preaching. I did not hear this sermon preached, but I know the man who did. He related the sermon to me and gave me the pastor's points. Are you listening? The subject was salvation. Here was the outline: "Salvation. God thought it. Jesus bought it. The Holy Spirit brought it. The Bible taught it. And bless God, I caught it."

While admittedly every one of those points is scriptural except the last one—salvation is not a disease, nor is it contagious—you can see how anybody could simply preach on something like that. It requires no study and no preparation. You get up, quote a few Scriptures, and say, "Here it is." That is basically topical preaching. Topical preaching is usually the worst kind of preaching, because there is no study and no effort going into it. Many times it appeals to the flesh, and you can add your own thoughts and your own ideas.

The second type of preaching is textual preaching. Textual preaching is when you take your texts from different portions of Scripture. Let me give you an illustration. There is a message that I could preach based on the words "due time." To preach a textual message, all you have to do is go through the Bible and look up the phrases "due times" or "due seasons." You will find that those phrases refer, number one, to judgment; number two, to salvation; and number three, to reaping and sowing, and so forth. If you are going to preach textually, you could go back to Deuteronomy and find the due time of judgment. You could come over to the New Testament and get the due time of salvation. "In due times, God has

manifested His word through preaching," you see; there is the due time of preaching.

What I am saying is that I have a different point, and for each point I have a different text. In one sense, you could use textual preaching in an expository manner if you took that one text and explained and expounded it as it appears in the text. But if you simply take four different texts for four points, then you can throw in your own thoughts. There again, you have what is basically known as textual preaching, although it is not necessarily the best kind of preaching.

The best kind of preaching is known as expository preaching. Expository preaching is when you take a book, a chapter, or a passage and go through that book, chapter, or passage word for word and sentence by sentence, always allowing the context to interpret and explain it.

Exegesis and eisegesis are very important words. Exegesis is drawing out of Scripture what Scripture actually says. Eisegesis is reading into Scripture what you want it to say. Do you realize you can just about prove whatever you want to prove from Scripture if you use eisegesis? In fact, that is how most people study the Bible. They go to the Bible and say, "I believe this. Let me find a passage and some verses that document what I believe." If you have to take it out of context to prove your point, you can take it out of context to prove your point. That is eisegesis—reading into Scripture what you really want Scripture to say. There is a big difference between exegesis and eisegesis.

When you exegete a passage, you bring out what that passage is saying, whether you like it or not and whether it agrees with your positions or not. You say, "Here is what the Word of God says. Point blank."

When one preaches expository preaching, he deals with subjects that he would never ordinarily address. Why? Because he is taking Scripture book by book, chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, and word by word. Consequently, as he preaches expositionally, he is forced to deal with passages that he would never normally address, even when they are the hardest

and most difficult passages in the Bible. You remember when I preached through Hosea: I had seventy-five messages, one right after the other, in the book of Hosea; twenty-six through the book of Amos; and I do not remember how many I had going through Proverbs.

When you go through a book or passage like that, you are forced to deal with subjects you would never ordinarily address—whether economics, government, or education. Consequently, you can preach on things you never normally would preach on. There is another advantage of expository preaching: people cannot accuse you of picking on them or pointing out their sins if the exposure of their sins occurs in the normal course of preaching, following one passage after another. I have had people tell me, "Brother Weaver, you are just picking on me." No, I am not picking on you. But the old saying is, if the shoe fits, wear it.

Here is what Scripture says: if Scripture condemns you, you need to repent; if it convicts you, you need to repent. Expository preaching is harder and more difficult, but it does have advantages. One of the greatest is simply this: in expository preaching, you are trying to present the whole counsel of God—what God says on every particular subject.

There are three basic kinds of preaching: topical, textual, and expository. Expository preaching is far better.

Preachers, like everyone else, often go through fads. Everybody has heard of "three points and a poem": you have three points, and then you always conclude with a poem. That has been a joke among preachers for years because it was a fad. But there was a time when it was considered absolutely necessary, if you were going to be a successful preacher, to have three points.

You need to preach expositionally as well. One of my favorite stories is about a preacher who was trying to preach expositionally and came upon the text, "And Balaam arose early and saddled his ass." His first point was, "Here we see a good trait in a bad man: Balaam rose early." Secondly, "We see the ancient art of saddlery: he saddled his ass." His third point was, "Some concluding remarks about the woman at the well." There was no relationship.

He had his three points, but that is ridiculous. You have to give what the Word of God says. Whether it is one point, two points, three points, or forty points, it does not matter. Expository preaching is the way to present the whole counsel of God.

Since we are in the book of Acts, turn to Acts chapter 20. This passage relates to the subject and gives us an opportunity to impress it upon our minds. In Acts 20, beginning with verse 17, Paul calls all of these elders, all of these preachers, together. They lead him into Ephesus, and he speaks to them: “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.” He was at Miletus and called the Ephesian elders there.

Expository Preaching and the Whole Counsel of God

“And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

“And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 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 of 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.”

Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." Look at verse 17: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders," or the pastors of the church. He gave these pastors a personal testimony, saying in verse 20, "and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and

from house to house." He preached not only publicly, but privately as well. He knew he would be bound when he got to Jerusalem and would lose his life, yet he said, "Wherefore, I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men."

Now ask yourself: How did the Apostle Paul get pure from the blood of all men? Did he witness to every individual he saw? The answer is no. All of us have heard messages during our lives telling us that people's blood is on our hands if we do not witness to them.

Let me tell you first of all that this teaching is not only unbiblical; it is humanly impossible. If Alice tells me, "We're out of bread. Please go to town, buy a loaf of bread, and come back so we'll have supper," and I drive to town witnessing to everybody I see, I am never coming home.

Suppose Doc is uptown in Fitzgerald, and I stop to witness to him. About that time Henry drives by, so I stop witnessing to Doc, turn around, run up to Henry, and flag him down. Who is warning Doc? You follow what I am saying? It would be humanly impossible.

Now go back to Acts chapter 20, verse 26. Here is how Paul got free from the blood of all men: "Wherefore, I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men." How, Paul? "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." How did Paul get free from the blood of all men? By preaching all of the Word of God. He preached the whole counsel of God.

It is impossible to preach the whole counsel of God if you preach topically. It is impossible to teach the whole counsel of God if you preach textually. But if you preach expository messages, and God lets you live long enough, you might make a dent in it.

But that is the only way. Here is an awful, and I might add condemnatory, question: If it is only by preaching the whole counsel of God that we are free from the blood of all men, how much blood do preachers have on their hands who preach only sin, salvation, separation, and soul winning?

You go into the average church and will usually hear a sermon on one of those four subjects, and that is it—nothing else. The Word of God covers many more subjects than those four. I am not saying

those subjects should not be dealt with, but they should not be dealt with to the exclusion of all other subjects.

