

Michigan Expositor's Summit
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MICHIGAN EXPOSITORS SUMMIT¹

April 19, 2018

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Introduction

Many people assume that they know what preaching is. They have often heard preaching in the churches. However, our experiences do not always match what the Bible teaches. For this reason, it is best to begin with a look at terminology and definition.

The Biblical Word for Preaching

The biblical term “preach” means to proclaim a message on behalf of another.² In ancient times, kings appointed representatives to communicate their messages throughout their kingdom. The title held by these representatives was “preacher” and their task was “preaching.” Genesis 41:43, Exodus 32:5, and Esther 6:9 illustrate the idea. Historic use of the word shows that only the king’s message was important, not the ideas of the preacher. The preacher’s only task was to communicate the king’s words.³

The term appears in the New Testament 61 times, primarily describing representatives of Christ.⁴ Several passages indicate that preaching is the primary means of communicating Christ’s message. See Romans 10:14–15; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11; 4:2.

A Definition and Description of Preaching

Preaching is a complex idea. Consequently, attempts to define it are many and varied, often ranging from simple to complex. Here is one useful definition:

Preaching is the God-appointed work of a man to speak to people on behalf of Christ, publicly proclaiming the meaning and significance of God’s Word in the power of the Spirit.⁵

¹ Notes for the three sessions of the MES are substantially condensed and adapted from a curriculum intended for classroom use in the Far East and appearing in Steven Thomas, “Teaching Homiletics in a Modular Missions Setting with Special Emphasis on Restricted Access Nations” (DMin diss., Ligonier Academy, 2017).

² See κηρύξ, DBAG, 543.

³ This aspect of the word emerges clearly in Micah 3:5 (LXX) where false prophets are denounced for delivering messages motivated by self-interest.

⁴ This statistic includes all inflected forms of the verb κηρύσσω.

⁵ This definition is the author’s own, but no doubt echoes input from many long-forgotten sources.

THE GLORY OF PREACHING

Theological Foundations

Overview

This session lays a theological and philosophical foundation for understanding the task of preaching. The content is organized in four major points:

1. Preaching is God's idea.
2. Preaching accomplishes what only God can do.
3. Preaching reveals what the preacher really believes.
4. Therefore, preachers must learn to preach well.

“Preaching is God's idea” targets the misconception that the work of the preacher developed as a cultural tradition over the history of the church. Many activities have displaced biblical exposition in some quarters of American Christianity.⁶ Sound homiletics begins with understanding that God has spoken his powerful word in history. As stated in the Belgic Confession, VII,

Neither may we compare any writings of men, though ever so holy, with those divine Scriptures; nor ought we to compare custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times or persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, with the truth of God, for the truth is above all ⁷

Sidney Greidanus observed, the preacher “realizes that the Reformation's *sola Scriptura* remains the fundamental criterion . . . for his preaching.”⁸ The God whose word is our sole authority also established preaching as the medium through which his word will be heard.

“Preaching accomplishes what only God can do” because the subject matter presents God's words, not man's words. God's own words give spiritual life, extend common grace, build his church, etc. Since this is true, the preacher's degree of determination to think and speak God's words after him opens a window into his heart. What does he believe about God's work,

⁶ John MacArthur, “Plexiglas Preaching: The Devastating Consequences of a Watered-Down Message” in John MacArthur, et al., *Fool's Gold?: Discerning Truth in an Age of Error* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 35-43.

⁷ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3:389.

⁸ Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1970), 1.

God's people, and God's messenger? Does he believe that "success" lies somewhere other than faithfulness to God's word? Consequently, "preaching reveals what the preacher really believes."

The first session moves to the logical conclusion that the faithful preacher must "learn to preach well." "Preaching well" introduces the idea of the expository sermon delivered by men who exhibit biblical qualifications.

1 Preaching is God's idea.

Preaching is not a product of human invention. God ordained it as the method he uses to accomplish his eternal purposes.

1.1. God has spoken.

The Scriptures make clear that everyone knows God exists (Psalm 19:1-6). However, natural revelation is not sufficient to bring people to faith; it only renders humanity without excuse (Romans 1:20). In contrast, the Bible, God's special revelation, reveals truth about God that humanity could never know otherwise (1 Corinthians 2:11).

1.1.1. God has spoken to reveal himself (the purpose).

The preacher's ultimate message is that God has revealed himself in the Bible.

1.1.1.1. God's word displays his character.

The theme of *speech* fills the creation account in Genesis 1 (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; cf. Psalm 33:6). God's "word" stands as a metaphor for God's sovereign, effectual power. By his word, God created all things (Hebrews 11:3). By his word, God sustains all things (Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 3:7). By his word, God displays his glory (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20). The expression "God's word" even appears as an extension of God himself (2 Samuel 12:9-10): to despise the word of the LORD is to despise the LORD.

1.1.1.2. God's word communicates his moral will.

God displays his character in his moral will. Exodus 20:1 introduces the Ten Commandments, "And God spoke all these *words*, saying" Cf. v. 2. The foundational laws given to Israel were an expression of God's self-revelation (Deuteronomy 10:4). God wants his people to associate his moral will with his *words* (cf. Deuteronomy 5:24).

1.1.1.3. God's word unveils his plans.

God revealed spiritual wisdom to Paul and the other apostles that the unsaved rulers of this world did not understand (1 Corinthians 2:6–16).⁹ The term “revealed” (v. 10) was usually reserved for hidden truths that must be disclosed supernaturally (cf. Matthew 16:17).

1.1.2. God has spoken his truth in human language (the medium).

The significant feature of God’s communication is that it comes to us in *human language*. In fact, it comes in the language of the *common man*.¹⁰

1.1.2.1. God spoke through the prophets and apostles in human language.

The Old Testament repeatedly refers to “the word of the LORD” coming on a prophet (Jeremiah 1:4; Ezekiel 1:2–4).

In the New Testament, the apostles communicated God’s message through the common task of writing letters with ordinary words (2 Peter 3:1–2).

1.1.2.2. God spoke through his Messiah in human language.

Jesus’ verbal teaching delivered the very words of God to them. John 17:8. See also, John 17:14. Cf. John 1:1, 18.

1.1.2.3. God “spoke” the Scriptures in human language.

The night before Jesus died, he promised to send the Holy Spirit to perform a specific mission (John 14:15–17; 25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–8; 12–15).¹¹ People often misunderstand these as general promises to all believers in this age. Closer examination reveals that they were promises made exclusively to the apostles. Their main theme is that the Holy Spirit would enable the apostles to produce an authoritative record of the words of Jesus. Their message would also include other words yet to be given by Jesus following his resurrection/exaltation. In this way,

⁹ In 2:6–7, Paul shifts to the first-person plural from the second-person plural and uses language that echoes Ephesians 3:5–9, strengthening the interpretation that his use of “we” is not editorial or a collective reference to Christians in general, but is rather exclusive, referring primarily to divine revelation given through the apostles. So, Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2010), 121.

¹⁰ A teacher might consider describing the shifting consensus that moved away from Hermann Cremer’s “Holy Ghost Greek” to Greek as koine. For an overview, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 24–29. Images of papyrus and ostraca provide helpful illustrations.

¹¹ Themes of communication dominate the text of John’s Gospel (word, reveal, witness, sign). For a detailed treatment of this emphasis see James M. Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

the Spirit of truth worked through the apostles to complete divine revelation. This means that the Bible is the very words of God, given by Jesus, through the apostles, and written in the Bible.¹²

The Bible has one ultimate author, even though given through many human authors. This has several implications for the way the preacher approaches his work.

- Since God spoke through humans, the message of Scripture is found in the words of the prophets and apostles.
- Since God is the ultimate author, the message of Scripture has integrity; that is, it is non-contradictory.
- Since God is the ultimate author, the message of the Scriptures reflects his character; that is, the Scriptures are true (John 17:17).

1.2. God intends for people to understand his message.

The message of God delivered by Christ through the apostles is a theme that runs through the prayer of John 17. Jesus reported that he had given the Father's words to the apostles (17:8). Jesus then prayed for the generations of Christians who would come to faith through the apostles' words (John 17:20).

1.3. God has entrusted his message to preachers.

"Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2) summarizes the preacher's chief responsibility (cf. Acts 6:4). This is God's will for the preacher.

1.3.1. Preaching is a sacred trust.

Paul initiated a significant theme in 2 Timothy with the statement that he was "appointed a preacher" (1:11). He explained that God entrusted to him a message of "sound words" (1:12-13). "Entrust" is the verbal form of a word that describes property deposited into the care of another.¹³ The message and its attendant responsibilities are a sacred trust, the property of one (God) placed in the care of another (the preacher).

1.3.2. The preacher's chief concern is to say what God has said.

As mentioned previously, the word "preach" originally described the official duty of a king's courtier. He spoke for the king. Therefore, his chief duty was to declare accurately what the king had said. He had no liberty to introduce his own ideas or inject creativity into the job.

¹² The author argued that this is the principle significance of the Paraclete passages in "The Pneumatology of the Johannine Account of Christ's Farewell Discourse (Th.M. thesis, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992). So also, Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 70.

¹³ See παραθήκη, DBAG, 616.

The preacher spoke with authority derived from his master and those who heard his words submitted to those words because of their origin. In the same way, the church's preachers bear the charge to speak the words of the King of kings.¹⁴

1.3.3. God's goal for preaching is that He will be glorified in the preacher's work.

Doxology shapes the church's preaching mission. This means the preacher's task is ultimately about God: to make known his character and his will so that He will glorified. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:15.

2 Preaching accomplishes what only God can do.

God mediates his powerful word through the words of appointed representatives. Through the prophets, God spoke immediately (directly). Through preachers he speaks mediately (indirectly). In both times and ways, his proclaimed word results in the powerful fulfillment of his will, whether for salvation or judgment. Romans 10:17, Isaiah 6:8–10.

God purposes to accomplish at least five things through preaching.

2.1 God unmask's humanity's true condition through preaching.

2.1.1 People are sinners because they reject what God has said.

Sin entered the world because Adam rejected what God *said* (Genesis 3:1ff.). Rejection of the word of God continues to be the basis of sin (cf. 2 Samuel 12:9).

2.1.2 Preaching confronts sinners with what God has said.

Biblical examples of preaching model the work of 1) proclaiming what God has said and 2) calling for repentance. See Matthew 3:1-8; 4:17; Luke 16:31; Acts 2:38; 3:14-19; 10:34-43; 11:18; 17:30-31; 26:19-20.

2.2 God extends common grace through preaching.

The unbelieving world receives temporal benefits from the message of the prophets (cf. Jonah) and the advance of the gospel. For example, 2 Peter 3:9 shows that a world in

¹⁴ Faithfulness to the words of God contained in Scripture does not mean that the preacher brings nothing to the communication process. If that were the case, mere reading of the Bible or even the public display of the printed text would be sufficient to discharge the preacher's calling. The appropriate contribution the preacher brings to the message will be discussed at the end of this section.

rebellion against God reaps the reward of delayed judgment as God patiently brings all the elect to faith.¹⁵

2.3 God gives life to the spiritually dead through preaching.

God breathed his animating Spirit into a lump of ground (Adam), creating a living soul (Genesis 2:7). In the same miraculous way, God's Holy Spirit gives spiritual life to those dead and hopeless in sin. He accomplishes this through the God-breathed word (2 Timothy 3:16). See Acts 5:17-21; 11:14-15, 18; Ephesians 2:1-10.

2.4 God builds his church through preaching.

God uses the preaching of his word to build the church numerically and spiritually (Acts 2:37-42; 4:1-4). Paul explained that God has gifted the church with men whose primary task is to speak the word of God: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).¹⁶ As they faithfully discharge their God-given roles, God builds up his church. See Ephesians 4:12-18.

2.5 God puts his glory on display through preaching.

The world deems foolish the work of preaching a message about a crucified Savior. But God chose this message and means of delivery to prevent anyone from claiming glory for the results. Glory belongs to God alone (Isaiah 42:8; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; 2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

3 Preaching reveals what the preacher really believes.

Preaching is God's idea. Preaching serves as a conduit for our doctrine, both in content and form. What the preacher does with it opens the window on his heart.

3.1 Preaching reveals what the preacher believes about the Bible.

The preacher who doubts the sufficiency of Scripture feels compelled to employ psychology, entertainment, or anything else that plays to the "itching ears" of an audience. When he feels compelled to find a formula that "works," the audience has become "sovereign" over the

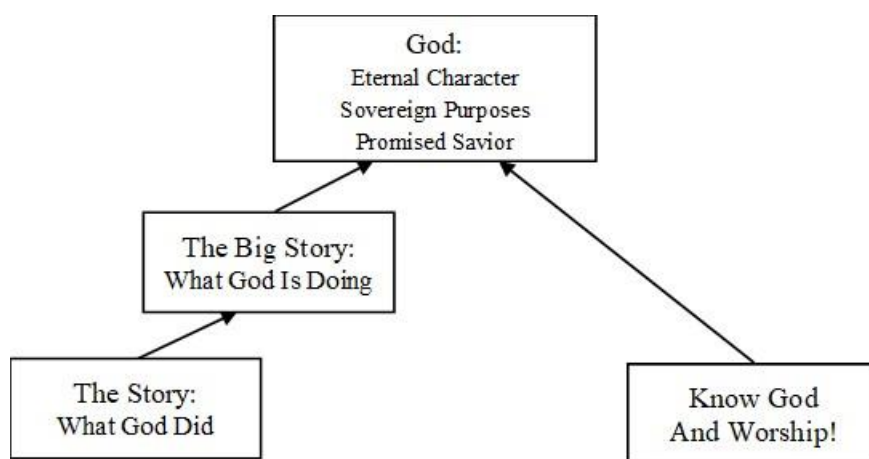
¹⁵ This verse is commonly cited as proof that God does not desire the damnation of the non-elect. However, the text describes his patient determination to gather all the elect. Two factors support this conclusion. First, God's patient delay of promised destruction is for the sake of "you," that is, the believers to whom Peter wrote. Second, use of the verb βούλομαι with God as the subject indicates intention or purpose (e.g., James 1:17-18), not desire.

¹⁶ The historic position among reformed churches has been that the offices of apostle and prophet were temporary, serving to establish the church by speaking for God before the completion of the canon of Scripture.

message.¹⁷ In contrast, commitment to the absolute sufficiency of Scripture leaves no room for pragmatism. See 2 Timothy 3:10-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

3.2 Preaching reveals what the preacher believes about God.

Many modern preachers attempt to convince the hearer that the word of God offers immediate satisfaction to personal desires. In contrast, the faithful preacher believes that all things are from God and through God and to God (Romans 11:36). God is the grand subject of the Bible and thus must be the grand subject of preaching. The faithful preacher believes that his people will find perfect resolution to every *true* need only as they meet God in Scripture. Therefore, he sets forth the character and works of the Triune God and then summons the audience to behold *his* glory.



The Primary Goal of Narrative Preaching¹⁸

¹⁷ Kent Hughes says correctly that when pragmatism is the “conductor” of ministry orchestration, “the audience inexorably becomes man rather than God.” R. Kent Hughes, and Barbara Hughes, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987), 29.

¹⁸ The author conceived this chart after reflecting on a similar chart presented by Donald R. Sunukjian, in *Invitation to Biblical Preaching; Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 30. His chart depicts the preacher’s task as moving from what “happened” (passage) to what “happens” (truth) to what is “happening” (sermon). The point of this movement is to apply the truth (by which he means an abiding principle) to the audience. It seems to the author that Sunukjian’s taxonomy potentially makes the interests of the audience sovereign over the text, thus risking misuse of the text. Indeed, Sunukjian confirms the author’s misgiving when he states, “Our ultimate goal is to ‘teach how what the Bible says fits their life’” (108). And again, “Our primary intent is not that our listeners learn something but that they use the Scriptures for all the practical ways intended in everyday life” (110). In this system, preachers can frame the message in utilitarian terms; the Bible becomes “God’s answer book.” A better approach is to move from the “story” (passage) to the “big story” (the metanarrative) in order to understand the character and purposes of God. Next, the preacher’s role is to bring his audience into God’s “presence” where they worship together. Knowing God (theology) provides the solution to every genuine need. To put the idea another way, practical solutions to human problems need to be grounded in corporate worship.

3.3 Preaching reveals what the preacher believes about himself.

The preacher proclaims truth from the God who can use stones to cry out to glorify his Son (Luke 19:40). This means that no preacher is indispensable. The mission will not falter without any one man. Paul's metaphor in 2 Corinthians 4:7 is instructive: preachers are jars of clay (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

3.4 Preaching reveals what the preacher believes about the church.

What is the nature of the assembly? What purpose does its gatherings serve? Who is the preacher's target audience when the church gathers? The preacher's ecclesiology emerges very clearly through his approach to preaching. Targeting the wrong audience will deprive the church of true worship.¹⁹ It can also fortify an unhealthy individualism. Preaching is central to *corporate* worship.

3.5 Preaching reveals what the preacher believes about the lost.

Many believe the preacher has the job of anticipating the audience's desires and delivering "relevant" sermons to entice the lost to Jesus.²⁰ In this way, the audience becomes sovereign over the message. However, humanity's deepest need is a transformation of worship. All people are idolaters by nature and by choice. The goal of our preaching is the transformation of life-long idolaters into worshipers of the true and living God. When the lost see the church at worship and hear the biblical preaching that serves as the centerpiece of worship, they are confronted at the level of their deepest need. This occurs whenever the preacher leads God's people into ever-deepening worship, engaging their affections with the "whole counsel of God."

4 Therefore, preachers must learn to preach well.

Since preaching is God's idea to accomplish what only he can do and since God has entrusted the preacher with the task, the preacher must do his best to preach well.

4.1 The preacher must avoid unacceptable preaching.

Here are four characteristics of unacceptable preaching.

¹⁹ Some preachers exclusively target unbelievers, seldom deviating from preaching the theme of "God's simple plan of salvation." However, if the church gathers to worship, preaching must present an expansive, robust theology as the fuel for worship. There will always be evangelistic value in the worship of the church, but the lost are the wrong target audience. Only the saved have the capacity to worship.

²⁰ For example, Rick Warren said, "It is my deep conviction that anybody can be won to Christ if you discover the key to his or her heart.... The most likely place to start is with the person's felt needs." Richard Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here for?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 219.

4.1.1 Unacceptable preaching lacks truthfulness.

Some preachers say wrong things, perverting God's word.

4.1.2 Unacceptable preaching lacks authority.

Some preachers say right things without a text, ignoring God's word.

4.1.3 Unacceptable preaching lacks accuracy.

Some preachers say right things from the wrong text, distorting God's word.

4.1.4 Unacceptable preaching lacks clarity.

Some preachers say right things from right texts in wrong ways, obscuring God's word.

When a preacher understands the Scriptural text correctly and applies it correctly, but explains it poorly, the audience will not understand the truth. Preachers obscure the meaning/application of the text in three common ways:

- They provide too much or too little detail.
- They use illogical illustrations.
- They make abstract applications.

4.2 The preacher must practice good preaching.

Good preaching involves two essential components: the right kind of message and right kind of messenger. It depends upon both the content of the sermon and the character of the speaker.²¹

4.2.1 Good preaching delivers the right kind of message.

The right kind of message exhibits five important characteristics.

4.2.1.1 The right kind of message is theological.

This means that the focus of good preaching is

²¹ Phillips Brooks offered what is arguably the best-known definition of preaching in his famous Beecher Lectures delivered at Yale: "Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching." Ironically, or perhaps intentionally, Brooks delivered his lectures three years after Henry Ward Beecher delivered a series of Yale lectures and was soon thereafter embroiled in a public moral scandal. Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York, NY: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1877), 5.

- The triune God (Ephesians 1:3-14).
- With special emphasis on Christ (Colossians 1:19, 2:9; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

As noted previously, a significant portion of modern preaching tends to begin with people: their desires and interests. The preacher “brings God” to man. This is the opposite of the kind of preaching found in Scripture. It begins with God. God is its theme. People are called to know him and find solutions to their true, deep needs in him.

4.2.1.2 The right kind of message is biblical.

Good preaching is always based on the word of God. Cf. Luke 24:27, 46-49; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13.

4.2.1.3 The right kind of message is exegetical.

Exegesis means to “lead out” the meaning of a text, “to fully explain it.” Exegetical preaching establishes the meaning of the Scripture text as the basis of the sermon.²²

4.2.1.4 The right kind of message is homiletical.

Preaching goes beyond explaining the meaning of the text of Scripture. It also explains the significance of the text. Homiletics is the science and art of bridging the distance between the situation of original readers and the circumstances of the current audience with clear and relevant communication.

4.2.1.5 Summary: Good preaching is expository.

An expository sermon is one in which “the point of the biblical text is the point of the sermon, applied to the life of the congregation.”²³

²² The practice of biblical interpretation has been in a state of increasing flux for the past fifty years. Speculative hermeneutical theories espoused by secular theorists such as Hans-George Gadmer, Paul Ricoeur, and others have shifted the discussion toward the interpreter’s “preunderstanding” and locate “meaning” within the interpreter. Many biblical theoreticians have felt the weight of this movement resulting in a progressive “departure from the grammatical-historical approach to interpretation” and a growing tendency to include “contextualization” under the umbrella of hermeneutics. See Robert L. Thomas, “Current Hermeneutical Trends: Toward Explanation or Obfuscation?”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 39:2 (June 1996): 241-56. One symptom of this flux is a bewildering number of new definitions attached to old terms, once considered stable ideas. With Robert Thomas, the author assumes the following definitions:

Hermeneutics:	A valid set of principles designed to determine authorial intent.
Exegesis:	The implementation of the valid set of principles.
Meaning:	The idea/truth intended by the author.
Interpretation:	A proper understanding of the author’s intended meaning.

²³ Mark Dever, quoted by Jonathon Leeman in *Reverberation*, p. 112. Haddon W Robinson’s well-known definition provides useful information to further explain Dever’s definition. “Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher,

4.2.2 Good preaching comes from the right kind of messenger.

Historically, secular teaching on the subject of public speaking has emphasized three essential characteristics of the speaker: 1) reason or logic (λόγος), 2) passion or sympathy (πάθος), and 3) right character or credibility (ἔθος). These same characteristics appear together in the Bible (though employing different terminology).

1 Thessalonians 1:5

our gospel came to you not only in word (λόγος), but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (cf. πάθος). You know what kind of men we proved to be (cf. ἔθος) among you for your sake.²⁴

4.2.2.1 The right kind of messenger has obvious ability to teach (logos—reason).

The right kind of preacher dedicates himself to study of the word of God with that goal of understanding its message accurately (2 Timothy 2:15). He also displays the ability to teach to others the truths that he has learned (1 Timothy 3:2). The church evaluates and affirms this ability before placing him in ministry (1 Timothy 5:22).

4.2.2.2 The right kind of messenger has evident compassion (pathos—sympathy).

The right kind of preacher exhibits a strong desire for others to share his faith (2 Corinthians 4:13-15). He demonstrates this through loving care for the people to whom he preaches (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 2:8-10).

4.2.2.3 The right kind of messenger has proven character (ethos—credibility).

The right kind of preacher is a man of Christian character validated by the local assembly in which he serves (1 Timothy 3:1-7). His life demonstrates a sincere and selfless devotion to the word of God for Christ's sake (2 Corinthians 2:17).

then through the preacher to his hearers,” *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 21.

²⁴ This verse describes the effect of persuasion on the hearer rather than its role within the speaker. However, Paul elsewhere makes it clear that his own persuasion of the truth of the message is used by the Spirit to effectually communicate the message to his hearers. As an example, see 2 Corinthians 4:13-15.

SERMON FORM AND DELIVERY

Introduction

This section surveys and illustrates basic homiletic practices and describes an overall process that includes multiple steps organized in major subsections labeled “phases.”

1. Phase One: Determine the larger context of the biblical passage.
2. Phase Two: Identify and explain the meaning of the biblical passage.
3. Phase Three: Shape the form of the biblical sermon.
4. Phase Four: Deliver the biblical sermon.

The goal is to offer step by step instructions as a guide through the process of preparation and delivery of expository sermons. Phase One describes habits for initial preparation designed to lay a solid foundation for study. It helps the preacher look at “the forest” (the larger context) before focusing exclusively on the “tree” (the specific passage).²⁵ Phase Two moves from context to the passage itself. It begins with a mini-review of hermeneutics. It maps out a process designed to culminate with an exegetical outline and statement that summarizes the meaning of the passage. Phase Three offers guidance in making a transition from the exegetical outline and summary statement to a homiletical outline and proposition. Finally, Phase Four offers brief discussion of final preparation and sermon delivery, including the importance of the preacher’s practice of prayer.

Simplicity characterizes this material. It does not aim for either academic novelty (as if attempting to make a new contribution to the discipline) or scholarly depth. The goal is to help any preacher achieve a basic level of competence in homiletics. Consequently, the content is the basic fare served in classrooms of training institutions committed to the practice of expository preaching, though in some places the author has lightly placed his own imprint on the subject matter. A second objective is to establish a conceptual baseline for homiletic practices by focusing on the New Testament epistles.

²⁵ This includes what Mortimer Adler calls “inspectional reading,” designed to prevent the student from missing the “forest for the trees.” Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading*, revised edition (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1972), 38.

Four Phases of Sermon Preparation and Deliver

1 Phase One: Determine the larger context of the biblical passage.

A preacher should take five initial steps when preparing for *lectio continua* preaching.²⁶ The central focus is on understanding of the larger context of a given passage.²⁷

1.1 Choose the book or extended passage from which to preach.

Two factors guide the preacher's choice: the audience and the preacher, himself.

1.1.1 Evaluate the audience.

Real-life issues faced by the congregation may guide the pastor as he decides which book to preach. Five questions help the preacher evaluate their needs.

1.1.1.1 What theological weaknesses does the congregation have?

1.1.1.2 What personal difficulties does the congregation face?

1.1.1.3 What is the congregation's phase of life?

1.1.1.4 What dangers does the congregation face?

1.1.1.5 What strengths does the congregation need to deploy?

1.1.2 Evaluate yourself.

A variety of factors in the preacher's own life can help guide his choices when selecting a book to preach.

²⁶ Latin, "continuous reading." The practice of preaching through books of the Bible, section by section, was strongly emphasized by the Reformers and their successors. However, they did not invent the practice; they rediscovered it, embracing the example set by preachers in the early church such as Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine. Hughes Oliphant Old argues that the practice was probably widely practiced in the Apostolic era as the early church mirrored the practices of the synagogues in many ways. He said, "preaching the *lectio continua* was one of the Patristic roots of Reformed worship," and adds, "the biblical root is the taproot." *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church, Volume 7: Our Time* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2010), 172.

²⁷ The material will highlight the importance of two interpretive questions: First, where does this book fit into the storyline of the Bible? Second, how does this book fit together? The author previews the importance of these questions in the introduction of this section and then reiterates their importance throughout the lectures so that the students do not miss this crucial aspect of the preparation process.

1.1.2.1 The preacher should evaluate his strengths and weaknesses.

All pastors mature over time. At different stages of his ministry, he will find some books more difficult to preach than others. He should preach what he has learned.

1.1.2.2 The preacher should evaluate his time and resources.

The pastor moves through phases of life, as does his congregation. That means demands on his time fluctuate. He should decide how much time he can invest to increase his knowledge of a specific book. He should also measure the difficulty of the book and assess the resources he has that will help him study it.

1.1.2.3 The preacher should evaluate his personal goals.

A preacher might set a goal to preach all the way through the New Testament. Perhaps his goal is to preach a specific book because the work will force him to understand it. Or perhaps a book has specific content that he needs to apply to his own life. Whatever the reasons that motivate the preacher, he needs to allow adequate time to research, study, and meditate. This usually means that he should choose the book at least three months in advance.

1.2 Collect materials for the study and review the background of the book.

A wealth of varied study resources is available. The pastor should collect at least three types of resources to help prepare a sermon series.

1.2.1 Introductory explanations

Resources that describe the historical background of a book of the Bible are essential to adequate understanding of the book's context. They answer questions such as:

- Who wrote the book?
- To whom was the book written?
- What circumstances prompted the author to write the book?
- What is the theme of the book and its key topics?
- What is the structure of the book?

1.2.2 Various types of commentaries

Broadly speaking, there are three types of commentaries, each of which serves a specific purpose. These are listed below in the order in which the preacher should refer to them.

1.2.2.1 Technical commentaries

Technical commentaries provide a detailed discussion of elements that help interpret the book of the Bible that lay the foundation of understanding the text: lexicography, grammar, syntax, structure and theology.

1.2.2.2 Expository commentaries

Expository commentaries explain the data of the text in a popular style, often originating as studies done for sermon preparation by other preachers.

1.2.2.3 Devotional commentaries

These provide valuable illustrations and applicational insights. Importantly, they also feed the pastor's own soul. The preacher should refer to these last in the preparation process. If he reads someone else's application first, it will be hard for him to engage the text on his own.

1.2.3 Topical materials (books and articles)

The preacher will discover key topics in the book as he studies. He should begin collecting books, pamphlets, and articles related to those topics.

1.3 Read the entire book of the Bible

The first step in the sermon preparation process is reading the book. Nothing is more valuable to the preacher's study process than repeatedly reading the text.

1.3.1 The practice

The preacher should read the book multiple times. The author advises reading through the book 15-20 times over a period of a few weeks. It is best to read it in a single sitting each time. Occasionally, he should read it aloud.²⁸

1.3.2 The goals

Through the disciplined practice of reading and rereading the book, the preacher will achieve three crucial goals:

- He will gain a thorough understanding of the structure of the book
- He will become familiar with the vocabulary of the book.
- He will identify major themes within the book.

²⁸ Educators have long espoused the value of reading aloud to children, but a growing number of current studies are advocating that adults occasionally read aloud to themselves. It increases cognition, enhances memory, and enables the reader to identify elements that were previously unnoticed. See Art Markman, "Say it Loud: I'm Creating a Distinctive Memory," *Psychology Today* (May 11, 2010), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/ulterior-motives/201005/say-it-loud-i-m-creating-distinctive-memory> (accessed September 27, 2016). See also, "Reading Aloud." (The Writing Center, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/reading-aloud/> (accessed September 27, 2016).

1.4 Summarize the book's contribution to the biblical metanarrative.

The preacher must grasp the relationship that exists between the books of the Bible. When preparing to preach through a book of the Bible, he must ask, "What contribution does this book make to the biblical story?" Answering this question is essential to both sound hermeneutics and sound homiletics.

1.4.1 It is essential to sound hermeneutics

People make two obvious types of hermeneutical errors because they fail to locate passages in the biblical narrative. Some ignore the contributions of later revelation. Others attempt to make God's promises in a specific setting normative for every age.

1.4.2 It is essential to sound homiletics.

Understanding the biblical metanarrative is essential to sound homiletics because it paves the way to clear communication. Every time the preacher steps into the pulpit he is responsible to proclaim the point of the text *and* demonstrate how he arrived at that point. To do this, he must be able to explain how his message plays a role in the larger biblical story.

1.5 Outline the book

A good outline explains the unity of the book's message. The outlining process builds upon the summary statement that captures the message of the book. Without it, attempts to outline the book will likely produce a collection of disconnected ideas. A good outline accomplishes two related objectives.

1.5.1 A good outline correctly identifies the structure of the book.

A book's structure reveals the way the author develops the message of the book.

1.5.2 A good outline identifies individual units of thought appropriate for a sermon.

The goal at this stage of study is to identify complete ideas in the structure of the book (not simply words or phrases). Their size should be sufficiently manageable. This typically means identifying paragraphs that can be handled appropriately in a single sermon.²⁹

2 Phase Two: Identify and explain the meaning of the biblical passage.

This section will 1) review principles of sound interpretation and 2) apply them to the interpretation of a familiar passage of Scripture as an example.

²⁹ Narrative portions of Scripture often present a notable exception to this guideline since the complete unit of thought will sometimes span a large section, even multiple chapters (cf., the Joseph cycle, Genesis 37-50).

2.1 Remember the essential elements and principles of interpretation.

Homiletics begins as an exercise in applied hermeneutics. Though this is not a workshop on hermeneutic theory, a brief review of the subject is helpful. Preaching will please God only when the preacher accurately represents what God has said in his word.

2.1.1 The essential elements of interpretation

Every time people hear or read verbal communication within their own society, they routinely, naturally, and instantly process multiple elements of the “text.”³⁰ However, the preacher must work carefully and thoughtfully because Scripture originates from a different time, place, and culture. He should consider six essential interpretive elements.