Alice and I were invited to a huge church while I was traveling on my way to preach in a distant city. We stopped in a town where I had a good friend whom I really respect and admire. On Wednesday, he told me, “John, come go to church with us tonight and hear our new pastor, Dr. So-and-so. He’s a great preacher.” I agreed, since we could leave early in the morning and I would still make the meeting by Thursday evening. That night, the good doctor stood up and read his text.

When he did, I took out my pencil, wrote down three or four points on a sheet of paper, handed it to Alice, and said, “Here’s what he’s going to preach.” He preached my points, point by point. How did I know what he was going to preach? Once you have heard one of these fellows, you have heard them all. You know exactly what they are going to say. They have nothing else to say, and if they get off those four subjects, they do not know which end is up.

The Nature of True Preaching: Exposition, Explanation, Application

One of the clearest Scriptures that tells us what preaching really is is found in Nehemiah chapter 8. Verse 7 tells us the names of the Levites who did this, but beginning in the middle of the verse, we read that “the Levites caused the people to understand the law.” We are talking about men who were preaching and teaching the Word of God. That is an interesting statement in itself: “And the Levites caused the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place.”

Now you have to ask yourself this question: How did these Levitical teachers cause the people to understand God's law? Look at verse 8: “So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.”

Here are three parts of real, genuine preaching and teaching. There must be exposition—that is, reading in the Word of God distinctly. There must be explanation, giving the sense thereof. And there must be, thirdly, application, causing the people to

understand. What, then, is real preaching and teaching? It is exposition, explanation, and application. That is what preaching is.

My wife can tell you, and some of you who have known me for a long time can testify, that when I first started preaching, I sometimes quoted as many as 150 Scriptures in one sermon. People have counted the Scriptures I quoted; sometimes there were more than that. I thought I was inundating the people with the Word of God. Then one day it dawned on me, by the Holy Spirit, that Christians really do not need the Scriptures merely quoted to them. You can use a tape recorder for that, or today a CD player or DVD player. What Christians really need are the Scriptures expounded, explained, and applied so that they will know how to obey the Word of God.

I would rather take one verse, even in my own personal study, and understand it than read five chapters and not understand a thing I have read. Real preaching and teaching consists of exposition, explanation, and application.

One of the most frequent complaints I receive from Christians as I travel is that their pastors are not feeding them. Innumerable people have remarked to me, “I’m thankful for God’s salvation, and I know that it needs to be preached, but I’m starving to death as a Christian. All our preacher does is speak on the subject of salvation.”

I know that sinners need to be saved. That's a given. But the truth is, God's people also need to know how to live and how to obey Him. The plain and simple truth is this: if more Christians lived biblical, holy, godly, obedient lives, more sinners could be easily reached. There must be a balance in our ministry. In the average church, there is no balance. We think, “We've got to reach sinners,” but we also have to feed the flock of God.

What did our Lord tell Peter? “If you love me, feed my sheep. Feed my sheep.”

Pastors need to hear this as well. Another simple truth that most preachers have never learned is that one does not necessarily have to preach a salvation sermon in order for sinners to be converted. You don't have to be preaching a salvation sermon for sinners to be converted. I was preaching one time in a capital city, and that capital city happened to have a huge university there, which was known for

its atheism and liberalism. Before I stood up to preach that morning, the pastor leaned over to me and said, “We have three professors here today from that university.” I wanted to preach against sin, atheism, unbelief, and hell. I wanted to clean their clocks. But the only message that I had any liberty and freedom to preach was entitled, “The Place of Women in the Church.”

I dealt with that subject. God used that message to convert all three of those professors. How? Don't ask me. It was not a salvation message. You don't have to be preaching about salvation in order for God to save a sinner.

The Efficacy of God's Word and God's Sovereignty

Look in your Bibles to Jeremiah 23 and verse 29. Look what God says: “Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” Ask yourself, how much of God's Word is like a fire? What's the answer? All of it. How much of God's Word is like a hammer? All of it. God can use any portion of His Word. Look in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3 and verse 16. Here's another passage that most of you can quote, but look at it. Look what God says.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” How much of Scripture is profitable? All of it. How much is profitable for doctrine, rebuke, correction, and reproof? All of it—not just part of it. Therefore, it does not matter what passage or portion of Scripture you are preaching from: God can use it to convert sinners.

All of His Word is inspired. All of His Word is for doctrine, for correction, for reproof and rebuke and instruction in righteousness. All of His Word is like a fire and like a hammer.

Look in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 2. I have had preachers say, “Well, Brother Weaver, I just want to be like the Apostle Paul. For in 1 Corinthians 2, he says, ‘I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’ That is what I want to know and preach: Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Wonderful. That is what I want to preach and teach as well.

But which book in the Bible first promises salvation and tells us about the Messiah? Genesis. Genesis 3:15 contains the Protoevangelium, the first promise of the Messiah. Which book tells us from which tribe He will descend? Genesis. Which book tells us that He will be a descendant of Abraham? Genesis. Which book pictures His salvation? Exodus. Which book tells us where He will be born? Micah. Which book tells us about His sufferings? Isaiah. Which book tells us that He is the messenger and the covenant? Malachi.

There is no book in the Bible that does not teach about Jesus Christ. If I am preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified, what does that mean? I have to preach the whole counsel of God. He is on every page of Scripture, in every book in the Bible. It does not matter where you preach, as long as it is the Word of God.

Look in your Bibles to Isaiah 55. Let me clear up another misconception about preaching. Beginning with verse 8, God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Now watch.

Isaiah says, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth. It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it." Listen to what God said: "So shall my word be."

What is he talking about? Go back to verse 10. The rain and snow water the earth, making it bring forth and bud, so that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. In other words, there is an efficacy, there is a power in the rain to produce. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I send it.

Now, let us ask some questions. Who sends the Word of God? God Himself, or God the Holy Spirit. Who makes sure that it will not

return void? God does. Who makes it prosper? God does. Who makes it accomplish His will? God does.

Do you see what I am trying to say? The efficacy of the application of the Word of God is in the hands of God alone. I cannot make you understand, as hard as I try, if God does not turn the lights on for you. If He does not illuminate your mind, you will never understand.

What does this teach me as a pastor and preacher? I may safely, comfortably, and easily trust God to bless and use His Word as He sees fit. It does not matter which passage, doctrine, book, or sentence I am preaching from, as long as it is the Word of God. My responsibility is to preach and teach the Word of God. It is up to God to apply that Word as He sees fit. Mine is the responsibility, and His is the ability.

Let me ask you to stop and think with me for a moment. Let us suppose that I am the best preacher in the world, with the best outlines and the best illustrations in the world. On top of that, suppose I have the best salvation messages in the world and am the world's greatest orator.

Now my question is this, how many sinners are going to be saved by my preaching, my outlines, my illustrations, my sermons, and my oratory? Absolutely none. Why? Because salvation is of the Lord. You know what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 21? "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Now, it didn't please God to save those through foolish preaching, but through the foolishness of preaching. Preaching is only a means, God is the agent in salvation. That's why in Jonah 2 and verse 9, Jonah said, "Salvation is of the Lord." And if you look in your Bibles, Acts chapter 2, and then let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 3.