2.1.1.1 Language—what do the specific words mean?

Words are the building blocks of communication. To understand the text, he must define the words. Many words carry great theological significance. Some are so crucial that the preacher cannot afford to misunderstand their meaning.

2.1.1.2 Grammar—how do the words function together?

Since God has communicated in propositions, we need to understand how they are formed. This requires paying careful attention to the parts of speech.

2.1.1.3 Literary genre—To what type of literature does the text belong and how does it differ from other types?

The Bible contains many genres of literature:

- Narrative
- Poetry
- Legal Code
- Prophetic Oracles
- Gospels
- Epistles
- Apocalyptic

Each requires special consideration for proper interpretation. This issue is further complicated because various books contain multiple genres.

³⁰ In this sense, “text” can be written, spoken, or artistic expressions.

2.1.1.4 Historical/cultural setting—To whom was the book/letter written?

Placing a book within its historical setting is valuable for both interpreting and communicating its content.

2.1.1.5 Larger biblical context—How does the message of the book fit into the message of the Bible (biblical storyline)?

This was discussed previously (see 1.4).

2.1.1.6 Theology

Two questions help the interpreter think theologically. First, he should ask, “What does the whole Bible say about a topic?” When he encounters a topic in a passage, he should compare Scripture with Scripture to arrive at a proper interpretation.

A second question the interpreter should ask is, “How have the believers in previous generations understood this topic (or passage)?” Past opinions will not always determine the way a preacher should interpret a text. However, a preacher should only diverge from interpretations held by those in the past if he has very good reasons derived from the Scriptures. No one has the right to hold a “private interpretation.”

2.1.2 The foundational assumptions of interpretation

An interpreter must keep three ideas in mind as he works with the essential elements of interpretation.

2.1.2.1 Each text has only one meaning (language is univocal).

Throughout church history, allegorical theories of interpretation have multiplied in an attempt to discover hidden meanings of Scripture.³¹ All such interpretations violate the nature of language. To argue against the univocal nature of language is to forfeit all hope of objective meaning.³² This does not preclude later revelation from expanding and clarifying the text. But any theory that allows new meanings to evolve or hidden meanings to lie beneath the words undermines the authority of Scripture by locating meaning in the mind of the reader.

³¹ For a survey of the development of allegorical interpretation throughout the 2nd-4th centuries, see George Holley Gilbert, “Interpretation of the Bible by the Fathers,” *The Biblical World* 38, no. 3 (1911): 151-58 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3141685> (accessed July 12, 2016).

³² One need not accept all of Milton Terry’s theological positions to acknowledge that he was right when he declared, “The moment we admit the principle that portions of Scripture contain an occult or double sense we introduce an element of uncertainty in the sacred volume, and unsettle all scientific interpretation.” *A Treatise on Biblical Hermeneutics* (New York, NY: Hunt & Eaton, 1890), 383.

2.1.2.2 The text's meaning is the author's intended meaning (it can never mean what it never meant).³³

There is a widely-held assumption that since the Scriptures have dual authorship, they must have (at least) two meanings: the meaning of the human author and the meaning of the divine Author. The meaning of the human author is the natural sense, but the latter meaning is called the "fuller sense" (*sensus plenior*). Another trend is to incorporate contextualization into the idea of interpretation so that "meaning" becomes fluid, defined by the view and experiences of a modern community.³⁴ However, to be consistent with the first foundational assumption

³³ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 26.

³⁴ Larry W. Caldwell, currently Professor of Intercultural Studies at Sioux Falls Seminary, has argued for an approach to contextualization that sets aside the grammatical/historical hermeneutic explained in this course. Instead, he advocates for the validity of culture specific approaches to interpretation. His most significant writings in missiology are: "Cross-Cultural Bible Interpretation: A View from the Field," *Phronesis: A Journal of Asian Theological Seminary* 3/1 (1996): 13-35; "Toward the New Discipline of Ethnohermeneutics: Questioning the Relevancy of Western Hermeneutical Methods in the Asian Context," *Journal of Asian Mission* 1/1 (1999): 21-43; and "Part I: Reconsidering our Biblical Roots: Bible Interpretation, the Apostle Paul and Mission Today," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, 29/2 (Summer 2012): 91-100 followed by "Part II," 29/3 (Fall 2012): 61-69. Each of these articles unpack ideas proposed in his doctoral thesis, "Receptor-Oriented Hermeneutics: Reclaiming the Hermeneutical Methodologies of the New Testament for Bible Interpreters in the Twenty-First Century" (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1990).

Caldwell offers some valid and helpful observations based upon fieldwork in the Philippines. He argues that missionaries indiscriminately impose Western teaching methods that are culturally insensitive and ineffective. This is especially true of methods that require the students to have access to large and expensive libraries. He is also concerned about those who fail to understand the target culture and, thus, fail to apply the truth in meaningful ways. To address the problem, he proposes an idea he describes as "ethnohermeneutics," by which he means the use of "dynamically equivalent hermeneutical methodologies already contained in the receptor culture" ("Cross-Cultural Bible Interpretation," 15, emphasis his). There are several problems with his proposals. The first problem is category confusion; the problems he appropriately identifies are matters of cross-cultural communication and application of truth, but he places the locus of the problem in hermeneutical methods. Hermeneutics determine the message, communication and application follow. A second problem lies in his thinly veiled acceptance of post-modern hermeneutics. This is reflected in his dissertation title that refers to "receptor-oriented hermeneutics." He is not offering an alternative to the grammatical/historical hermeneutic by which the modern reader can determine the author's intended meaning. Caldwell is more concerned about reader-response than authorial intent as reflected in frequent references to the utilitarian value of hermeneutic methodology. For example he states, "We seldom call into question the possibility that what works for us may *not* work for others" ("Toward the New Discipline," 24, emphasis his). The end result of his proposal is a pluralistic approach to interpretation, in spite of his insistence to the contrary (*Ibid.*, 25). A third problem is that Caldwell insists his approach mirrors Paul's practice of contextualization, best seen in the use of Midrashic interpretation ("Reconsidering Our Biblical Roots," parts I and II). However, the use of Midrash by NT writers is a debate far from settled. Whatever conclusion one reaches, he must bear in mind that biblical interpreters of the OT and their Jewish counterparts "emerge with some very different readings. One must conclude that either the exegetical techniques and hermeneutical assumptions do not determine very much after all or else that there are additional factors that need careful probing if we are to explain why, say, Hillel and Paul read the Hebrew Scriptures (or their Greek translations) so differently," G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), xxv. Therefore, Caldwell has advocated the replacement of the only interpretive method that yields objective results based on a questionable reading of Paul. Finally, Caldwell seems to treat culture specific interpretive methods as if they are equivalent and ethically neutral. This leads to disturbing problems. For example, it is likely

(2.1.2.1), the interpreter must seek the meaning of the text in the intentions of the human author.³⁵

2.1.2.3 Scripture interprets Scripture (the Bible speaks with a unified voice).

Both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Second London Baptist Confession declare in 1.9:

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.

This idea is known as the “analogy of faith” (*analogia fidei*). It means that the Scriptures themselves set the interpretive parameters for a text. The interpreter discovers the parameters by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Some have described application of the idea this way, “interpret the unclear in light of the clear.” This is possible because *all* Scripture is “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). The ultimate Author guarantees the non-contradiction of Scripture (Numbers 23:19; John 17:17).

2.2 Determine the structure of the text.

It helps to visualize the flow of thought in a passage by arranging the elements (key words, phrases) into their logical relationships. Here is an illustration using a familiar verse: John 3:16.

For
God loved the world
so that
He gave his one and only Son,
that
whoever believes in him
shall not perish

that the penchant toward allegorical and mystical interpretation of sacred texts in China is a reflection of the deep cultural influence of Daoism. Should the western teacher, therefore, not attempt to overcome the influence of culture? When one accepts a method of non-literal interpretation and validation through mystical experience, the authority of the Word is replaced with experience. One suspects that even Caldwell would offer some correctives to errant interpretations established by the culture’s “dynamically equivalent hermeneutical methodologies,” but if so, on what basis could he argue his case?

³⁵ Michael Barrett says, “Focusing on authorial intent recognizes that there is an objective and understandable message conveyed that ought to be discoverable by the normal process of interpretation.” *Beginning at Moses*, (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999), 7. Kevin J. Vanhoozer engaged the popular linguistic theory of Jacques Derrida in his work, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998). Vanhoozer’s project was designed to deconstruct postmodern deconstruction of the text by offering a theologically based view of language as a “communicative act” that involves author, text, and reader. Though his work was directed toward postmodern linguistic theory, it is important for the topic at hand because it connects the meaning of the text with the intentions of the author.

but
have eternal life.

The structure demonstrates connections between the parts of the sentence that make up the verse.³⁶

2.3 Evaluate the syntax of the text.

A close look at John 3:16 reveals important relationships expressed in the words of the text. The verse begins with a conjunction that connects it with the preceding verses. An adverb (so that) connects the two main statements in the verse. It describes the *manner* in which God loved the world: he gave.³⁷ The last part of the verse indicates God's purpose in giving his Son ("that" whoever . . .).³⁸

2.4 Identify and study key words/ideas in the text.

Several words occur in John 3:16 worthy of further study or contemplation. Among them are: love, world, and one and only.

Ask questions about the key words and then compare this passage with the rest of Scripture. For example: What aspect of God's *love* is in view?³⁹ In what sense does God love the *world*? Does this mean the world without distinction? Or the world without exception? What does it mean to "*believe* in him?" What is *eternal* life?

2.5 Write out an exegetical outline of the passage.

This is an essential task of "exegesis." The basic idea is to "lead out" or "reveal" the meaning. The goal of an exegetical outline is to explain accurately the structure of the passage. It explains how the various elements of the text fit together.

Here is an example from John 3:16:

³⁶ This structure is an example of the paragraph structure analysis recommended by Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981). The point of this exercise is to lay groundwork for understanding the process of constructing an exegetical outline.

³⁷ ὥστε introduces the dependent clause and marks it as the intended result of God's love, namely he gave. Therefore, it is not a description of the intensity of God's love (contra Carson, *John*, 204, citing C. Spicq), but rather a description of the manner in which God expressed his love. *BDAG*, 1107.

³⁸ ἵνα denoting purpose.

³⁹ D. A. Carson offers five ways the Scriptures use the term "love." See *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 16–21. The author demurs on the second item in his list: "God's providential love over all that he has made."

Summary: The climax of Jesus' mission (cf. "lifted up" in 3:14) is grounded in God's love. The verse explains this idea:

God's motive for Jesus' mission: He loved

The subject: God

The action: love

The object: the world

The manner in which God expressed his love: He gave

What God gave: His unique Son

The purpose of his giving:

Those who believe will not perish

Those who believe will have everlasting life

Note: This outline explains the verse, but is not yet a sermon outline.

2.6 Summarize the contribution the passage makes to the argument of the book.

The Gospel of John contains a purpose statement (20:30-21). John's goal in writing was that his readers might believe that the Christ is Jesus and thus have life. John 3:16 calls men and women to trust Christ, both his person (who he is) and his work (what he did) because he is the gift of God's love.

3 Phase Three: Shape the form of the biblical sermon.

The preacher's work begins with a focus on the text. Rather than thinking about what he can say about the text, he should think about what the text actually says. The point of the exegetical outline was to determine what the text says. Next, he must put the message of the text into a shape that allows him to communicate both the meaning and significance of God's truth to his congregation. He can do this in six steps.

3.1 Craft the proposition of the sermon.

The proposition of the sermon summarizes the point of the text in a way that is directed toward the preacher's audience. The summary statement the preacher prepared when crafting his exegetical outline will form the basis for the proposition.

3.1.1 The importance of the proposition

The proposition presents a central unifying idea for the sermon. It is the main point the sermon communicates. All the parts of the sermon contribute to the hearer's understanding of the proposition. Without a clearly stated proposition, the sermon can become little more than a collection of disconnected ideas.

3.1.2 How to craft a proposition

A good proposition answers two implied questions:⁴⁰

3.1.2.1 Ask, what is the subject of the passage?

The exegetical summary should provide an answer to this question. Using the illustration of John 3:16, one might say that the subject of the verse is "God's love."

3.1.2.2 Ask, what does the passage say about the subject?

If the subject of John 3:16 is "God's love," the preacher must determine what the verse says about his love. The preacher should combine the subject with a summary of what the verse says about it. This will be the sermon's proposition.

3.1.3 Characteristics of a good proposition

A good proposition is:

- Brief
- Memorable
- Relevant to the audience
- Faithful to the text and context

Some might summarize John 3:16 with the proposition, "God loves you." It is brief and memorable, but not complete. Another example might be, "God sent his Son to die so that we can live." This proposition is better, but it omits the main theme of the verse: God's love. A proposition that exhibits all the characteristics listed above would be: "God showed his love by sending his Son to die so that we might live."

3.2 Determine the form the outline will take.

The preacher may use a variety of forms for the outline of the message. Some texts will lend themselves more easily to certain structures. But the shape the sermon takes is a matter

⁴⁰ The answers to these questions combine as a subject and a complement. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 21.

of the preacher's preference. It is good to use variety. Four common types of sermon structures are:⁴¹

3.2.1 Deductive

The deductive sermon structure presents the proposition in the introduction. Points developed throughout the body of the sermon explain it.

3.2.2 Inductive

The inductive structure explains the ideas contained in the text throughout the body of the sermon and concludes with the proposition. The points build logically to the conclusion.

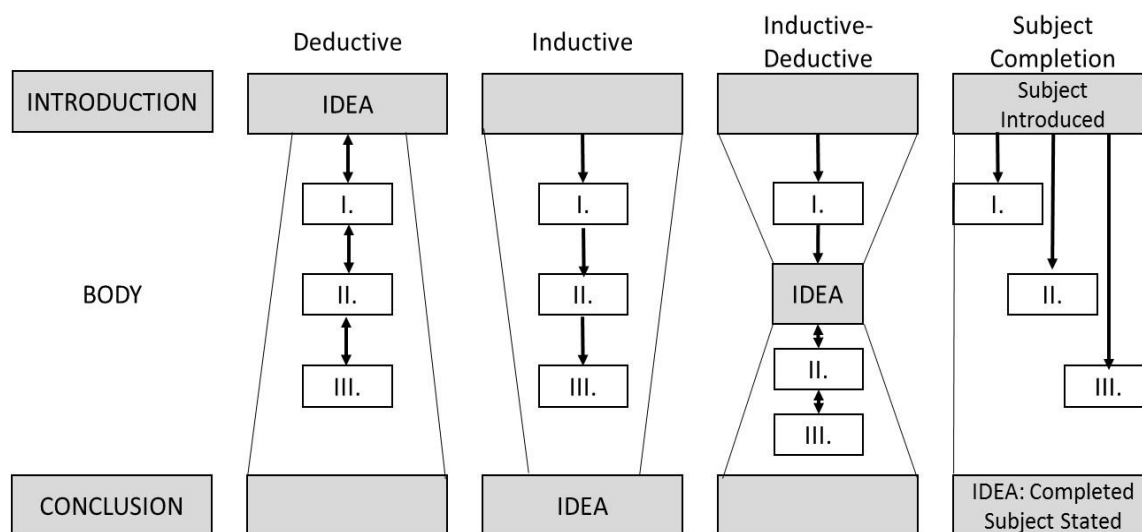
3.2.3 Combined (Inductive/Deductive)

Sometimes a sermon may combine both the deductive and inductive structures. The first part of the sermon develops inductively to a proposition that is then applied deductively in the remaining portion of the sermon.

3.2.4 Subject Completion

The proposition is constructed clause by clause throughout the sermon.

These four forms can be visualized this way:⁴²



Homiletic Structures

⁴¹ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 115-35.

⁴² Ibid., 117.

3.3 Write the homiletical outline.

Moving from the exegetical outline to a homiletical outline facilitates communication. Preaching is not an academic exercise, but an impassioned attempt to make God and his truth known to others. Therefore, the outline should be framed as speech to the audience.

3.3.1 Characteristics of a good outline

- The points of the sermon should communicate using complete thoughts.
- The points of the sermon should support the proposition.
- The points of the sermon should usually reflect the exegetical outline.
- The points of the sermon should communicate relevance to the audience.

3.3.2 Practical suggestions for the process of outlining

- Use consistent structural symbols.
- Write the main points first.
- Clearly distinguish between coordinate and subordinate ideas.
- Use statements rather than questions.

3.4 Fill in the details.

The body of a sermon typically will include six important elements. The first four are major components (large) and the last two are minor components (small).

3.4.1 Explanation

One mistake commonly made by younger preachers is including too much material in the sermon. They are excited by what they have learned and can't imagine leaving out any part of their research. In the end, they overwhelm the audience with details that don't advance the main point of the sermon. To avoid this, he should ask, what do my hearers need to know to understand this text? Provide all the explanation they need, but no more.

3.4.2 Argumentation

Argumentation demonstrates the validity of the truth claims made in the sermon. It shows why the hearer needs to accept them as true. Good arguments can also show why the hearers should act upon the point(s) of the sermon. Sometimes the preacher may develop the logic of an idea. Other times he might use other Scripture to corroborate the idea. He should be very cautious about arguing on the basis of experience; he must not give the impression that experience determines truth.

3.4.3 Illustration

Charles Spurgeon compared illustrations to a window; their purpose is to let in light.⁴³ Illustrations not only cast light on the subject, making it more understandable, but they accomplish many other objectives. They create interest and hold the hearer's attention. They provide guidance in applying the truth of the sermon. They make the truth memorable.

Preachers must use illustrations cautiously. He should not use too many illustrations. He should choose brief illustrations that do not detract from the sermon itself. He should be sure that the point he is illustrating needs illumination.⁴⁴

3.4.4 Application

Paul instructed Titus to “teach what accords with sound doctrine” to the believers in the churches on Crete (Titus 2:1). In the rest of the chapter, he listed categories of instruction to be directed toward specific groups within the churches. However, he did not specify what it looks like to be “sober-minded” or “dignified.” He left the details to Titus’ judgment; the details were to be “fitting with, appropriate to” sound doctrine.⁴⁵ This means that the preacher’s task moves beyond explaining doctrine to include the work of application. The Scriptures principally teach “what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man” (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q3). Therefore, “The exposition of Scripture remains incomplete until a preacher explains the duty God requires of us.”⁴⁶

Application does not mean the preacher should direct the congregation’s choices by promoting a list of prescribed behaviors. Instead, he should focus on shaping the hearer’s affection for the truth. Help them consider what loving the Lord with all their heart looks like in everyday life.⁴⁷

⁴³ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Art of Illustration: Being Addresses Delivered to the Students of The Pastors’ College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1897), 1. In the same passage he famously said, “You may build up laborious definitions and explanations and yet leave your hearers in the dark as to your meaning; but a thoroughly suitable metaphor will wonderfully clear the sense.”

⁴⁴ For helpful discussion on reasons to use illustrations, as well as sources, examples, and cautions, see Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 163-96; Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 151-62; Richard L. Mayhue, “Introduction, Illustrations, and Conclusions” in John F. MacArthur ed., *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 204-207.

⁴⁵ Πρέπω, *DBAG*, 861.

⁴⁶ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*. 210. This work provides a helpful list of nine categories of “common concern” on pages 217-18

⁴⁷ Two classic works on the preacher’s task help orient the preacher toward the genuine spiritual needs of his people. See William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), chapters 7-8, and Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2009), especially chapters

3.4.5 Transitions

Too often preachers make their audience “see” the outline of his sermon. They say things such as, “And now, point number two.” This sounds awkward because no one speaks that way. Brief transitional statements help the preacher move naturally through the sermon. He should use them as he moves from the introduction to the body of the sermon; between the points of the sermon; from the body of the sermon to the conclusion.

Not only do transitions help the preacher speak naturally and smoothly, they help the audience follow the sermon. “Transitions serve as road signs to point out where the sermon has been and where it is going.”⁴⁸

3.4.6 Summaries

Brief summaries at important transition points in the sermon, and especially in the conclusion, help the audience comprehend and remember the message. For example, the preacher might say, “Before we consider what Paul says next, let me remind you of what he has already said.” The preacher must be careful not to use the summary as an opportunity to preach the sermon a second time.

3.5 Craft the introduction and conclusion

Introductions and conclusions are brief compared to the body of the sermon. However, they both are very important and should be prepared with careful thought.

3.5.1 The introduction

The sermon introduction prepares the audience to listen to the sermon. It does this effectively when it accomplishes specific objectives.

3.5.1.1 The objectives of the introduction

A carefully crafted introduction helps:

- Capture the listener’s interest.
- Set the context of the passage.
- Give an overview of the passage structure.
- Introduce the proposition.

The preacher might accomplish the first objective in several possible ways. He might 1) demonstrate a genuine need, 2) connect the passage with a current issue, 3) introduce a problem that the passage will solve.

8-11. A review of these works would serve the teacher well, preparing him to guide the student’s responsibility and ability to apply the text.

⁴⁸ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 138.

3.5.1.2 Characteristics of a good introduction

A good introduction should be:

- Concise: its length should not overshadow the sermon.
- Engaging: it should draw out interest (but it should not promise too much).
- Relevant: it should connect with the audience in a meaningful way.⁴⁹
- Preparatory: it should equip hearers to focus on what God has said.

3.5.2 The conclusion

The conclusion of the sermon drives home the point of the message. Unfortunately, the conclusion is often the most neglected portion of the sermon.⁵⁰ Therefore, the preacher should plan it carefully rather than speaking extemporaneously.

3.5.2.1 The objectives of the conclusion

Conclusions should accomplish three objectives:

- Summarize the message.
- Exhort the listeners toward appropriate response.
- Motivate the hearers to act.

3.5.2.2 Characteristics of a good conclusion

A good conclusion should be:

- Concise: it must not extend the sermon unnecessarily.
- Clear: it should make the point of the message unmistakable.
- Hopeful: it should give assurance that all good things come from God.

3.6 Consider writing a manuscript

The author has found the practice of writing a manuscript to be a useful discipline.

Here are four reasons the author recommends the practice:

- When writing, the preacher thinks more logically, carefully, and clearly.
- When writing, the preacher uses more colorful and descriptive language.
- When writing, the preacher creates a permanent document.

⁴⁹ Bryan Chapell's "Fallen Condition Focus" concept is useful for this purpose, though unlike Chapell, the author does not think it must be used in every sermon. See Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 48ff.

⁵⁰ Mayhue, "Introductions, Illustrations, and Conclusions, in *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, 207.

- When writing, the preacher facilitates greater poise in the pulpit.

Writing a manuscript does not mean the preacher must use a manuscript when preaching; it is an exercise in giving careful thought to the message. When a preacher writes out his sermon, he must be careful to use an appropriate writing style. He should write “for the ear,” rather than “for the eye.”⁵¹ In other words, the manuscript should be written for normal conversation, not formal communication.

4 Phase Four: Deliver the biblical sermon.

4.1 Preparing to deliver the message

The faithful preacher needs to complete his sermon well before time to preach. There are tasks to perform between the preparation process and the preaching moment.

4.1.1 Review and modify the message.

It is beneficial to take a break from the hard mental work of sermon preparation. It allows the preacher to rest. Afterward, he can return to his sermon with a new vitality. As he reviews it with “new eyes,” he will see things overlooked before.

4.1.2 Pray, pray, pray

The faithful preacher will pray throughout the preparation process. His prayers offered just before preaching, especially on the Lord’s Day, should focus on the impact of the message on the hearts of both the preacher and the hearers. He should plead with the Lord to send his Spirit to empower his word. He should always be conscious of the fact that unless the Spirit of God works through the message, his preaching will accomplish nothing of lasting value.⁵²

⁵¹ Darrell W Johnson, *The Glory of Preaching: Participating in God’s Transformation of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 150.

⁵² See James E. Rosscup, “The Priority of Prayer and Expository Preaching,” in *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, 47-62. He decries the paucity of substantive discussion about prayer in most well-known books on preaching: “The reader does not see it in chapter titles, subheadings, or topical indices” (49). It is true that many books, while giving sound guidance on the intricacies of biblical interpretation, strategic homiletic structure, even including discussions of effective use of gestures and voice inflection, fail to list prayer as an essential discipline. The teacher must not duplicate this error. The author surveys the important symbiosis that exists between preaching and prayer, using texts such as 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; Ephesians 6:18-20; and Colossians 4:2-4. For a useful resource in this discussion, see Curtis Mitchell, “Evangelistic Praying,” *Grace Theological Journal* 5.1 (1984):127-133.

4.2 Delivering the message

The preacher should present himself with dignity, humility, and respect. He must remember that he speaks for Christ.

The preacher should focus on the message, not the “performance.” He should speak and act naturally. Otherwise, his work in the pulpit will seem artificial and contrived. This does not mean that he should never attempt to improve his pulpit behavior. Every preacher occasionally develops distracting habits that he should identify and eliminate. The preacher can enlist a trusted friend to help with this, usually his wife.

When the faithful preacher rises to speak God’s word on behalf of Christ, he should remember this challenge offered by another preacher:

- Preach to honor God’s Word.
- Preach to reach the unconverted.
- Preach to please God.
- Preach to equip Christians for the work of the ministry.
- Preach to lift up the downhearted.
- Preach to be more effective this time than last.
- Preach to bring conviction of sin and repentance.
- Preach to compete with no one but yourself.
- Preach to refresh the spiritually weary.
- Preach to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵³

Amen.

⁵³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, 271.

PREACHING THEOLOGY

Overview

This third workshop encourages exegetically sound, historically consistent theological preaching. The content is organized in five major points:

1. The nature of theological preaching
2. The potential dangers of theological preaching
3. The essential guidelines for theological preaching
4. The use of a confession for theological preaching
5. The value of theological preaching

The first major point frames the idea of topical preaching in terms of systematic theology. Rather than unleashing the imagination of the preacher to use the Scriptures arbitrarily, this section encourages systematic, logical correlation of doctrine. The second point offers a warning regarding potential misuses of theological (topical) preaching. This warning provides a platform from which to encourage sound practices for comprehensive doctrinal teaching constructed on the foundation of solid exegetical work. Commitment to exegetical analysis of selected texts also ensures that the preacher sets a proper interpretive example for his people. In order to counteract the potential dangers often associated with theological preaching, the third point discusses two essential guidelines: theological preaching must be exegetically based and historically consistent. The fourth point promotes historical consistency by introducing the New Hampshire Confession of Faith as a useful tool for theological preaching. Discussion of the NHCF is designed to accomplish a few modest goals. The confession can serve as a theological template for our people in their study of systematic theology. Since it is brief, it will not overwhelm them with too many details. Use of the confession can also encourage catholicity and historicity in their theological commitments. There is no expectation that this discussion will result in the practice of confessional subscription. Those matters would be better pursued in courses dealing with ecclesiology. The fifth major point attempts to provide motivation to put the ideas of this section into practice by listing practical values derived from employing systematic theology in a preaching plan.

Theological Preaching

1 The nature of theological preaching

A faithful preacher should “feed” Christ’s “sheep” (John 21:17) a main diet of biblical expositions, usually preached through a *lectio continua* plan.⁵⁴ Theological preaching departs from that plan. However, this occasional departure from the norm benefits both the preacher and his congregation.⁵⁵ It allows the preacher to edify God’s people in two ways. First, it enables him to address the congregation’s immediate needs. Second, it allows him to demonstrate the unified message of the Bible.

1.1 The preacher chooses and arranges his biblical text or texts according to subject.

The Bible addresses all the issues that believers face in the Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16-17), either through precept or principle.⁵⁶ Theological preaching will use the Bible to target the congregation’s needs. They might need theological grounding in essential doctrinal truths. Or, they might need specific instructions in Christian living. The faithful preacher will include sermons in his preaching plan that will foster growth in each of these areas. However, he must remember that all preaching should be expositional. That means he will base each message on the word of God with the goal to “expose” or “bring to light” what God has said in the text.

To this end, theological preaching may be structured two ways.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ “So the primary reason we should normally do expository preaching [i.e., *lectio continua* preaching] is that it expresses and unleashes our belief in the whole Bible as God’s authoritative, living, and active Word.” Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Viking, 2015), 35. Keller’s thought is on point, though in his own context he prefers to work through key sections of Scripture rather than entire books. The author draws a contrast between preaching *lectio continua* and theological preaching. This distinction is not intended to imply that the former is not or should not be theological.

⁵⁵ John Frame unites systematic theology and the preaching/teaching task, “we align the concept of theology with the concepts of teaching and preaching in the NT. The terms for teaching—*didasko*, *didache*, and *didaskalia*—refer not to the stating of objective truth for its own sake, but to the exposition of God’s truth in order to build up God’s people.” *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 7.

⁵⁶ “Topical preaching is a better medium for taking what could be said in many expository sermons and then making it more accessible by putting it in *one place*.” Jason C. Meyer, *Preaching: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 294, emphasis his.

⁵⁷ Many who studied homiletics in the author’s generation were taught a three-fold taxonomy of sermons: textual, topical, and expository. The labels applied to this three-fold division can be misleading if the preacher does not give full weight to the meaning of “expository.” John Stott rightly said, “[Exposition] refers to the content of the sermon (biblical truth) rather than its style (a running commentary). To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view The opposite of exposition is ‘imposition,’ which is to impose on the text what is not there. But the ‘text’ in question could be a verse, or a sentence, or even a single word. It could

1.1.1 The preacher may choose a single biblical text that teaches his chosen subject.

If a congregation needs to learn about prayer, a preacher might choose to preach a sermon from Matthew 6:5-15. He might use the text in either a single sermon or a series of sermons. If the congregation needs to learn about the nature of the Bible, he might preach on the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures from 2 Peter 1:16-21. At other times, the preacher might deliver a series of sermons from multiple texts that contribute to a broader understanding of a subject.

As the preacher develops a message from any text chosen thematically, he must be careful to consider the text in the same way he would when doing *lectio continua* preaching. This will safeguard him from reading ideas into the text that are not there. It will also prepare him to help the congregation think about the text within its biblical context.

1.1.2 The preacher may choose multiple biblical texts that contribute to the subject.

Sometimes the preacher will craft a single sermon dealing with a theme, but he will develop the subject matter from multiple texts. This is typically known as “topical preaching.” Returning to the example of preaching on the theme of prayer, the preacher might instruct his congregation specifically on evangelistic prayer, following Paul’s example. Multiple texts inform the listener’s understanding of the subject. Each text provides a new facet of the subject. Major features of such a sermon might look like this:

Proposition: We must pray for each other as we labor for the gospel.

1. Pray for God-given opportunities (Colossians 4:3).
2. Pray for God-given boldness (Ephesians 19-20).
3. Pray for God-given words (Ephesians 6:19; Colossians 4:4).
4. Pray for God-given protection (2 Thessalonians 3:2).
5. Pray for God-given success (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

be a verse, or a paragraph, or a chapter, or a whole book. The size of the text is immaterial, so long as it is biblical. What matters is what we do with it.” Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 125-26. The author prefers to teach the idea that all preaching must be expository. Differences in type are: 1) expositions preached according to *lectio continua*, 2) an exposition of a single text chosen for its subject, and 3) an exposition of multiple texts that contribute to a subject. This description is not as simple, but it is more accurate. In the current discussion, types 2 and 3 are treated under the single category, “theological preaching” because the sermon text or texts are selected for a theological idea contained therein.

1.2 The preacher correlates the sermon subject with categories of systematic theology.

“*Systematic* theology seeks to apply Scripture by asking what the whole Bible teaches about any subject.”⁵⁸ Systematic theology commonly groups the topics of biblical doctrine into ten categories.⁵⁹

- The doctrine of God (Theology proper)
- The doctrine of the Bible (Bibliology)
- The doctrine of angels (Angelology)
- The doctrine of man (Anthropology)
- The doctrine of sin (Hamartiology)
- The doctrine of Christ (Christology)
- The doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)
- The doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology)
- The doctrine of the church (Ecclesiology)
- The doctrine of last things (Eschatology)

A sermon subject is always theological whether it deals specifically with a doctrinal truth or a matter of practical Christian living. The preacher should meditate on the theological connections that pertain to his chosen subject. Using the previous example of evangelistic praying, the preacher may draw out several connections taught throughout the Bible:

- Prayer presupposes God’s greatness: his omniscience and omnipotence.
- Prayer presupposes God’s goodness: he is inclined to answer prayer and exercises providential oversight.
- Prayer presupposes human frailty: men and women are utterly dependent on him.
- Evangelistic prayer recognizes the importance of God’s redemptive plan.
- Evangelistic prayer upholds the centrality of the message of Christ crucified.