Let me just show you this. I'm sure that you're familiar with it, but I want you to see it. Look in Acts chapter 2 and verse 47. There are a lot of people being saved, especially not only the day of Pentecost, but after the day of Pentecost. And look what the Scripture says specifically, Acts 2 and verse 47, "and they continuing daily," but verse 46, "daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread

from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Now verse 47, "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Who was it that added to the church? The Lord. And He did it as such as should be saved. Preaching may be the means, but the Lord is the end. If you will turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. 1 Corinthians chapter 3. And look at what the Apostle Paul says concerning himself, and Peter, and Apollos, and all the other great preachers.

First Corinthians chapter 3. Notice if you would, verse 6. He says, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." What is the preacher? Nothing. He's an instrument. Who is it that gets all the honor and all the glory? God. Because none of our preaching, none of our teaching would benefit anyone if God did not make it effectual by His Spirit. It's just that simple.

Mine is the responsibility; His is the ability. Zechariah chapter 4 and verse 6 says, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." Do you realize that the end of preaching is not accomplished by might or power? It is not by oratory, outlines, or anything else. It is only by the Holy Spirit of God. I must be faithful. However, it is not my efforts, power, ability, messages, outlines, illustrations, or anything else that determines the outcome of preaching. It is God and God alone.

I want to show you from the Scripture one truth that we oftentimes conveniently forget. I have heard preachers say, "Well, if sinners aren't being saved, something is wrong." Not necessarily. I will show you why in just a moment.

One of my pastor friends, now dead, and I had been friends for years. In fact, we were in college together. He pastored in a little town in Alabama. In the neighboring town, there was a pastor who resigned his church so that he might go work with the Sword of the Lord. The Sword of the Lord is a basic Arminian newspaper. At that time, it was put out by John R. Rice. I have heard John R. Rice say it myself: "If you're not baptizing 300 a year, you're not right with God."

This pastor asked my pastor friend to recommend a pastor for his church, since he was going to be leaving. My pastor friend said, "No, I could not in good conscience do that." When asked what he meant, he replied, "You believe, and the paper that you're going to work with believes, that if you're not baptizing 300 a year, then you're not right with God. To be absolutely honest, I can't recommend somebody go to your church and be an abysmal failure. Your church will never baptize 300 a year, because there are not even that many people in that community, and there are already five churches there. If I recommend someone to take your church, I'm recommending them to be a failure according to your philosophy, because you're going to go up there and write and preach."

"If you don't baptize 300 a year, you're a failure. No, sir." He said, "I just can't recommend anybody to go there and be a failure. He said, all those saints over there dry up and die and blow away. He said, I just can't recommend the man to be a failure."

Now, you see where he put his finger right on one of the problems? Simply because people are not being saved does not necessarily mean that there's something wrong with the preacher or something wrong with the preaching. You remember that text we read in Isaiah 55 and verse 11? What did God say? "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that whereunto I send it." God does not always send His Word for reconciliation. Sometimes He sends His Word for condemnation.

Look in your Bibles, 2 Corinthians chapter 2, and let's begin reading there with verse 14. Here it is, 2 Corinthians 2, verse 14. Here the Apostle Paul says this: "Now thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place." Did you hear that one word that I emphasized? "Now thanks be unto God who"—what's the next word? "Always." "Causeth us to triumph in Christ." In other words, we never fail when we're in Christ.

There is no such thing as a failure when you're faithfully preaching and teaching the Word of God. Whether anybody gets saved or not is immaterial. Look at it.

"Now thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. Now look what the Apostle Paul says: For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other we are the savor of life unto life."

"And who is sufficient for these things?" Now let me just stop there. Let me demonstrate and illustrate for you what the Apostle Paul was saying. Let's suppose I have a hundred people in this room and all of you are unconverted. You're all lost. Not a Christian among you. And I come in and I preach Jesus Christ. And I expound and explain and apply the Word of God. And during my preaching and after the preaching is over, God miraculously and mercifully saves every one of you. You know what God does? When that preaching of Christ is going forth and people are being converted, God says, "That's a sweet smell."

“My Son is preached, and I am satisfied.”

Let us go in a different direction. Suppose there are a hundred people here, and every one of you is lost—not one converted, not one Christian among you. I preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; I expound, explain, and apply the Word of God. While I am preaching, every one of you grits your teeth and shakes your fist, saying, “If you do not shut up, we will kill you.”

Then you storm out, mad and hateful, saying, “I will never come back and hear that man again.” What does God say? “My Son is preached. And I am satisfied.”

That is what Paul said: “We are the savor of life unto life, and death unto death”—life unto life in those who believe, and death unto death in those who do not believe. Therefore he asked, “And who is sufficient for these things?” Only God. He applies the Word of God: “My word shall not return unto Me void.”

"But it shall accomplish that whereunto I send it." It is up to God. Whether He sends His Word for death, or salvation, or condemnation, or reconciliation, or alienation, the outcome is in God's hands alone. It is not in my hands; it is in God's hands. God may send that Word, not just for reconciliation, but also for

condemnation. My responsibility is to preach and teach the Word of God. Your responsibility is to hear it, obey it, and apply it. But it is God who determines the outcome.

Applications and Conclusion

The first application is this: an understanding and comprehension of God's sovereignty is absolutely essential and necessary to the faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God. That is so important. It is only as we grasp the fact that God is sovereign, that God is in absolute control of everything, that we can be comfortable with expounding, explaining, and applying sometimes the hard but necessary parts of Scripture.

You cannot always preach on shouting subjects. You cannot always preach on subjects that make everybody say, "Praise the Lord." Sometimes you preach on subjects and everybody is saying, "Oh me, oh me." It is only as we recognize that God is sovereign and that God determines the outcome that I can say, "Lord, whatever You show me, that is what I am going to preach and teach. That is what I am going to give them." I can be comfortable with that because I know God is sovereign.

Secondly, Christians must come to a realization of what constitutes biblical preaching and what God requires of them in hearing, applying, and obeying the Word of God that is enunciated in the preaching. We must understand that preaching and teaching are for instruction, rebuke, reproof, correction, and edification; they are not for entertainment or to make somebody feel good. Most Christians erroneously judge a preaching service by the false standard of their feelings, whether or not it made them feel good, and not by whether or not the Word of God was preached. Thirdly, you must learn that real biblical preaching consists of expounding, explaining, and applying the Word of God.

Preaching does not consist of jumping up and down and saying religious things. You may be a wonderful orator, a wonderful entertainer, or say good and religious truths, but that does not mean that you are preaching. Preaching deals with exposition, explanation, and application. Until a preacher does those three

things, he may be a shouter, an entertainer, or fun to listen to, but he is not a preacher and he is not a teacher.

When you leave the building, you ought not to leave saying, “What a wonderful orator,” or, “Wasn’t that a funny message? Didn’t that make me feel good?” What you ought to leave saying is, “The Word of God was applied to me today, and I now know how to obey God better and to bring my life into closer and greater conformity to the Word of God.” That is the point of preaching.