These five brief observations connect the sermon texts (Colossians 4:3-4; Ephesians 6:19-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2) with theology proper, anthropology, soteriology, and Christology. Additional thought could expand the network of connections. The point is not that the preacher must trace all possible theological connections a text(s) might have. However, he should select a few important connections to include in his explanation of the text(s). This will contribute to a growing theological literacy among his people.

2 The potential dangers of theological preaching

⁵⁸ Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 9.

⁵⁹ Variety exists in the logical structures erected by different systematic theologians. Some subsume angelology within their discussion of theology proper; many combine the doctrines of anthropology and hamartiology etc. Even so, most works of systematic theology discuss each of these ten topics.

A departure from preaching *lectio continua* takes the preacher down a path marked by potential dangers. The probability that these dangers will be realized increases as the preacher abandons his commitment to preaching *lectio continua*.

2.1 Danger of inappropriate subject selection

Since the preacher chooses the topic week after week, it is easy to allow his choices to be guided by his own interests. “He is tempted to think more of his ideas and his sermons than ‘rightly dividing the word of truth’ and leading men into the Kingdom of God.”⁶⁰ Thus, some preachers limit subject matter to noncontroversial doctrines. Others choose topics that their audience finds appealing. Still others have favorite topics that they expound frequently to the exclusion of other important doctrines. Preachers who follow these paths are seldom aware of their own motivations because no one can fully comprehend his own ability for self-deception (Jeremiah 17:9).

2.2 Danger of insufficient text analysis

Contrary to common assumptions, theological preaching is often more difficult than *lectio continua* preaching. When a pastor chooses a single text in the middle of a book of the Bible, he must do significant background analysis to ensure that he understands the text correctly. He cannot draw upon previous exegetical work compiled while working through the preceding elements of the author’s argument. Therefore, he risks making interpretive errors unless he invests sufficient effort to understand the role of the text within its context in the book. A topical sermon crafted from multiple texts compounds the same problem. Consequently, some preachers take shortcuts in the study process with the result that they place words in God’s mouth that God never said.

2.3 Danger of setting an inadequate example of biblical interpretive methods

Whenever a preacher delivers a sermon, he teaches his congregation on two levels. First, he teaches them the meaning and significance of a biblical text(s). Second, he teaches them how he arrived at the meaning and significance of the biblical text. Thus, every sermon teaches the congregation methods of biblical interpretation. When the preacher’s normal pattern for preaching is theological, selecting various texts, he never teaches his people how to read a book as the author intended. They will learn to treat the Bible as a collection of verses to be used as prooftexts for ideas chosen by the interpreter.

3 The essential guidelines for theological preaching

Preachers should strike a balance between *lectio continua* preaching and theological preaching. As noted previously, the former category ought to be the preacher’s standard practice.

⁶⁰ John A. Broadus, cited by Irvin A. Busenitz, “Thematic, Theological, Historical, and Biographical Expository Messages,” in *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, 213.

If the preacher maintains a commitment to the former and applies the following two guidelines to the latter, he can minimize the potential dangers associated with theological preaching.

3.1 Theological preaching should be exegetically based.

A faithful preacher will work with the text in its context to make sure that he grasps its intended meaning. Theological preaching is not a matter of simple, superficial proof-texting.⁶¹ It must grow out of biblical exegesis. “Exegesis and Systematic Theology properly go hand in hand. Neither is complete, neither is really safe, without the other.”⁶² Systematic theology cannot exist without being accurately grounded in the texts of Scripture. Yet, the exegete relies on theology (the analogy of faith) to verify his conclusions. This seems to be a circular process. Indeed, an essential symbiosis exists between theologian and exegete that leads to deeper knowledge of biblical truth. The preacher might never know the biblical teaching on a subject *fully*, but he can know it *truly*.⁶³

3.2 Theological preaching should be historically consistent.

As the preacher refines his understanding of theological truth, he should maintain a healthy suspicion of his own conclusions. Each interpreter brings a set of preconceptions to the study process that creates a potential for him to impose ideas on the text that the author never intended. As a safeguard against novel interpretations that distort the word of God, the preacher should compare his conclusions with theology taught by others. Specifically, he should consider theological teaching that is both broad and long. “Broad” teaching refers to theological commitments widely held by the people of God. “Long” teaching refers to theological commitments that have spanned the centuries. Proper theological preaching connects with the teaching of God’s people across the world and throughout history. While neither of these characteristics can guarantee the validity of every point of doctrine, they provide strong deterrent to creating deviant doctrines.

⁶¹ John Frame admits that “theology really cannot do without proof-texts,” but he also adds that “we should not cite proof-texts unless we have a pretty good idea of what they mean in their context.” The goal of biblical exegesis is to understand texts within context. *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987), 197.

⁶² John Albert Broadus, *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, ed. Edwin Charles Dargan (New York, NY: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1898), 124.

⁶³ This is the point of Grant Osborne’s “hermeneutical spiral” vis-à-vis the “hermeneutical circle” of Hans-Georg Gadamer. The image of a *spiral* indicates movement from the text toward growing understanding of the author’s intended meaning. The *circle* represents a closed, unending process governed by the reader’s evolving preconceptions, and excluding any possibility of achieving knowledge of authorial intent. For a cogent summary of Gadamer’s theory, see Paul Regan, “Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics: Concepts of Reading, Understanding, and Interpretation,” *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology and Practical Philosophy*. IV, no. 2 (2012): 286-303. In contrast, see Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 366-415. In two appendices Osborne explains 1) issues regarding the problem of meaning and 2) guidelines toward a solution.

4 The use of a confession for theological preaching

A historic confession of faith is a useful tool for theological preaching. A good confession of faith articulates widely-held theological conclusions forged by previous generations of believers. They give the preacher a guide to important theological subjects. They also create a sense of unity between the congregation and the broad body of Christ.

Historic confessions of faith share several characteristics.⁶⁴

- Confessions are human attempts to summarize and express the basic elements of the Christian faith.
- They were constructed throughout the ages by people from different contexts.
- The people who constructed them are all bound together by:
 - Shared commitment to God’s revelation in Christ
 - Shared commitment to the biblical text
 - Common human nature as readers of that text.
- Therefore, historic confessions have a quality that transcends the local conditions of their original composition.

The use of confessional statements is fully consistent with *sola scriptura*. In fact, their use “is as old as the Bible itself.”⁶⁵ Early summaries of doctrine appear in many New Testament passages that likely reflect early confessional statements. Clear examples would be: 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 1 Timothy 3:16; Philippians 2:6-11; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:22, 5:1.

4.1 A confessional resource for theological preaching

Several carefully crafted, theologically helpful, and widely used confessions of faith have been handed down through history. Two of the most famous are the Presbyterian document, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) and its Baptist counterpart, *The Second London*

⁶⁴ This list of characteristics is a restatement of Carl Trueman’s description in, *The Creedal Imperative*, (Weaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 65. The actual quote is, “. . . confessions are human attempts to summarize and express the basic elements of the Christian faith. They have been constructed throughout the ages by people from different contexts but who are all bound together by the shared horizons of God’s revelation in Christ and in the biblical text and their own common human nature as readers of that text. This is what gives creeds and confessions a quality that transcends the local conditions of their original composition”

⁶⁵ D. Matthew Allen, “Confessional Christianity,” *The Founders Journal* 58 (Fall 2004): 25.

Baptist Confession (1689).⁶⁶ Another document drafted by Baptists in 1833 provides a valuable resource for theological preaching. It is the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (NHCF, see Appendix D).

4.1.1 The origins of the Confession

A fellowship of Baptist churches in the state of New Hampshire (USA) established a committee charged with the task of preparing a “declaration of faith and practice . . . as may be thought agreeable and consistent with the views of all our churches in this state.”⁶⁷ They completed their work in 1833. The confession they drafted became one of the most widely used Baptist confessions in America.⁶⁸ Many Baptist denominations that later came into being adapted it as the basis for their own confessions of faith.⁶⁹

4.1.2 The strengths of the Confession

The NHCF was widely embraced because it exhibits several strengths. It is accurate, brief, and historical. Since it accurately expresses the major doctrines of historic Christianity, any preacher who uses it does not need to make a list of disclaimers or additional explanations. Because it is brief, congregations can easily grasp the basic thrust of its eighteen articles. Its historical character unites believers in a common doctrinal stream that flows out of the Reformation. Perhaps its chief strength lies in the fact that it has “always been an irenic document.”⁷⁰ It moderates the language of earlier confessions while holding firmly to historic doctrines of Protestant orthodoxy.⁷¹

⁶⁶ For an insightful analysis of the historical context in which both documents were born, see Timothy George, “Baptists and the Westminster Confession” (paper presented at the Colloquium on Calvin Studies, Davidson, NC, January 26-27, 1996), http://foundationrt.org/bw/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/George_Baptist_Westminster.pdf (accessed October 5, 2016).

⁶⁷ William Hurlin, O. C. Sargent, and W. W. Wakeman, *The Baptists of New Hampshire* (Manchester, NH: New Hampshire Baptist Convention, 1902), 51.

⁶⁸ *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. “New Hampshire Confession,” by M. A. Noll, 827-8.

⁶⁹ Ibid. The Baptist Faith and Message, confession of the Southern Baptist Convention (1925), shows significant dependence on the NHCF. Another example is the GARBC, a splinter group that separated from the Northern Baptist Convention over pervasive modernism. They adapted the NHCF in 1932 (with a modification that clarified their premillennial commitment). *Encyclopedia of Protestantism*, s.v. “General Association of Regular Baptist Churches,” by David M. Scholer, 2:526.

⁷⁰ Robert G. Delnay, “The Origins of the GARBC Articles of Faith” (paper read at Baptist Bible School of Theology, Clarks Summit, PA, March 15, 1983).

⁷¹ James Leo Garrett suggests that the confession’s silence on many doctrinal issues could lead one to conclude that it is as valid to call it moderately Arminian as it is to call it moderately Calvinist. *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009), 132. However, Tom Nettles labels it “warm evangelical Calvinism.” See his explanation in “The New Hampshire Confession: Warm Evangelical Calvinism” Founders Ministries Blog, entry posted July 27, 2014, <http://founders.org/2014/07/17/the-new-hampshire-confession/> (accessed December 7, 2016). A careful reading shows that certain elements of the confession are

4.2 Examples of preaching from the 1833 confession

The NHCF includes a list of scriptural evidences connected with each element of every article. A preacher may use the NHCF for preaching in two ways. He may choose to explain an element of an article by preaching an exposition of one of the supporting texts. Or, he may choose to broaden the message by focusing on multiple statements contained in an article, employing multiple supporting texts. Here are two examples. The first article of the NHCF is a statement regarding the Scriptures.

Article I. Of The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction;¹ that it has God for its author, salvation for its end,² and truth without any mixture of error for its content;³ that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us;⁴ and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union,⁵ and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.⁶

¹ 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 3:21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psa. 119:11; Rom. 3:1-2

² 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:38-39

³ Prov. 30:5-6; John 17:17; Rev. 22:18-19; Rom. 3:4

⁴ Rom. 2:12; John 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 4:3-4; Luke 10:10-16; 12:47-48

⁵ Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11

⁶ 1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3:5; Eph. 6:17; Psa. 119:59-60; Phil. 1:9-11

If a pastor wants to explain and emphasize the implications of the inspiration of the Scriptures he could choose to preach from the single text, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. The larger context of this passage reveals that Paul was challenging Timothy to “continue in” the Scriptures (3:14) and this text explains why Timothy must do so. A simple homiletical outline might look like this:

Proposition: We should devote ourselves to the Bible because it is unlike any other book.⁷²

Outline:

1. It is God’s own words for us.

irreconcilable to classic Arminian theology. See also, Mark Dever for an explanation of additional benefits of using the NHCF in, “Which Confession?,” *The Founders Journal* 61 (Summer, 2005): 4-9.

⁷² This is an example of the two elements that make up a proposition. The value of the word of God (“it is unlike any other book”) is the subject; therefore, the people of God should be devoted to it (“we should devote ourselves to it”) forms the complement. The choice of the word “devote” is applicational, related to the command *ὁ δὲ μένει* in 3:14. Paul commanded Timothy to “continue” or “remain” in what he had learned and believed in contrast (*δὲ*) to those who go “from bad to worse” (3:13). The concept of being *devoted* to the word of God is intended to answer the implied question, “how shall one continue in the word?” It also sets up additional applicational instructions the preacher might offer to his congregation.

2. It transforms our lives.
 - a. It teaches us the truth.
 - b. It rebukes us when we are wrong.
 - c. It helps us do what is right.
 - d. It trains us all of our life.
3. It gives us everything we need to do what God wants us to do.⁷³

This outline enlarges the confession's statement that the Bible was written by men divinely inspired (it is a book unlike any other); that God is the author (it is God's own words for you); that it is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction (it will transform your life through teaching, etc., and will give you everything you need).

A pastor is not limited to preaching from one passage referenced in the article. Using the same article of the NHCF the following outline reflects multiple statements and multiple texts presented in the confession. It focuses primarily on the phrase, "[the Holy Bible] has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter."

Outline:

1. The Bible's author is God.
 - a. The Bible was written by men guided by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21
 - b. Therefore, the Bible comes from God. 2 Timothy 3:16
2. The Bible's goal is our salvation.
 - a. The Bible's message is able to save. 2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 11:14
 - b. *Only* the Bible's message is able to save. Luke 16:29-31
3. The Bible's content is truth.
 - a. Every word is true. John 17:17; Proverbs 30:5-6

⁷³ The phrase "man of God," used by Paul only here and in 1 Timothy 6:11, has been interpreted two ways. Some see it as a general reference to anyone who belongs to God. So, George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 450. However, based on Old Testament precedent and the purpose of 2 Timothy, it seems more likely that Paul had in mind Timothy's role as a preacher of the word of God. See Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 593. Under this interpretation, the four-fold value of the Scriptures presented in 3:16 describes the effect of the good work of the man of God in the lives of his hearers. Since both the preacher and the hearers are enfolded into Paul's discussion of the value of the Scriptures, the author has consistently used the first person plural throughout the outline.

b. Every word is true because God never lies. Romans 3:4

Proposition: Trust the message of the Bible to meet your greatest need because it comes from God.

The three main points of this outline are taken directly from the statement of the NHCF; each subpoint summarizes an emphasis found in supporting texts. It moves inductively, building to the concluding proposition. The proposition captures the main points in reverse order: Trust the message of the Bible (it is worthy of trust because its content is truth) to meet your greatest need (humanity's greatest need is salvation) because it comes from God (God is the Bible's author).

4.3 Suggested ways to use the NHCF

The preacher can usefully employ the theology of the NHCF in a variety of ways. He might:

- Preach an 18-week topical sermon series that develops scriptural expositions related to each article in the confession.
- Periodically preach a shorter series of messages dealing with one topic in the confession.
- Make appropriate references to the confession while preaching sermons in his normal schedule.
- Include public reading of an article from the confession in a service that includes a sermon on a confession-related topic.
- Develop a congregational Scripture memory program based on texts in the confession.

5 The value of theological preaching

Theological preaching done well is hard work. However, exegetically based, systematically organized, historically consistent theological preaching yields many advantages for both the preacher and his congregation.

5.1 Theological preaching honors the wisdom and commitment of preceding generations.

Works of systematic theology and the church's confessions that distill theology into concise statements represent insights from innumerable people of God laboring across the centuries.

Creeds and confessions are voices from the church's past. They are the distillation of the church's discoveries of the meaning and the implications of the truth as God has revealed it in Holy Scripture and confirmed it in the experience and the conscience of his people.⁷⁴

Each generation of believers should endeavor to build on the foundation laid by preceding generations rather than dismissing it by trying to construct their own novel body of doctrine. Those who preceded the current generation served the same Lord and are worthy to be followed with careful consideration (Hebrews 13:7-8).

5.2 Theological preaching displays commitment to pass on wisdom to succeeding generations.

If a preacher demonstrates little interest in the theological riches received from preceding generations of God's people, he cannot expect the men who follow him to display high regard for what he teaches. He sets a precedent for the next generation. Second Timothy 1:12-14 and 2:2 show that the faithful preacher should stand as the nexus between the past and the future. His role is to receive the truth so that he can pass it on. Paul's description of the process does not advocate novelty or personal creativity.

5.3 Theological preaching enables preachers to communicate the truth clearly.

Theological preaching enhances the preacher's clarity in two ways. First, it forces him to think *logically*. He labors to correlate truth by replacing a "brush pile" of disjointed facts with a logical structure.⁷⁵ Second, it forces the preacher to think *comprehensively*, considering how themes connect throughout the entire corpus of Scripture. Every preacher has the tendency to become overbalanced, focusing on a few issues and ignoring other issues. Narrow focus obscures the truth woven throughout the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

A study of systematic theology will help us to keep and develop our spiritual balance. It enables us to avoid paying attention only to that which, by virtue of our temperament, appeals to us.⁷⁶

Clear and comprehensive doctrine leads to a healthy church. Van Til goes on to say that church history shows that when the church values God-centered preaching proclaimed by faithful men who declare the whole counsel of God, the church's understanding increases, and it flourishes.

⁷⁴ Robert S. Rayburn, "Biblical and Pastoral Basis for Creeds and Confessions," *The Practice of Confessional Subscription*, David W. Hall, ed. (Oak Ridge, TN: Covenant Foundation, 2001), 22.

⁷⁵ The author has borrowed the colorful phrase, "brush pile," from Dr. Rolland McCune, instructor in systematic theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. McCune used the expression to describe the first paper the author wrote for him. Though the author was pleased with the lexical and grammatical data he compiled to describe the text under consideration, his professor pointed out (in red ink) that the paper failed to systematize the "brush pile" of data, thus missing the point of the passage. It was a valuable and memorable lesson.

⁷⁶ Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. Edited by William Edgar (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 22-23.

5.4 Theological preaching prepares the church to establish meaningful boundaries for cooperation in ministry.

All believers share a common bond through mutual union with Christ. However, a shared position in Christ does not mean that functional, ecclesiastical unity is always prudent or achievable. The common expression, “churches of like faith and practice,” assumes a necessary relationship between the church’s body of doctrine (faith) and the way it functions (practice). Confessions and theological preaching,

... serve to protect and to foster the bond of Christian fellowship as a unity of faith and doctrine, of mind and conviction, and not merely of organization or sentiment.⁷⁷

Otherwise, how can a congregation justify excluding anyone from membership, exercising church discipline, or distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate ecclesiastical associations?

5.5 Theological preaching equips the church to defend against encroaching error.

Most of the biblical qualifications for a pastor deal with matters of character. The Pastoral Epistles list very few vocational qualifications. He must be “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2). Titus 1:9 echoes that, saying that he must “be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.” To this Paul adds, he must be able “to rebuke those who contradict it.” The faithful preacher bears the responsibility of protecting the church with a two-fold strategy, one part positive (teaching) and one part negative (rebuking). Theological preaching, especially preaching based on established, historical theological statements, helps discharge both aspects of his responsibility. It creates a protective barrier against error.

[Confessions] offer a summation of Christian doctrine for the instruction of the faithful; and they form a bulwark against the incursion of error by providing a standard of orthodoxy and a test for office-bearers.⁷⁸

Therefore,

... the health of the church depends upon its pastors functioning as faithful theologians—teaching, preaching, defending, and applying the great doctrines of the faith...⁷⁹

May God raise up men of God who will proclaim the whole counsel of God, clearly and comprehensively, so that the church of God will flourish.

⁷⁷ Rayburn, “Biblical and Pastoral Basis for Creeds and Confessions,” 21.

⁷⁸ Rayburn, “Biblical and Pastoral Basis for Creeds and Confessions,” 21.

⁷⁹ Al Mohler, Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2008), 105-6.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Here is a collection of resources that the author has found useful. Of course that does not mean that all these books are of equal value. A few are even flawed by significant problems. The most important works are identified by an asterisk (*). Those flawed by the hermeneutics of the Christ-center preaching movement are marked with a dagger (†). Brief comments are included under a few of the works.

*Alexander, T. Desmond. *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2009.

Alexander (Queen's University, Belfast) is an academic that isn't as well-known as some. You won't agree with all of his presuppositions about the text and its provenance, but he is committed to addressing the text in its established canonical form. Certain aspects of his approach to biblical theology are fascinating and on target, especially the connection between Eden and the tabernacle. He identifies themes traceable along a trajectory that spans the Bible's metanarrative.

*Chapell, Bryan. *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005.

Chapell's work is a standard text in homiletics, though weakened by his foundational hermeneutic commitment.

Chisholm, Robert B. *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006.

†Clowney, Edmund P. *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003.

Clowney is probably the single most influential man in popularizing Christ-centered preaching. He was masterful at his craft, whether or not you agree with his presuppositions about the process. He wrote a few texts, but his influence was primarily in the classroom. He popularized a diagram of his preaching theory that you will find in many places in various forms.

*Fee, Gordon and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

†Ferguson, Sinclair B., *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*. PT Media 2. London: The Proclamation Trust, 2002.

This is a little booklet. Ferguson seems more restrained in his approach to Christ-centered hermeneutics than others.

*Gibson, Scott M. *Should We Use Someone Else's Sermon?: Preaching in a Cut-and-Paste World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

†Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.

*Gordon, T. David. *Why Johnny Can't Preach: The Media Have Shaped the Messengers*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2009.

This work has practical relevance. Preaching in general and especially preaching from narrative passages is not just a science. It is both a science and an *art*. Preachers, unaccustomed to reading literature, tend to ask, *What is this passage about*, and fail to ask, *How is it constructed*? This stems from the fact that we are awash in visual media and bereft of immersion in good literature.

†Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988.

Greidanus is part of the Christ-centered preaching movement. However, his observations about exegeting the author's intended meaning are very helpful.

†_____. *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

_____. *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001.

Greidanus took his ThD in Amsterdam. The book recounts the backstory of the Christ-centered preaching movement—a controversy that arose in Reformed churches in Holland. The popular over emphasis on salvation history that prevails today was set in motion in that controversy as a reaction against moralistic preaching.

†Johnson, Dennis E. *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007.

This is an important work. It contains a large amount of helpful information. It is also important because it begins with two arguments that require response: 1) he specifically calls out dispensationalist hermeneutical emphasis on literal interpretation as being wrong-headed and 2) he argues that the apostles did not use literal interpretation—and we should follow their lead.

*Kaiser Jr., Walter C. *Preaching and Teaching from the Old Testament: A Guide for the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

_____. *The Majesty of God in the Old Testament: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.

*_____. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching & Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1981.

Kuruvilla, Abraham. *Privilege the Text!: A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 2013.

It has some very promising ideas. The fourth chapter is worth the price of the book. In it he goes head to head with the fad of Christ-centered preaching, using Genesis 22 as a test case. There are, however, some significant flaws. Most concerning is his affirmation of Paul Ricoeur's emphasis on "the world in front of the text."

*Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. *Preaching and Preachers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971.

*Logan, Samuel T., ed. *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1986.

Lowry, Eugene L. *The Homiletical Plot: The Sermon As Narrative Art Form*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980.

This book has been around for a long time and has been updated. It is odd and quirky (the author describes the elements of the preaching plotline as: oops, ugh, aha, whee, yeah). It deals with narrative as a preaching form. In spite of its oddities there a few good insights.

*MacArthur, John. *Rediscovering Expository Preaching: Balancing the Science and Art of Biblical Exposition*. Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1992.

Martin, Ralph P. *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.

*Mathewson, Stephen D. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

This has quickly become a standard text for the subject. I look forward to your reviews. I must say that I was quite surprised by the sample sermons that were included.

*Old, Hughes Oliphant. *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*. Volumes 1-7. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

The author was first a professor at Princeton and then at Erskine. He did not sign the statement on Scriptures at Erskine that rejected Barthian theology and affirmed inerrancy. Even though you will not share his presuppositions about the text, the historical work these volumes contain is immensely helpful.

*Piper, John. *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990.

This is a classic modern text that should be read and re-read.

*Perkins, William. *The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1996.

Perkins was one of the most influential churchmen in post Reformation England. This is a classic work that should be mandatory reading in every homiletics class. Perkins captures the Puritan understanding of preaching, framing it in the memorable words: doctrine and use.

*Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

The late Haddon Robinson's work remains the most useful text on expository preaching that has been ever been written.

*Ryken, Phillip Graham. *City on a Hill: Reclaiming the Biblical Pattern for the Church*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003.

*Ryken, Philip Graham, Derek Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan. *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship : Celebrating the Legacy of James Montgomery Boice*. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishers, 2011.

Chapters 5-6 of this work detail the work of expository preaching—both contributed by Baptist preachers! Chapters 1-3 make a convincing argument for the regulative principle of worship which serves to set the context in which our preaching should take place.

*Still, William. *The Work of the Pastor*. Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2001.

*Stott, John R. W. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982.

This is another classic text on homiletics. Every preacher will benefit especially from Stott's discussion of his method for carving out time for broad reading.

*Stuart, Douglas K. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

Example One

The Epistle of James A Homiletic Summary

Theme: Living Faith

Introduction: 1.1

Those with living faith:

I. Grow through trials.

- A. They don't lose their joy because they know that God is at work. 1.2-4
- B. They seek God's wisdom because they believe in Him. 1.5-8
- C. They trust God to always do what is best. 1.9-12
- D. They never blame God for our failure:
 - 1. They remember that God never intends for us to fail. 1.13-15
 - 2. They remember that everything good comes for God. 1.16-18

II. Cultivate a Bible-based worldview.

- A. They shape their lives according to Scripture which means:
 - 1. They "welcome" Scripture in order to achieve the righteousness of God. 1.19-21
 - 2. They obey Scripture and receive the blessings of God. 1.22-25
- B. Thus, they offer religion that pleases God. 1.26-27

III. Don't play favorites in the family of God.⁸⁰

- A. They do not show favoritism to others because it is inconsistent with God's character. 2.1-7

⁸⁰ This outline deviates from the exegetical outline at this point in that 2.1-4 prohibits partiality and illustrates the common sin that is to be avoided. 2.5-13 explains the prohibition by setting forth two related principles (5-7 and 8-13). I have decided to treat the prohibition as necessary background to the discussion of the two principles.

- B. They do not show favoritism to others because it violates God's law. 2.8-13

IV. Prove what they believe by what they do.

- A. They do not depend on empty words. 2.14-19
- B. They back up their words with actions. 2.20-26

V. Practice self-control.

- A. They are motivated to develop self-control by a sense of accountability. 3.1-2
- B. They work particularly hard to control humanity's chief sin problem, the tongue. 3.3-12
- C. They achieve self-control by applying godly wisdom to every area of life. 3.13-18

VI. Value humility.

- A. They refuse to let selfish pride define their relationships. 4.1-3
- B. They combat the worldliness that fosters pride. 4.4-5
- C. They conquer pride by humbling themselves before God. 4.6-10
- D. They allow humility to govern their relationship with others. 4.11-12
- E. They humbly submit to God's will for tomorrow. 4.13-17

VII. Reject materialism.

- A. They resist the seduction of wealth. 5.1-6
- B. They patiently trust the Lord for future blessing. 5.7-11

VIII. Mean what they say. 5.12

IX. Develop a lifestyle of prayer.

- A. They pray in every kind of circumstance. 5.13-16a
- B. They never underestimate the power of prayer. 5.16b-18

X. Hold each other accountable. 5.19-20

Example Two

First Corinthians An Exegetical Outline

The lesson: The local assembly is a community of faith that exists by God's grace and for his glory.

I. Introduction 1:1-9

- A. Greeting 1:1-3
- B. Thanksgiving for God's grace 1:4-9

II. Paul responds to reports from the household of Chloe 1:10-6:20

- A. The 1st reported issue: Divisions in the church 1:10-4:21
 - 1. Preoccupation with human wisdom divided the church 1:10-17
 - 2. Argument 1: The Gospel is contrary to human wisdom 1:18-2:5
 - a. The Gospel is contrary in its content 1:18-25
 - b. The Gospel is contrary in its purpose 1:26-31
 - c. The Gospel is contrary in its methods 2:1-5
 - 3. Argument 2: The Gospel comes from God's wisdom 2:6-16
 - a. God's wisdom was revealed the Holy Spirit 2:6-13
 - b. God's wisdom is received through the Holy Spirit 2:14-16
 - 4. Conclusion: The church was spiritually immature 3:1-23
 - a. The spiritually immature divided the church 3:1-4
 - b. The spiritually immature misjudged God's workers 3:5-9
 - c. The spiritually immature risked eternal loss 3:10-17
 - 1) Some risked eternal rewards 3:10-15
 - 2) Some risked eternal salvation 3:16-17
 - d. The spiritually immature must reject human wisdom 3:18-23
 - 5. Counsel: Humble yourselves to heal the divisions in the church 4:1-21
 - a. Command: Stop judging God's servants 4:1-5

- b. Confrontation: Repent of your own pride 4:6-13
 - c. Admonition: Follow your loving “father” 4:14-21
- B. The 2nd reported issue: Church members tolerated gross immorality 5:1-13
Counsel: Humble yourselves and purge evil from within the church
- C. The 3rd reported issue: Church members were suing each other 6:1-11
Counsel: Live together in unity that is consistent with spiritual life
- D. The 4th reported issue: Church members were visiting prostitutes 6:12-20
Counsel: Flee sexual immorality because you belong to Another

III. Paul responds to questions received in a letter from the church 7:1-16:12

- A. The 1st topic: Concerning marriage 7:1-40
 - 1. Proper conduct within marriage 7:1-9
Counsel: Marriage is God’s good gift which benefits moral purity
 - 2. Guiding principles regarding marriage and divorce 7:10-24
Counsel: Uphold the bond of marriage insofar as you are able
 - 3. Advice for those contemplating marriage in hard times 7:25-40
Counsel: Choose marriage or singleness for each has its own benefits
- B. The 2nd topic: Concerning meat offered to idols 8:1-11:1
 - 1. Principle: Protect the weak rather than your rights 8:1-13
 - 2. A personal example: Self-control for the sake of others 9:1-27
 - a. Paul had specific rights as an apostle 9:1-14
 - b. The progress of the Gospel takes priority over rights 9:15-23
 - c. Admonition: Pursue self-control rather than rights 9:24-27
 - 3. An OT example: Lack of self-control leads to sin and wrath 10:1-22
 - a. Illustration: Israel sinned and suffered judgment 10:1-13
 - b. Application: Flee idolatry 10:14-22
 - c. Conclusion: Mimic Paul, doing all for God’s glory 10:23-11:1
- C. The 3rd topic: Concerning head coverings in worship 11:2-16
Counsel: Men and women must behave respectfully in worship
- D. The 4th topic: Concerning the Lord’s Table 11:17-34
Counsel: Lord’s Table requires unity without selfish division

- E. The 5th topic: Concerning the use of spiritual gifts 12:1-14:40
 - 1. The Holy Spirit equips the church for service 12:1-31
 - a. The Holy Spirit has given diverse gifts for service 12:1-11
 - b. The Holy Spirit intends the gifts to benefit the body 12:12-26
 - c. Not all gifts were equally beneficial 12:27-31
 - 2. Love is the “more excellent way” 13:1-13
 - a. Service without love has no value 13:1-7
 - b. Service with love has lasting significance 13:8-13
 - 3. Love must shape service within the church 14:1-40
 - a. Love seeks to edify the church 14:1-5
 - b. Love speaks the truth with clarity in the church 14:6-19
 - c. Love upholds the testimony of the church 14:20-25
 - d. Love maintains order within the church 14:26-40
- F. The 6th topic: Concerning the resurrection 15:1-58
 - 1. Importance: The resurrection is essential to the Gospel 15:1-11
 - 2. Argument 1: If Christ is not risen, our message is empty 15:12-19
 - 3. Goal: Since Christ is risen, all shall rise to a new creation 15:20-28
 - 4. Argument 2: If we do not rise, service for Christ is useless 15:29-34
 - 5. Nature: God will sovereignly raise us in the image of Christ 15:35-49
 - 6. Certainty: God assures victory over death through Christ 15:50-58
- G. The 7th topic: Concerning the collection for Jerusalem 16:1-11
The community of faith has obligations that reach beyond the local assembly
- H. The 8th topic: Concerning Apollos and final admonitions 16:12-18
Stand united in mutual commitment to truth and love

IV. Conclusion 16:19-24

Example Three

Hebrews A Homiletic Summary⁸¹

Theme: The Superiority of Christ

Proposition: Persevere in the Christian faith because Christ, God's final revelation, is infinitely superior to the old covenant.