Next week we will look at, expound, explain, and apply chapter 10, verse 33.

Father, we thank You once again for Jesus Christ, for His Word, and for His truth. We are thankful that the Word of God is sufficient in and of itself as it is empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. Father, make application of this Word to our hearts. Make us better hearers, better listeners, better preachers, and, above all, make us more obedient, holy, and godly in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching

Part Two

SCRIPTURE READING - Acts 10:1-8, 9-16, 17-18, 27-28 (KJV)

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian Band, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always. And he saw in a vision, evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming into him and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

> And on the morrow as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten. But while they made ready, he fell into a trance. And he saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice, and the vessel was received up into heaven.
>
> Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men who were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And as he talked with him, he went in and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation. But God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me. God told Cornelius, “Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter. He is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the seaside, who when he cometh shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”

Introduction and Review

Last week I began a brief series on the biblical perspective on preaching. I spent a great deal of time distinguishing between topical sermons, textual sermons, and expository sermons. There is indeed a time and a place for a topical and a textual message, but if those

messages are done correctly, they can be done in an expository manner in some sense. Usually they are not. Topical preaching is usually the worst type. Textual is better, but the far more superior type of preaching is known as expository preaching. Then we went to Nehemiah 8:8, where I showed you from the Bible what real preaching really is.

The Levites expounded the Word of God, explained the Word of God, and applied the Word of God. Biblical preaching is basically exposition, explanation, and application. It is not simply that we remember Scriptures, but that we understand those Scriptures, know how to apply them, and know how to obey them in our everyday life.

Just as there is an art to preaching, there is also an art to hearing the Word of God. When God requires the preacher in 1 Timothy 3 to be apt to teach, at the same time He requires His people to be apt to hear. Just as preparation is needed in order to preach, preparation is needed in order to hear preaching as well. The truth of the matter is, there are a great many people today who attend preaching who never really hear preaching. There is a vast difference between attending preaching and hearing preaching. Just as preparation is needed and necessary to convey truth, preparation is needed and necessary to understand and apply truth.

Today I want to finish this message and show you three thoughts. We will be looking especially at Acts 10:33. We will see that there is a providential preparation, a providential perspective, and, of course, a providential preaching.

Providential Preparation

If you grasp and understand what I am going to show you today, it will change your entire attitude toward the preaching and hearing of the Word of God.

The reason I read the beginning of Acts chapter 10 is that Peter was certainly not prepared to preach to Cornelius at the beginning of that chapter. Neither were Cornelius and his family prepared to hear Peter's preaching. God had to move on both parties in order to prepare them. He had to providentially prepare Peter and

providentially prepare Cornelius so that they might hear what Peter had to say.

At this particular time, Peter believed that anyone outside the land of Israel was common or unclean. In Acts 10:28, Peter says, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation. But God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

Going back to verse 1, there was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band. Cornelius was a Roman soldier, and he was of the Italian band, which probably meant that he was from Italy, thus a Roman. This is why Peter was speaking of someone from another nation—in other words, someone who was not of Israel.

When the men of Jerusalem heard that Peter had gone into Cornelius, the apostles and brethren in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the Word of God. When Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." Peter then had to rehearse everything because they were going to confront him over their customs and their Pharisaical conditions, precepts, and concepts—that no man who was a Jew was to go into anyone else's house, especially someone of another nation.

Peter would never have gone into Cornelius's house had God not prepared his heart. Certainly Cornelius would never have heard Peter unless God directed him to send to Joppa, to the house of Simon the Tanner, and ask for Simon Peter to come. In all probability, Cornelius had never heard of Peter and did not even know him. God had to sovereignly prepare both the preacher and the hearer. This is the whole point of Peter's vision. Do you understand that this is the whole point of the vision Peter had seen?

Peter became very hungry and would have eaten, but while they made ready, he fell into a trance. That is, he was praying, and God gave him a vision. What did he see? He saw heaven opened and a certain vessel descending, and in it were all kinds of creeping things, beasts, and fowls of the air. A voice from heaven said, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." He answered, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any

thing that is common or unclean." God then instructed him that whatever God had created, he should not call common or unclean. This was done three times.

The point of the vision was not to nullify the dietary laws in the Old Testament, nor to nullify the Old Testament. Its purpose was to make Peter understand that men outside Israel were not to be classified as common or unclean. That was the whole point. Immediately afterward, men came knocking at the door, saying that God had sent them to get him.

That is why Peter said in Acts 10:28, "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Here is the interpretation of the vision.

With this in mind, consider the command as well as the commission God had given His disciples in Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Now note the commission that our Lord gave. He said that the disciples were to be witnesses to Him first in Jerusalem. That was where they were. Secondly, in Judea, which would encompass the southern kingdom. Thirdly, in Samaria, the northern kingdom. And then where were they to go? To the uttermost parts of the earth. Yet at that time most of them had stayed around Jerusalem. It took the persecution in Acts chapter 8 to drive many of the disciples away.

Peter had to be prepared to go into the house of Cornelius, and Cornelius had to be prepared to receive Peter into his house. Everyone can see the absolute necessity of providential preparation to get Peter and Cornelius together. But what most of us do not see, comprehend, or understand is this: just as there was providential preparation in getting Peter and Cornelius together, there must be providential preparation in getting the preacher and the hearer together.

Preaching, especially preaching the Word of God, does not come naturally or easily. This does not mean that preaching is a great

difficulty when God has called you and you love preaching. It means that you cannot teach what you do not know. In order to teach and preach, there must be preparation and study. Just as studious preparation is needed to convey the truth, there must also be preparation to hear the truth. Your heart and your life must be prepared as well.

For years, I was bothered by the fact that many Christians did not readily learn as they should. Think about how many people have come to church all their lives, listened to teaching all their lives, and yet know so little and are so ignorant of the things of God. How in the world does that happen?

I certainly do not expect you to learn in one hour what it has taken me forty hours to figure out and learn. Yet there is another side to this truth. Although it may take many hours of study to present the truth to you, once it is presented, it is usually analyzed, systematized, and ready to be applied.

You do not have to do all the digging; you simply have to listen. In all my preaching, I have tried to do everything I could to make truth understandable, comprehensible, and applicable. Yet God must illuminate the mind and open the understanding. If He does not open our understanding, we receive nothing, no matter how analytical, systematic, or applicable the message may be. God must truly open our eyes.

I also understood this: the one who studies always learns a great deal more than the one who simply listens. If you do not believe that, prepare a message. Do a little studying and teaching, and you will always learn more as you study than the individuals who listen to you. So my question was this: Why in the world do God's people not really hear the truth, learn the truth, easily and readily and quickly?

The problem I found was this: the problem is not always with the preacher. Sometimes it is with the hearer. Do you realize that it does not matter how great a preacher is, how excellent his teaching method is, or how wonderful his outlines are? If the student or hearer is unprepared, all the teaching will fall on deaf ears.