I. Prologue: Christ is the culmination of God's revelation because he is infinitely superior. 1:1-4

II. Christ is superior to all things. 1:4–10:18

A. Christ is superior to the angels, 1:5–2:18

1. You ought to believe that Christ is superior to the angels because: 1:5–14
 - a. Christ is the Son of God. 5–6
 - b. Christ is the divine King. 7–9
 - c. Christ is the eternal Creator. 10–12
 - d. Christ is the exalted Victor. 13–14
2. First warning: You must not drift away from the message of salvation in Christ. 2:1–4
3. You must not doubt Christ's superiority due to his humanity. 2:5–18
 - a. Christ, though infinitely superior, became a man so that he could taste death in your place. 5–9
 - b. Christ, though infinitely superior, suffered in order to turn away God's wrath. 10–18

B. Christ is superior to Moses, 3:1–4:13

1. Christ is the culmination of the faith of Israel; trust him! 3:1–6
2. Second warning: 3:7–4:13
 - a. Do not provoke God with unbelief. 3:7–19

⁸¹ This outline is adapted from an outline by R. Bruce Compton, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary.

- b. Persevere to enter God's rest. 4:1–13
- C. Christ is Superior to the Levitical Priesthood, 4:14–10:18
 - 1. Christ is superior because he is a different kind of priest. 4:14– 7:28
 - a. Christ is a different kind of priest, so you can and must draw near to God. 4:14–16
 - b. Christ is a different kind of priest, so he will save if you will obey. 5:1–10
 - c. Third warning: 5:11–6:8
 - (1) Grow up in the word of God! There is no excuse for spiritual immaturity. 5:11–14
 - (2) Press on toward maturity because apostasy has no remedy. 6:1–8
 - d. Christ is a different kind of priest, so we have assurance of God's faithfulness. 6:9–20
 - (1) You can persevere . . . 9–12
 - (2) . . . because God is faithful. 13–20
 - e. Christ is a different kind of priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, 7:1–28
 - (1) We need a different kind of priest because the Law cannot save. 1-14
 - (3) Christ is the superior Priest. 15–28
 - (a) Christ is the Priest who can never die. 15–19
 - (b) Christ is the Priest promised by God. 20–22
 - (c) Christ is the Priest whose ministry will never end. 23–25
 - (d) Christ is the Priest who offered a perfect sacrifice. 26–28
 - 2. Christ is superior because he has a different kind of ministry. 8:1– 10:18
 - a. Christ represents us in the very presence of God. 8:1–6
 - b. Christ brings us to God through a new covenant. 8:7–13
 - c. Christ offers an effective sacrifice. 9:1–10:18
 - (1) The sacrifices of the Law cannot save you. 9:1–10
 - (2) But Christ's sacrifice was perfect: 9:11–10:18

- (a) Christ's sacrifice provided our deepest needs. 9:11–28
 - [1] Christ's sacrifice provided eternal redemption. 11–14
 - [2] Christ's sacrifice provided a new covenant. 15–22
 - [3] Christ's sacrifice provided a heavenly high priest. 23–28
- (b) Christ's sacrifice was perfectly effective. 10:1–18
 - [1] Christ's sacrifice accomplished what no other sacrifice can do. 1–10
 - [2] Christ's sacrifice accomplished what no priest can do. 11–18
 - [a] Christ offered a sacrifice once that perfects forever! 11–14
 - [b] The Spirit of God convinces us that no other sacrifice is needed. 15–18

III. The superiority of Christ brings responsibilities to those who trust him 10:19– 13:17

- A. Believers are responsible to persevere in the exercise of spiritual privileges. 10:19–39
 - 1. Some of those privileges are: 10:19–25
 - a. Because of Christ, we must draw near to God. 19–22
 - b. Because of Christ, we must hold fast to the faith. 23
 - c. Because of Christ, we must encourage one another to love. 24–25
 - 2. Fourth warning: 26–39
 - a. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” 26–31
 - b. Endure and receive what God has promised. 32–39
- B. Believers are responsible to persevere in a life of faith, 11:1–40
 - 1. Faith connects us to realities beyond our senses. 1–3
 - 2. The Old Testament records testimonies of faith. 4–40
 - a. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. 4–7

- b. God is not ashamed to be called our God—if we believe. 8–22
 - c. By faith we see Him who is invisible. 23–28
 - d. Christ is the center of faith. 29–40
- C. Believers are responsible to persevere in the face of trials. 12:1–29
 - 1. Endure life's trials by looking to Jesus. 1–2
 - 2. The Lord's discipline is evidence that we belong to him. 3–13
 - 3. Fifth warning: 14–29
 - a. Do not fall from the grace of God. 14–17
 - b. We have great privilege, and with it comes great responsibility. 18–27
 - c. So, we must worship God acceptably. 28–29
- D. Believers are responsible to persevere by fulfilling various Christian duties, 13:1–17
 - 1. We have the responsibility of love. 1–3
 - 2. We have the responsibility of purity. 4
 - 3. We have the responsibility of contentment. 5–6
 - 4. We have the responsibility of faithfulness. 7–8
 - 5. We have the responsibility of endurance. 9–14
 - 6. We have the responsibility of pleasing God. 15–16
 - 7. We have the responsibility of submission. 17

IV. The Conclusion, 13:18–25

- A. Let's pray for each other. 18–19
- B. Let's pray for Christ's glory. 20–21
- C. Take the message of this book to heart. 22–25

Pastor Steven Thomas

Hebrews
Sermon Schedule

Huron Baptist Church

Date	Text	Title	Emphasis
2-Oct-11	Heb 1:1-4	Hebrews: What It Is All About	Christ is the culmination of God's revelation because he is infinitely superior.
9-Oct-11	Heb 1:5-6	The Supremacy of the Son	Christ is the Son of God.
16-Oct-11	Heb 1:7-9	The Supremacy of the King	Christ is the divine King.
23-Oct-11			Missions Emphasis Week
30-Oct-11			Missions Emphasis Week
6-Nov-11			Lord's Supper
13-Nov-11	Heb 1:10-12	The Supremacy of the Creator	Christ is the eternal Creator.
20-Nov-11	Heb 1:13-14	The Supremacy of the Victor	Christ is the exalted Victor.
27-Nov-11	Heb 2:1-4	How Shall We Escape?	You must not drift away from the message of salvation in Christ.
4-Dec-11	Heb 2:5-9	Incarnation and Glory	Christ, though infinitely superior, became a man so that he could taste death in your place.
11-Dec-11	Heb 2:10-18	Suffering and Glory	Christ, though infinitely superior, suffered in order to turn away God's wrath.
18-Dec-11	Heb 3:1-6	Greater than Moses	Christ is the culmination of the faith of Israel; trust him!
25-Dec-11			Christmas Message
1-Jan-12			Lord's Supper
8-Jan-12	Heb 3:7-19	The Tragedy of a Hard Heart	Do not provoke God with unbelief.
15-Jan-12	Heb 4:1-13	The Believer's Rest	Persevere to enter God's rest.
22-Jan-12	Heb 4:14-16	Christ: The Sympathic Priest	Christ is a different kind of priest, so you can and must draw near to God.
29-Jan-12			Prayer Emphasis Sunday
5-Feb-12	Heb 5:1-10	Christ: The Saving Priest	Christ is a different kind of priest, so he will save if you will obey.
12-Feb-12	Heb 5:11-14	It Is Time To Grow Up	Grow up in the word of God! There is no excuse for spiritual immaturity.
19-Feb-12	Heb 6:1-8	Beyond Forgiveness	Press on toward maturity because apostasy has no remedy.
26-Feb-12	Heb 6:9-12	Confident of Good Things	You can persevere.
4-Mar-12	Heb 6:13-20	The Anchor for the Soul	You can persevere because God is faithful.
11-Mar-12		Vacation	
18-Mar-12		Vacation	
25-Mar-12	Heb 7:1-14	The King of Righteousness	We need a different kind of priest because the Law cannot save.
1-Apr-12	Heb 7:15-19	A Priest Forever	Christ is the Priest who can never die.
8-Apr-12			Easter Message
15-Apr-12	Heb 7:20-22	The Promise of God	Christ is the Priest promised by God.
22-Apr-12	Heb 7:23-25	Unending Intercession	Christ is the Priest whose ministry will never end.
29-Apr-12			Lord's Supper
6-May-12	Heb 7:26-28	The Perfect Priest	Christ is the Priest who offered a perfect sacrifice.
13-May-12	Heb 8:1-6	Ministry In Heaven	Christ represents us in the very presence of God.
20-May-12	Heb 8:7-13	The New Covenant	Christ brings us to God through a new covenant.
27-May-12	Heb 9:1-10	What Religion Cannot Do	The sacrifices of the Law cannot save you.
3-Jun-12		Teaching on the Island	
10-Jun-12		Teaching on the Island	
17-Jun-12	Heb 9:23-28	Delivered from Judgment	Christ's sacrifice provided a heavenly high priest.
24-Jun-12	Heb 10:1-10	Once for All	Christ's sacrifice accomplished what no other sacrifice can do.
1-Jul-12	Heb 10:11-14	Seated At God's Right Hand	Christ offered a sacrifice once that perfects forever!
8-Jul-12	Heb 10:15-18	When God Doesn't Remember	The Spirit of God convinces us that no other sacrifice is needed.
15-Jul-12	Heb 9:11-14	Eternal Redemption	Christ's sacrifice provided eternal redemption.
22-Jul-12	Heb 9:15-22	A New Mediator	Christ's sacrifice provided a new covenant.
29-Jul-12			Lord's Supper
5-Aug-12	Heb 10:19-22	Confidence to Come to God	Because of Christ, we must draw near to God.
12-Aug-12	Heb 10:23	Unwavering Hope	Because of Christ, we must hold fast to the faith.
19-Aug-12	Heb 10:24-25	Coming Together for Love	Because of Christ, we must encourage one another to love.
26-Aug-12		Vacation	
2-Sep-12	Heb 10:26-31	Spurned, Profaned, & Outraged	"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
9-Sep-12	Heb 10:32-39	Faith that Endures	Endure and receive what God has promised.
16-Sep-12	Heb 11:1-3	Believing is Seeing	Faith connects us to realities beyond our senses.
23-Sep-12	Heb 11:4-7	God Wants You To Believe	Without faith, it is impossible to please God.
30-Sep-12	Heb 11:8-22	Longing for a New Home	God is not ashamed to be called our God--if we believe.
7-Oct-12	Heb 11:23-28	Faith That Transcends Sight	By faith we see Him who is invisible.
14-Oct-12	Heb 11:29-40	Reward Deferred	Christ is the center of faith.
21-Oct-12			Missions Emphasis Week
28-Oct-12			Lord's Supper
4-Nov-12	Heb 12:1-2	Run With Endurance	Endure life's trials by looking to Jesus.
11-Nov-12	Heb 12:3-13	Evidence of God's Love	The Lord's discipline is evidence that we belong to him.
18-Nov-12	Heb 12:14-17	Myths About Security	Do not fall from the grace of God.
25-Nov-12	Heb 12:18-27	Privileges of the City of God	We have great privilege, and with it comes great responsibility.
2-Dec-12	Heb 12:28-29	Acceptable Worship	So, we must worship God acceptably.
9-Dec-12	Heb 13:1-3	Entertaining Angels	We have the responsibility of love.
16-Dec-12	Heb 13:4	Honoring Marriage	We have the responsibility of purity.
23-Dec-12			Christmas Message
30-Dec-12	Heb 13:5-6	The Lord is Enough	We have the responsibility of contentment.

6-Jan-13			Lord's Supper
13-Jan-13	Heb 13:7-8	Jesus Never Changes	We have the responsibility of faithfulness.
20-Jan-13	Heb 13:9-14	Join Jesus Outside the Camp	We have the responsibility of perseverance.
27-Jan-13			Prayer Emphasis Sunday
3-Feb-13	Heb 13:15-16	Things That Really Please God	We have the responsibility of charity.
10-Feb-13	Heb 13:17	How To Have a Joyful Pastor	We have the responsibility of submission.
17-Feb-13	Heb 13:18-19	Praying for a Clear Conscience	Let's pray for each other.
24-Feb-13	Heb 13:20-21	Equipped to Please Christ	Let's pray for Christ's glory.
3-Mar-13	Heb 13:22-25	Listen To What I Have Said!	Take the message of this book to heart.



NHCF – Of the Scriptures

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: In 1833 Baptists in New Hampshire crafted a Confession of Faith to summarize the core doctrines to which they subscribed. This document eventually became the most widely used confession among Baptists in America (though sometimes with minor updates). It even influenced independent churches that wrote their own doctrinal statements in the latter half of the 20th century.

Article 1: Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction;¹ that it has God for its author, salvation for its end,² and truth without any mixture of error for its matter;³ that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us;⁴ and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union,⁵ and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.⁶

Text: 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (and other texts)

I. The Bible’s author is God.

- A. The Holy Spirit guided men to write the Bible. 2 Peter 1:21
- B. Therefore, the Bible comes from God. 2 Timothy 3:16

II. The Bible’s goal is our salvation.

- A. The Bible’s message is able to save. 2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 11:14
- B. *Only* the Bible’s message is able to save. Luke 16:29-31

III. The Bible’s content is truth.

- A. Every word is true. John 17:17; Proverbs 30:5-6
- B. Every word is true because God never lies. Romans 3:4

Today’s take-home truth: Trust the message of the Bible to meet your greatest need because it comes from God.

¹ 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 3:21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psa. 119:11; Rom. 3:1-2
² 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:38-39
³ Prov. 30:5-6; John 17:17; Rev. 22:18-19; Rom. 3:4
⁴ Rom. 2:12; John 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 4:3-4; Luke 10:10-16; 12:47-48
⁵ Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11
⁶ 1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3:5; Eph. 6:17; Psa. 119:59-60; Phil. 1:9-11



NHCF – Of the True God

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Today we continue a study of the New Hampshire Confession of faith, a document crafted by Baptists in 1833. It summarizes the core doctrines the Bible teaches. We use the confession as a lens through which to consider Scriptures that undergird it. This sermon will explore the second article of this important historical document.

Article 2: Of the True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth;¹ inexpressibly glorious in holiness,² and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love;³ that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;⁴ equal in every divine perfection,⁵ and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.⁶

Text: Exodus 20:1-4 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: There is one true God whom we worship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I. There is one true God . . .

He is a Spirit who is:

¹ John 4:24; Psa. 147:5; 83:18; Heb. 3:4; Rom. 1:20; Jer. 10:10

² Exod. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:6-8

³ Mark 12:30; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 10:37; Jer. 2:12-13

⁴ Matt. 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6

⁵ John 10:30; 5:17; 14:23; 17:5; 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6

⁶ Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5; comp. 2; 7

A. Living

B. Infinite

C. Personal

D. Self-revealing

E. Sovereign

II. whom we worship . . .

A. He displays his glory.

B. His children respond with loving praise and commitment.

III. as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

A. They are equal in essence.

B. They are distinct in function.



NHCF-- Of the Fall of Man

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: The third article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith describes the condition of each person in the sight of God. Each member of the human race is a rebel against God—by nature and by choice. And there is nothing that we can do to change this. Thus, Christ's death was essential for our salvation.

3. Of the Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker;¹ but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state;² in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners,³ not by constraint, but choice;⁴ being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin,⁵ without defense or excuse.⁶

I. God created humanity for his own purposes. Acts 17:24-28

- A. He made our parents in unconfirmed holiness.
- B. He placed our parents under His authority.

II. But our parents refused to be ruled by our Creator. Genesis 3:6-8

- A. Adam chose to transgress God's law . . .

¹ Gen. 1:27, 31; Eccl. 7:29; Acts 17:26-29; Gen. 2:16

² Gen. 3:6-24; Rom. 5:12

³ Rom. 5:19; John 3:6; Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:15-19; 8:7

⁴ Isa. 53:6; Gen. 6:12; Rom. 3:9-18

⁵ Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18, 32; 2:1-16; Gal. 3:10; Matt. 20:15

⁶ Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom. 1:20; 3:19; Gal. 3:22

- B. And thus, lost *everything*.

III. Their choice affects all of us, their descendants. Romans 3:9-19

- A. Each of us is a sinner by choice.
- B. Each of us is a sinner by nature.

- 1. We are unable to do what we ought.
- 2. We are unwilling to do what we ought.