Proverbs 16:1 says, “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” Let us deal with one thought

here: the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord. What does that mean? If your heart is ever prepared to pray, God prepared it. If your heart is ever prepared to study, God prepared it. If your heart is ever prepared to come to Christ, God prepared it. The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord.

The truth is simply this: God must prepare our hearts, or our hearts are not prepared. Period. The preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord.

Hosea 10:12 says, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." Here God commands us to sow to ourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up our fallow ground, and seek the Lord till he comes and rains righteousness upon us.

Now you say, "Wait a minute. In Proverbs 16, he says the preparations of the heart in man are from the Lord." Yet Hosea 10:12 tells me to sow to myself in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up my fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till he comes and rains righteousness upon me. Is there a contradiction? No, there is no contradiction. Proverbs 16:1 talks about ability; Hosea 10 talks about responsibility. Only God has the ability to prepare the heart. It is my responsibility to seek God to prepare my heart. It is my responsibility to turn from anything and everything that would keep me from hearing the Word of God and being unprepared to receive the Word of God. There is a difference between ability and responsibility.

The parable of the sower, really the parable of the soils, occurs in three passages in the New Testament: Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. In every one of those passages, the Bible says that a sower went out to sow. Some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds devoured it. Some fell on stony ground, some on thorny ground, and some on good ground. Of those four types of hearers, only one brought forth fruit: the good-ground hearer. Why did the wayside, stony-ground, and thorny-ground hearers not bring forth any fruit? Here is the answer: the soil was not prepared.

When you plant a garden, you do not simply go out and throw your seed on top of the ground. You prepare the soil. You make the soil ready to receive the seed.

In Mark 4:24, when our Lord was applying the Word of God to how we hear, He said, "Take heed what ye hear." Do you realize that it is your responsibility to make sure that what you are hearing is indeed the Word of God? "Take heed what ye hear." But in Luke 8:18, He says, "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

Here is the amazing truth: we are going to give an account to God, not just for what we hear, but for how we hear. I have seen people, as I have preached, with their eyes up on the ceiling, wondering how many panels are up there: one, two, three. When they look out the window, they are watching a little bird or a little squirrel. And when one little child gets up to go to the bathroom from the front of the church building, everybody looks as though they have never seen a child go to the bathroom before. What does that tell you? Somebody is not paying attention. Somebody is not listening.

I have news for you: usually, I can tell who is listening and who is not listening. I can tell who is asleep and who is not asleep, and I can tell whose mind is wandering. When I see that blank stare in the eyes, you can be looking directly at me, but when I see that blank stare, I know you are somewhere in Never Never Land.

What did our Lord say? He said, "You better take heed not only what you hear, but how you hear." Every one of you is hearing me externally and audibly. But just because you hear me externally and audibly does not mean that you are hearing me internally and spiritually. There are two types of hearing in the Word of God. One is simply external, and the other is internal. If you are not hearing internally, the external hearing is doing you no good. It was Augustine, the early church father, who said it like this: "I heard the Gospel all my life, and then one day I heard it."

Let me tell you something. If you do not obey the Word of God, you have never really heard the Word of God. If you do not heed the Word of God, you really have never heard the Word of God.

Look back in your Bibles, if you would, to 1 Samuel chapter 15. You know the story there. God sent King Saul on a journey and told

him to kill all the Amalekites. Of course, you remember how he spared Agag, the king, and the best of the sheep and the best of the oxen. Samuel came, and Saul, the hypocrite, said, "Blessed be thou of the Lord. I have performed all the commandment of the Lord." About that time, something went baa-moo. Samuel said, "Saul, if you have obeyed God, what meaneth the lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep in my ear?" If he had obeyed God, everything would be dead. Samuel would not have been hearing anything.

Then Saul blamed it all on the people. He said, "The people spared all of this, that they might sacrifice to God." Now look in 1 Samuel 15 and verse 22. This was Samuel's answer to Saul: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams." Note what he said: to obey is better than sacrifice.

Let me put it to you bluntly. God had rather have your obedience than anything else you can give Him. He would rather have your obedience than twenty million dollars—just that simple. He would rather have your obedience than everything in the world. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken is better than the fat of rams. The fat of rams was the choicest part of the sacrifice, which was always given to God. What does that mean?

That means hearkening and obeying are synonymous. If to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken, to listen, is better than the fat of rams, it means that you do not really hear unless you are obeying. That is why I said no one ever really hears the Word of God until he applies the Word of God. So here it is. I am stating it very bluntly: unless your heart is prepared to receive the Word of God, you will never, ever receive the Word of God.

In Mark chapter 4, this passage deals with the application of the parable of the sower, or the parable of the soils. You remember the wayside hearer, the stony ground hearer, the thorny ground hearer, and finally the good ground hearer. But why do most people never, ever really learn truth? Here is why most people remain stunted. In Mark chapter 4, verse 23, our Lord said, "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." Pay attention to this. Then He said unto them, "Take heed what ye hear."

That is what I quoted earlier. Then He says, “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.” Let me just stop there: “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.”

Here is what He is saying: to whatever degree you give to hearing and learning the truth of God, to that degree God will measure truth back to you. In other words, you do not get four hours’ worth of truth if you only study fifteen minutes. You do not get a half day’s truth if you only study ten minutes. If you study ten minutes, you get ten minutes’ worth of truth, and that is it, because God measures it back to you exactly to the measure that you put into it. That is what He says.

Look what he said in verse 24: “Take heed what you hear. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.” And unto you that hear shall more be given. What is God saying? God is saying, I only give more truth to those who hear. What does the word hear mean? It means to obey. Why should God give you any more truth if you are not going to obey the truth He has already given you? Why should God give you anything else if you will not apply and obey that which He has already given you? So He said, “Unto you that hear shall more be given.”

Look at verse 25: “For he that hath, to him shall be given.” In other words, if you keep it, obey it, and apply it, I will give you more. But here is one horrendous truth in verse 25: “And he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.” If you do not use the truth, you will lose the truth.

You can take your arm, tie it to your chest, and leave it there for three months. Then let someone untie it, and you will have to learn to use that arm all over again. Those muscles will be so weak. The same thing is true with spiritual truth.

How many have said, “That was a good point the pastor made. That was a good message. I will remember that,” and yet you do not remember it? You do not remember it because you never applied it, never obeyed it, and never made it something practical that you did every day in your life. Our Lord said, “If you do not use the truth, you are going to lose the truth.”

That is why people do not mature in the faith. That is why our people are not scholars and theologians. They ought to be; they should be. The same thing is true in other areas. You could be a great mathematician, but do not think about math, teach math, study math, or use math for ten years, and then let us see how up to date you are and how good a mathematician you are. If you do not use the truth, you lose the truth.

A Providential Perspective on Preaching

Let me state it bluntly: your heart is not prepared to hear the truth. If it is not prepared to hear the truth, the truth will not do you any good. You will not receive any benefit from the preaching of God. God must not only prepare my heart to preach and teach the truth; He must prepare your heart to hear, receive, obey, and apply the truth. So there must be a providential preparation.

I have had people tell me after I preached, "Brother Weaver, that was exactly what I needed to hear." Do you know why it was exactly what you needed to hear? Because God prepared my heart to preach it, and God prepared your heart to hear it.

Providential Perspective

Let us look at Acts 10:33. Cornelius said to Peter, "Immediately therefore I sent to thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

When I read this verse several weeks ago, I was awestruck at the simplicity and yet the depth of Cornelius's understanding. Cornelius understood more about preaching without ever having been really preached to than most Christians do their entire life. First, notice what he says: "We are all here present before God." It should be duly pointed out that it was Cornelius who had gotten the congregation together.

How did Cornelius do that? He invited his family and friends. Acts 10:24 says, "And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea, and Cornelius waited for them and had called together his kinsmen and

near friends." Peter did the traveling and Peter did the preaching, but Cornelius got the congregation together.

It is your responsibility to get your family and your friends under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. It is not the preacher's responsibility; it is yours. God gave you your family, God gave you your friends, and you are responsible.

I cannot reach those whom I do not know, and I cannot reach those over whom I have absolutely no influence. Yet in most churches, people want the pastor to witness to their family and friends and try to get them into church. Why? Because most Christians do not have enough testimony to reach their own family. Their family knows how they live, and therefore they need an outsider to come in and reach them. No, God gave you your family and your friends. You are responsible to get them under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Consider Paul in Acts 27, in the midst of a horrendous storm. He told the people not to leave, but they would not listen, and nearly everything in the ship had been cast into the sea. After a long fast, Paul stood in their midst and said, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me. I told you so. Ye should have hearkened unto me and not have loosed from Crete, to have gained this harm and loss." Yet he continued: "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar, and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." Now listen to what God told Paul. He said, "Paul, I have given you all those that sail on your ship." If you skip down to verse 37, we read, "And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls"—276 souls. What did God tell Paul? "I've given you all who sail on your ship."

Let me ask you a question: Who sails on your ship? You see the application? Your family and your friends are on your ship. It is your responsibility to get them under the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. You can reach people that I could never reach. You can

influence people that I can never influence. Who sails on your ship? He says, “We are all here present before God.” He got his family; he got his friends there.

People ask me all over the country, “Will you come and preach over here?” “Sure. I’ll come and preach. You get the group together.” I can’t get anybody together. You get them together, and I’ll come preach to them. It is your responsibility to get people under the preaching of the Word of God.

Secondly, look at Acts 10 and verse 33. I want you to notice what he said. I told you I was awestruck, not only at the simplicity, but at the depth of what he said. Acts 10:33 says, “Now therefore are we all here present before God.” He not only said, “We’re all here”; he said, “We’re all here present before God.”

You could explain that phrase, “present before God,” in the widest sense of the word. That is, God is omnipresent, which means that God is everywhere at one time in the totality of His person. David clearly taught this in Psalm 139. Every time I think of Psalm 139, I think of Don Thomason, because that is his favorite passage of Scripture. You remember, David said, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”

He said, “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me.” What did David say? “I can’t get away from God.” Yes, he could mean that we are here before God in the sense that God is omnipresent and is everywhere at once in the totality of His person. But there are two more interpretations that you could give to this phrase.

Secondly, Cornelius could have used this phrase as an oath in order to demonstrate his genuine sincerity. In that sense, he would be saying, “We are all here before God. We are all here in the presence of the eyes of whom no one can mock with dissimulation and hypocrisy. We are so here in the presence of God that we understand His authority and His majesty. It is not a mortal man with whom we have to do, but the sovereign God of heaven and earth

Himself. We are standing here or sitting here as in His presence, to whom we will give an account."

One of the old commentators said, "The whole of the man must be present, not his body here and the heart with the fool's eyes in the ends of the earth. But that which makes it indeed a religious attendance is we are present before God. In holy ordinances we present ourselves unto the Lord, and we must be as before Him as those that see His eye upon us."

If we are here before God, we must all be here, and we must be all here. Our bodies cannot be here while our minds or our hearts are somewhere else. We must be here with everything that we have, giving ear to God.

There were people in the New Testament who believed exactly that. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Why did the Apostle Paul thank God for the Thessalonian Christians? When they heard Paul, Barnabas, Silas, or whoever was with Paul preach, they did not sit there saying, "That is Paul's opinion. That is what Barnabas thinks. I am not going to pay any attention."

They received the word they heard from them, not as the word of men, but as the word of God. They understood the authority, the majesty, and the power of God within His Word. They did not sit there and listen merely to a man speaking; they heard the voice of God. They heard His authority.

Certainly, that is true. When we hear God's Word, we must not receive it as the word of men, but as the Word of God.

Thirdly, Cornelius could have meant the phrase, "We are all here present before God," not merely in recognition of God's omnipresence, nor simply as an oath acknowledging that it is truly God with whom we have to do and that we are present before His eyes. He could have comprehended the teaching of our Lord in Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Cornelius could have understood that our Lord, in a very special and peculiar way, was in the midst of His people when God's Word was being expounded, explained, and applied. During the preaching of His Word, our Lord is, in a very peculiar way, speaking to His own. I will show you that in the Bible in just a moment.

But let me tell you about a time when I was preaching in South Carolina on a Sunday morning. The building was absolutely packed, and I was dealing with a biblical doctrine, preaching as hard as I could preach. Right in the middle of my sermon, a man sitting about halfway back screamed aloud, “Oh, God, I'm lost! I'm lost!” He jumped up from the pew and ran down the aisle, screaming the whole time, “Oh, God, I'm lost! I'm lost!”

He came to where I was, fell down in front of me, grabbed my ankles, and cried and sobbed, saying, “I'm lost. I'm lost. I'm lost.” Here I was in the middle of my sermon. I looked at the preacher and said, “Would you please get him away from my ankles, take him into the room, tell him about the Lord, tell him why he is lost, and explain Christ to him?” They led him away. I was able to finish preaching that day, and God did indeed bless; several other people were converted as well.

I was really anxious to talk to this man because it was apparent that he was under such deep conviction. Afterwards, he came to me, beaming and smiling. “Preacher,” he said, “I just want you to know that God saved me today. I found Christ, and Christ is my Lord and my Savior. I bowed to Him, and I have turned from my sins.” He was gleaming from eye to eye.

I said, “Look, I have just got to ask you a question. Here is my question: What was it that I said, or what illustration did I use, that got you under such conviction?” You see, Brother Ernie, I was thinking that if it worked one time, it might work again somewhere else. I could use that one again.

The man looked at me. “He’s a preacher. Do you want me to tell you the truth?”

“Well, of course I do.”

"Well, really, to tell you the truth, I really wasn't listening to you." He said, "Somebody short-circuited you, and the Lord was speaking to me."

I said, "I am surely happy for that. But let me show you what I am talking about. Look in your Bibles, Romans chapter 10. Listen carefully. What did our Lord say? 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'"

That is a tremendous thought. Just stop and think: Jesus Christ is walking this morning in the midst of His people. What? Yes. Look at what the Bible says. Romans 10:13: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Everybody can quote this verse. It is a favorite verse. I do not care if you are an Arminian, a Calvinist, or whatever you are; everybody can quote it. Isn't that wonderful? Well, sure it is.

Now, let me ask you. If you understand that verse, don't answer out loud. Let me ask you. What is it that saves? Is it an act of calling, or is it faith? For by grace are you saved through what? Faith, and that not of yourselves. Well, now let me ask you, why do men call upon the name of the Lord? He said, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Well, look in verse 14, let's kind of work this thing backwards. All right. Verse 13 says, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now watch verse 14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Oh, wait a minute. What? You mean you have to believe before you call? Oh. Well, really and truly, it's not calling that saves you, is it? You're already saved because you believe. The calling is evidence that you genuinely believe, right? So in order to call on the Lord, you must believe because nobody's going to call on him whom they do not believe.

OK, so he says, watch verse 14 now. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Now watch carefully. How do you believe? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?

Now, I want you to note carefully what the Scripture does not say. It is important that you not only see what Scripture does say, but what it does not say. Look in verse 14: "How then shall they call on

him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Scripture does not say, How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard about?

If you hear about someone, he is not present. But if you hear someone, he is present. Verse 13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." How do you call? Verse 14 says you must first believe. What gives you faith? You must first hear Christ. When will you hear Christ? "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" You hear Christ because He is walking in among His people as the preacher is expounding, explaining, and applying the Word of God.

Do you remember in the garden? Mary went there to see the Lord, and He had already risen from the dead. She looked around and saw Him standing there, but supposed He was the gardener. She said, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Remember what our Lord said? "Mary." What did she do? She fell on Him and said, "Rabboni." He just called her name.

It seems to me that our Lord said something in John 10: "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." In the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, Christ is present, calling His sheep, speaking to them, comforting them, instructing them, and opening their eyes. Cornelius had a biblical perspective on preaching. He said, "We are all here present before God." He could equally have said, "We are all here in the presence of God." It is not merely that God is omnipresent, or that we will answer before Him in the day when we stand before Him. It is that here Christ is walking among us, calling His own, teaching His own, and speaking to His own. The most important thing in preaching is to hear Christ.

You remember those Greeks who came to the disciples and said, "Sirs, we would see Jesus." That must be your attitude as you come to hear the preaching of the Word of God. You must hear Christ as He speaks through His Word.

Providential Preaching

Now, let us go back to Acts chapter 10, because I want you to see the third point: providential preaching. Not only was there a providential perspective, in that he understood what real preaching and teaching was; there is also providential preaching. He says in verse 33, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

Those who are providentially prepared to hear the Word of God, those who have a providential perspective on preaching, are prepared to hear all things—not some things, not just a few pet doctrines, but all things. We want the whole Word of God.

Have you ever thought what an encouragement this could be to a pastor? When a pastor knows that he is absolutely free to open the Word of God to any book, chapter, paragraph, or verse, and exegete and expound that portion of Scripture, knowing that it will be received by his hearers as the Word of God, he will be encouraged to preach the whole Word of God.

We have to remember that God speaks about far more than just four subjects. He does not deal only with sin, salvation, soul winning, and separation. He speaks on economics, government, education, the home—He speaks on everything. Can you imagine what an encouragement it would be to a pastor if he knew that he could open the Bible and preach from any text, knowing that he would not upset, scatter, run off, and make mad a number of believers because they did not like what he preached about?

I have told so many people, "I could not pastor the average church." I had a church invite me to come down to Florida and be their pastor. I said, "I will preach for you, but I am not really interested in being your pastor." This church building—you should have seen the building—was several million dollars. They had a gymnasium, another several million dollars.

They had a big Christian school, and it was beautiful. They said, "We really want you to be our pastor." I said, "You really do not want me to be your pastor. You only think you want me to be your pastor." They asked how I could say that. I said, "When I get up and start preaching against debt—and, by the way, you owe four or five million

dollars—and when I start preaching against some of these other things, I am going to run half of you off. Then who is going to pay for all these facilities? You will have to get rid of me and find somebody who will not preach the way I preach, so you can keep your buildings. No, you do not want me; you only think you want me. The truth is, I do not want you, because I do not want to inherit all this debt and all these problems."

But you see what I am saying? Do you know why I love you? Because I can open the Bible and preach anything. You do not get mad at me. You say, "I may not understand that. I may have to hear it two or three times, but it is the Word of God, and I am willing to submit to it." If you get mad, at least you do not show it. Maybe it is because you know I have a black belt, or because I have Tom to protect me. But what an encouragement it would be to the average pastor simply to know that he could open the Bible and preach anything. That is what they said: "We are here to hear all things."

Why is it that there are certain subjects, books, and doctrines in the Bible that are taboo to certain Christians and congregations? Is it not the Word of God? Is it not all of it the Word of God? Why is it that some pastors believe that when they come to a text of Scripture, they have to water it down, overlook it, skip it, or do an exegetical jig around it?

You know, it is amazing to me. Let me tell you why most pastors are like that: because most Christians are not prepared to hear all things. It is wrong on the pastor's part, but it is wrong on the people's part as well. It may surprise you, but I am going to show you this from Scripture. The inability of professing Christians to hear all things from the Word of God can limit the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Let me show you that from the Bible.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 5, and look at verse 10. Here the apostle has been talking about the greatness of Christ, especially His priesthood: "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek." He is getting into the deep things of Christ. Verse 11 says, "...of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing."

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Why could the author of Hebrews not continue teaching about the Melchizedekal priesthood of Christ? He said, "I'll tell you why. It is a hard truth, and you are dull of hearing." That is, you are full of lethargy; you are slothful and lazy; you will not pay attention. Consequently, when the time comes that you should be teachers, you need somebody to start you all over again on milk. The truth of the matter is this: Christians' inability to hear all things hinders the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

It is true that pastors are wrong when they compromise, water down, skip, and try to please men. That is wrong. I confess that; I acknowledge that. But it is equally wrong when people get mad and upset and do not like it when it is the plain Word of God.

Now, look at Acts 10:33. Cornelius said, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." Do you realize that Cornelius apprehended a truth most Christians never comprehend? God commands that His Word be preached and taught. The word commanded is the Greek word protasso, which means to command, order, prescribe, and appoint. Why does God call preachers? He appoints them, commands them, and orders them to preach and teach His Word.

We looked at Acts 20 last week, but you remember that Paul said he was free from the blood of all men because he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. If God commands me as a pastor and preacher to preach the whole counsel of God, then, by implication, what does He command you as people? He commands you to hear the whole counsel of God—and, of course, to hear it, receive it, apply it, and obey it.

How do you think this affects the average preacher? How would most preachers of the gospel respond if they came to church early one Sunday morning and found the congregation waiting at the doors? Suppose they said, "Pastor, we are ready to hear all. We have come at the beginning. We were so anxious to hear the Word of God that we could not wait. We got here early, and we want to stay until the end. We want to be attentive to all things. We want to hear all

things. We desire to hear whatever God has commanded you to preach, no matter how displeasing it is to the flesh, no matter how contrary it is to our former notions and interests, and no matter how contrary it is to secular interest. We are ready to hear everything. Let nothing be held back. Let nothing be kept back. Give it to us, and give it to us all."

How do you think the average pastor would respond to that after he came back, or got out of the hospital, from having a heart attack? Just knowing that there were people who really wanted the Word of God, he would preach and teach his heart out.

You say, "Come on, brother, things like that didn't really happen." Sure, they did. It happened in the New Testament. Look at Acts 13. I have said this before, and I am going to do it one of these days: I am going to preach a sermon entitled "The Mistake of a Great Rabbi." I get so tickled every time I think about this. Acts 13, verse 15.

Paul is in the synagogue. "And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." Can you imagine asking the Apostle Paul, "Do you have anything to say?" Of course, Paul starts preaching in verse 16, and he goes all the way to verse 41, where he ends his sermon: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

Now watch. "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." In other words, they would not let Paul get away. They said, "You've got to promise us that you and Barnabas are going to come back and preach to us again."

It was not over. "And now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas," who were speaking to them, and persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. They just happened to have another sermon ready on the preservation and perseverance of the saints, so they preached to them again. "And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

Here were people who could not get enough of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Cornelius said, “We're all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.” We must understand that preaching is something God commands. Consequently, if the preacher is faithful to God, he must preach all things that God commanded him.

Preaching and hearing have corollary responsibilities. When someone is particularly called and commissioned by God to preach, those to whom he is sent have the obligation, duty, and responsibility to hear what God has commanded him to preach.

Applications

Secondly, in God's sovereign providence, there is no room for luck, chance, fate, or fortune. When God commands the preacher to preach on a certain subject, no matter how much you dislike it, disagree with it, resent it, or think it is silly or needless, God has designed that message for you. There is no such thing as luck, chance, fate, or fortune in preaching. If God prepares my heart to preach, that means you need whatever He has laid on my heart to preach.

Let me give you an illustration. I was raised on a farm, and my mother was one of the greatest cooks in the world. I was used to having breakfast—biscuits, eggs, grits, ham, bacon, whatever. When we had breakfast, we had breakfast. When I joined the service and went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I was in boot camp and had been there perhaps a week or two. One morning I went through the chow line for breakfast, and a private slapped two pieces of bread on a plate and put some crazy ooey-gooey stuff on top of it: creamed beef on toast. I said, “I'm not eating this junk.”

There were times when I walked out of the chow hall with peas in my pocket. Some of you may remember the sign saying, “You won't beat all you take.” They had people there to make sure you ate everything; if you did not, they sent you back to finish it. If you got too much, you put it in your pocket. I do not remember how I got rid of it, but I remember thinking, “I am not eating this slop.”

I did not know that, that morning, they had planned a five-mile hike with a full field pack. About ten o'clock in the morning, that creamed beef on toast got looking mighty good to me. I wish I had some, but I didn't. I did without it. I didn't like it, I didn't want it, and I was the one who suffered for it. You know, I actually got to like it after a while, because the next time they put it on my plate, I ate it. I knew I had to have some energy.

I haven't eaten it since I got out. But the point I'm trying to make is simply this: when you come and hear a message and say, “Why is he preaching that?”—because God commanded it. You may not think you need it now, but when God puts you on that five-mile hike with a full field pack, He has given you what you need in advance. You had better receive it as the Word of God, apply it as the Word of God, and obey it as the Word of God, so that you will be prepared for whatever God sends your way.

Would it not be absolutely wonderful if every Christian came to church on the Lord's Day saying, “We're all here, present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God”? What a perspective on preaching.

Father, we do ask that You help us, teach us, build us up in the most holy faith, make us holy, righteous, and godly. May we bow to Your Word. May we, Heavenly Father, obey and apply Your Word, that we may be holy and godly and Christlike. Give us grace that we may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear. In Thy name we pray, Amen.

Source Notes

Chapter 1: A Biblical Perspective on Preaching Part #1
JW00954 | SermonAudio

Chapter 2: A Biblical Perspective on Preaching Part #2
JW00953 | SermonAudio

Topical Index

Chapter titles and section headings are listed with the pages on which they begin.

A

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching Part #1 p. 5

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching Part #2 p. 23

A Providential Perspective on Preaching p. 33

Applications p. 44

Applications and Conclusion p. 21

E

Expository Preaching and the Whole Counsel of God p. 11

I

Introduction and Review p. 24

Introduction and Text p. 5

P

Providential Perspective p. 33

Providential Preaching p. 40

Providential Preparation p. 25

T

The Deterioration of Preaching and Listening p. 6

The Efficacy of God's Word and God's Sovereignty p. 15

The Nature of True Preaching: Exposition, Explanation, Application p. 13

Three Types of Preaching p. 7

Scripture Index

Scripture references identified in chapter readings, headings, and manuscript text are listed with their page locations.

Genesis

Genesis 3:15 p. 16

1 Samuel

1 Samuel 15 p. 31

Nehemiah

Nehemiah 8:8 p. 24, p. 25

Psalm

Psalm 139 p. 35

Proverbs

Proverbs 16 p. 29

Proverbs 16:1 p. 28, p. 29

Isaiah

Isaiah 55 p. 16, p. 19

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 23 p. 15

Hosea

Hosea 10 p. 29

Hosea 10:12 p. 29

Jonah

Jonah 2 p. 17

Matthew

Matthew 13 p. 29

Matthew 18:20 p. 36

Mark

Mark 4 p. 29

Mark 4:24 p. 30

Luke

Luke 8 p. 29

Luke 8:18 p. 30

John

John 10 p. 39

Acts

Acts 1:8 p. 27

Acts 2 p. 17, p. 18

Acts 10 p. 5, p. 35

Acts 10:1-8,9-16,17-18,27-28 p. 23

Acts 10:24 p. 33, p. 34

Acts 10:28 p. 26, p. 27

Acts 10:33 p. 25, p. 33, p. 35, p. 42

Acts 13 p. 43

Acts 20 p. 11, p. 42

Acts 27 p. 34

Romans

Romans 10:13 p. 38

1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1 p. 17

1 Corinthians 2 p. 15

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 2 p. 19

1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 2:13 p. 36

1 Timothy

1 Timothy 3 p. 6, p. 7, p. 25

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 3 p. 15

Titus

Titus 1 p. 6, p. 7

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

Your companion study guide

A Biblical Perspective on Preaching

Follow the Scripture references, reflect on each lesson, and use the written-response space to apply what you learn.



Scan to open the matching study guide

Downloadable PDF | 8.5 x 11 inches
No sign-in required

studyguides.weaverbiblecollege.com

If you cannot scan the code, visit the address above and search for this book by title.