IV. Therefore, all humanity stands condemned . . . Ephesians 2:1-3

- A. Condemned eternally.
- B. Condemned justly.
- C. Condemned irreparably.

Today's take-home truth: We cannot save ourselves from our hopeless condition—but we have a Savior!



NHCF—Of The Way of Salvation

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: The fourth article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith explores the salvation God has graciously provided for sinners. It reveals from Scripture that our only hope is in Jesus Christ who came to live for us and die for us and now reigns over us.

4. Of the Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace,¹ through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God,² who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin,³ honored the divine law by his personal obedience,⁴ and by his death made a full atonement for our sins;⁵ that having risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven,⁶ and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Saviour.⁷

Text: John 1:14-16 (and other texts)

I. You cannot save yourself.

- A. God saves sinners by grace . . .
- B. period!

¹ Eph. 2:5; Matt. 18:11; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Acts 15:11

² John 3:16; 1:1-14; Heb. 4:14; 12:24

³ Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:9, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21

⁴ Isa. 42:21; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:21

⁵ Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 4:25; 3:21-26; 1 John 4:10; 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Heb. 9:13-15

⁶ Heb. 1:8, 3:8-1; Col. 3:1-4

⁷ Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:9; Heb. 2:18; 7:26; Psa. 89:19; Psa. 14

II. Only Jesus Christ can bring you to God.

- A. He became one of us . . .
 - 1. Purposefully.
 - 2. Willingly.
 - 3. Sinlessly.
- B. So that he could live for us,
- C. Die for us,
- D. And reign over us.

III. He is the perfect Savior!

- A. He is the God-Man . . .
- B. And thus a Savior who is:
 - 1. Perfectly capable.
 - 2. Perfectly compassionate.
 - 3. Perfectly sufficient.

Today's take-home truth: Jesus is the Savior and there is no other—turn to him today!



NHCF—Of Justification
Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Biblical teachings summarized in the fifth article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith explains the foundational doctrine of justification. This doctrine was the flashpoint of the controversies that erupted during the Reformation. Roman Catholics then (and now) claimed that justification means “to make righteous.” Protestants insisted (correctly) that it means to declare righteous. God declares us to have right standing because all who trust Christ are united with him and receive the benefits of his perfect righteousness.

5. Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ¹ secures to such as believe in him is Justification;² that Justification includes the pardon of sin,³ and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness;⁴ that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood;⁵ by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God;⁶ that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.⁷

Text: Ephesians 3:8 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: Through faith in Christ we have right standing with God and all the rich blessings it brings.

¹ John 1:16; Eph. 3:8

² Acts 13:39; Isa. 3:11-12; Rom. 8:1

³ Rom. 5:9; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 9:6; Acts 10:43

⁴ Rom. 5:17; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:7; 1 John 2:25; Rom. 5:21

⁵ Rom. 4:4-5; 5:21; 6:23; Phil. 3:7-9

⁶ Rom. 5:19; 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 1 John 2:12

⁷ Rom. 5:1-3, 11; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 4:8

I. Our justification was secured by Christ. Ephesians 3:8

- A. Right standing with God is our greatest need.
- B. God declares righteous all who trust in Christ.

II. Our justification requires both forgiveness and righteousness.

- A. God forgives us as a gift received solely through faith in Christ's sacrifice. Romans 4:4-5
- B. God promises eternal life to us on the basis of Christ's righteousness. Philipians 3:7-9

III. Our justification results in a relationship with God that brings blessing. Romans 5:1-2

- A. Peace with God is ours!
- B. Every other necessary blessing is ours!



NHCF—Of the Freeness of Salvation

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Controversies swirled among some Baptists in America during the 1820s and 30s. A vocal minority of churches questioned the legitimacy of organizations such as missions agencies, Sunday school classes, and seminaries. Following an address delivered at Black Rock Church in Maryland in 1832, a fellowship of churches organized that called themselves “Primitive Baptists.” In the years that followed, this group gained a reputation for opposing the free offer of the gospel. This is an extreme expression of Calvinism confined neither to Baptists nor to the 19th century. Therefore, it is not coincidental that the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, published in 1833 contains its sixth article.

Article 6: Of the Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel;¹ that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith;² and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel;³ which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.⁴

Text: John 3:16–21

- I. **God freely offers the gospel to all who hear.**
- II. **All who hear the gospel are responsible to believe it.**
- III. **All who refuse to believe are justly condemned.**

- A. They have no one to blame but themselves.
- B. They “store up wrath” for eternity.

Today’s take-home truth: Today you have heard the gospel; God calls you to respond in faith. Do not delay.

¹ Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; Luke 14:17

² Rom. 16:26; Mark 1:15; Rom. 1:15–17

³ John 5:40; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:32; Prov. 1:24; Acts 13:46

⁴ John 3:19; Matt. 11:20; Luke 19:27; 2 Thess. 1:8



NHCF—Of Grace in Regeneration

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Today we will consider biblical teachings summarized in the seventh article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith. It demonstrates from Scripture that salvation is not merely mental assent to the historic facts of the gospel message. Salvation occurs only as the Spirit of God grants spiritual life to the spiritually dead. Spiritual life is evident in those whom the Spirit regenerates.

7. Of Grace in Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again;¹ that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind,² that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth,³ so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel;⁴ and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life.⁵

Text: John 3:1–8 (and other texts)

Today’s take-home truth: If you want to enter the kingdom of God, “you must be born again.”

- I. God graciously gives the gift of spiritual life.
- II. This means that God changes the sinner’s “governing disposition.”

¹ John 3:3, 6-7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7-9; 21:27

² 2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:5; 1 John 4:7

³ John 3:8; 1:13; James 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:13

⁴ 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 John 5:1; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-11

⁵ Eph. 5:9; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 3:14-21; Matt. 3:8-10; 7:20; 1 John 5:4, 18

III. How God does this is a mystery.

- A. We only know it happens as the Spirit of God . . .
- B. uses the Word of God . . .
- C. to create children of God.

IV. Those who have spiritual life display specific evidence:

- A. Repentance that bears fruit.
- B. Faith that perseveres.
- C. A life that follows a new path.



NHCF—Of Repentance and Faith

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Though predating it by 150 years, the eighth article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith speaks to a controversy that raged toward the end of the 20th century. The controversy was over the nature of the relationship between repentance and faith in God's work of salvation.

8. Of Repentance and Faith

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God;¹ whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ,² we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy;³ at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour.⁴

Text: Acts 20:17–21 (other texts)

Today's take-home truth: Repentant faith is the only way to come to God.

I. Repentance and faith are essential to salvation.

- A. God *requires* repentance and faith.
- B. God *unites* repentance and faith.

¹ Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:1

² John 16:8; Acts 2:37–38; 16:30–31

³ Luke 18:13; 15:18–21; James 4:7–10; 2 Cor. 7:11; Rom. 10:12–13; Psa. 51

⁴ Rom. 10:9–11; Acts 3:22–23; Heb. 4:14; Psa. 2:6; Heb. 1:8; 8:25; 2 Tim. 1:12

- C. God *enables* repentance and faith.

II. Repentance is the proper response to our sin.

- A. It is based in conviction of sin . . .
 - 1. The Spirit convinces us of our “sad state.”
 - 2. The Spirit convinces us of our only hope.
 - B. that results in turning from sin.
 - 1. This conviction produces godly sorrow, . . .
 - 2. agreement with God, . . .
 - 3. and pleas for mercy.
- #### III. Faith is the proper response to our Savior.
- A. In faith, we submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, God's perfect . . .
 - 1. Prophet, who speaks for God,
 - 2. Priest, who brings us to God,
 - 3. and King, who rules for God.
 - B. and depend on him alone for our salvation.



NHCF—Of God's Purpose of Grace

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: The title of the ninth article means that God has *purposed* to extend *grace* to lost sinners, that is, He has *planned* it or decreed it. This becomes apparent in the first line, "We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God . . ." The NHCF properly casts election in the realm of grace! The sermon will explore God's gracious election from several texts of Scripture.

9. Of God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners;¹ that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end;² that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable;³ that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy;⁴ that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree;⁵ that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel;⁶ that it is the foundation of Christian assurance;⁷ and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.⁸

Text: Acts 13:44–52 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: The biblical doctrine of election matures and transforms all who lay hold of it.

¹ 2 Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:3-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:15; 1 John 4:19; Hos. 12:9

² 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14

³ Exod. 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36

⁴ 1 Cor. 4:7; 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; 4:16; Col. 3:12; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 15:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:12

⁵ 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40; 2 Pet. 1:10

⁶ 1 Thess. 1:4-10

⁷ Rom. 8:28-30; Isa. 42:16; Rom. 11:29

⁸ 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 6:11

I. Election is God's choice to save some . . .

- A. It is a choice sovereignly decreed *before* time.
- B. It is a choice graciously accomplished *within* time.

- 1. His choice brings life-giving grace,
- 2. Sanctifying grace,
- 3. Saving grace.

II. The outworking of election is a mystery to us.

- A. It orchestrates all things to accomplish God's predetermined end.
- B. Yet God maintains humanity's responsible choices.

III. An understanding of election is essential to mature worship.

- A. As to God . . . It puts God's greatness and goodness on display most clearly.
- B. As to humanity . . .

- 1. It prepares the elect for the church's worship.
- 2. It fuels the elect for the church's mission.

IV. The elect display evidence of God's work.

- A. Every genuine Christian displays evidence.
- B. Christian assurance rests on that evidence.
- C. Hard pursuit of Christian character is the evidence.



NHCF—Of Sanctification
Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Our current sermon series is exploring the biblical doctrines summarized in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (1833). Today we will consider biblical teachings summarized in the tenth article. It speaks to misconceptions that became common in the 20th century regarding the Spirit's work.

10. Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness,¹ that it is a progressive work;² that it is begun in regeneration,³ and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.⁴

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: "The faith that saves is a faith that sanctifies."

I. God transforms his people into his own holy likeness.

- A. Transformation is ongoing, not instantaneous.
- B. Transformation is according to his will, not ours.

II. God transforms his people without fail.

¹ 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9; Eph. 1:4

² Prov. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Phil. 3:12-16

³ 1 John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14

⁴ Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 4:30

III. God transforms his people from the moment the Spirit gives them life.

IV. God transforms his people inwardly.

- A. He accomplishes this transformation by the Holy Spirit .
 - 1. The Spirit gives us life.
 - 2. The Spirit gives us strength.
- B. working through the means God has ordained:
 - 1. The Word of God
 - 2. Self-examination
 - 3. Self-denial
 - 4. Watchfulness
 - 5. Prayer



NHCF—Of The Perseverance of Saints

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: This Lord's Day we will review the eleventh article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith: Of Perseverance. The one who perseveres does not give up but continues in the faith and in faithfulness. The term implies a steadfast commitment despite difficulty. The sermon will begin with Jesus' parable of the sower and will include several other texts of Scripture that clearly demonstrate this important doctrine.

11. Of the Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end;¹ that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors;² that a special Providence watches over their welfare;³ and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.⁴

Text: Matthew 13:18–23 (and other texts)

- I. Real believers endure to the end . . .**
- II. distinguishing themselves from those who merely pretend . . .**
- III. because God ensures their outcome.**
 - A. God cares for his own.
 - B. God keeps his own.

¹ John 8:31; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18

² 1 John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9

³ Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Psa. 121:3; 91:11-12

⁴ Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Jude 24-25; Heb. 1:14; 2 Kings 6:16; Heb. 13:5; 1 John 4:4

Today's take-home truth: Real believers endure to the end, distinguishing themselves from those who merely pretend, because God ensures their outcome.



NHCF—Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Article 12 of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith addresses the relationship between Law and the Gospel. Some assume that since Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses, Christians are set free from the constraints of law as a principle. This is a distortion of biblical doctrine call antinomianism.

12. Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

We believe that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government;¹ that it is holy, just, and good;² and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin;³ to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible Church.⁴

Text: Romans 3:27-31 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: God rules by a perfect Law; we can only do his will when the Gospel transforms our affections.

I. God governs this world according to his moral Law.

- A. His Law is eternal.
- B. His Law is unchangeable.
- C. His Law is perfect.

¹ Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Luke 16:17; Rom. 3:20; 4:15

² Rom. 7:12, 7, 14, 22; Gal. 3:21; Ps. 119

³ Rom. 8:7-8; Josh. 24:19; Jer. 13:23; John 6:44; 5:44

⁴ Rom. 8:2, 4; 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 8:10; Jude 20-21; Heb. 12:14; Matt. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:28

II. Because of the Fall, no human being obeys his moral Law.

- A. They are unable to obey it . . .
- B. because they love sin.

III. But the Gospel changes this.

- A. The goal of the Gospel is:
 - 1. Deliverance from sin and
 - 2. restoration to obedience.
- B. The goal of the Gospel is based on the work of Christ.
- C. The goal of the Gospel is accomplished through:
 - 1. The work of Christ's church . . .
 - 2. as it applies the "ordinary" means of grace.



NHCF – Of A Gospel Church
Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: The 13th article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith offers a brief but valuable description of the local church. It includes statements that define its membership, activities, and leadership.

13. Of a Gospel Church

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers,¹ associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel,² observing the ordinances of Christ,³ governed by his laws,⁴ and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word,⁵ that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons,⁶ whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Text: Acts 2:37–42

I. The local church is an organized assembly of committed members . . .

- A. They are committed to Christ
- B. They are committed to each other.
 - 1. They share commitment to a common faith.
 - 2. They share commitment to a common purpose.

¹ 1 Cor. 1:1-13; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:31; 1 Cor. 4:17; 14:23; 3 John 9; 1 Tim. 3:5

² Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 5:12-13

³ 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:6; 2 Cor. 2:7; 1 Cor. 4:17

⁴ Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; 15:12; 1 John 4:21; John 14:21; 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 John 6; Gal. 6:2; all the Epistles

⁵ Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 12:14

⁶ Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 15:22; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1

II. who invest their lives in the biblical mission . . .

- A. Proclaiming Christ.
- B. Obeying Christ.
- C. And serving Christ.

III. under the direction of qualified leaders.

- A. They are led by a pastor and deacons . . .
- B. selected according to biblical qualifications.

Today's take-home truth: The local church is an organized assembly of committed members who invest their lives in the biblical mission under the direction of qualified leaders.



NHCF – Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Baptists believe that Christ bequeathed to the church two ordinances by which to remember Gospel truth and declare our faith. These are only two: baptism and the Lord's Supper. They employ deep, significant symbols, but they are not sacraments. This message will unpack the meaning of the symbols as described in article 14 of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith.

14. Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer,¹ into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost;² to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life;³ that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper,⁴ in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ;⁵ preceded always by solemn self-examination.⁶

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: Christ bequeathed to the church two ordinances by which we "see" the Gospel.

¹ Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:32-34; 18:8

² Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Gal. 3:27-28

³ Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16

⁴ Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts and Epistles

⁵ 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20

⁶ 1 Cor. 11:28; 5:1, 8; 10:3-32; 11:17-32; John 6:26-71

I. The ordinance of baptism comes first in priority.

A. (Participants) Baptism always follows faith.

B. (Method) Baptism is properly performed by:

1. immersion in water to symbolize spiritual cleansing . . .
2. that accompanies submission to the Triune God.

C. (Purpose) Baptism publicly demonstrates the believer's union with Christ through faith.

1. It demonstrates union with Christ in death.
2. It demonstrates union with Christ in life.

D. (Result) Baptism is the "doorway" into the life of the church.

II. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper follows baptism.

A. (Participants) The Lord's Supper belongs to members of the local assembly.

B. (Method) The Lord's Supper uses ordinary elements for a sacred purpose.

C. (Purpose) The Lord's Supper:

1. Unites the assembly . . .
2. through remembrance of Christ.

D. (Result) The Lord's Supper helps maintain the purity of the church.



NHCF – Of the Christian Sabbath

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: The fifteenth article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith describes the historic Christian understanding of the significance of Sunday. The confession uses the word “Sabbath,” a term that simply means a day of “rest.” Most Baptists prefer not to use this term today because it implies the error that the laws associated with the fourth commandment have been transferred from Saturday (Israel’s Sabbath) to Sunday. The New Testament shows that the early church concentrated corporate worship on Sunday, calling it “the Lord’s Day.”

15. Of the Christian Sabbath

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord’s Day, or Christian Sabbath;¹ and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes,² by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations;³ by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private⁴ and public;⁵ and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God.⁶

Text: Revelation 1:10 (and other texts)

Today’s take-home truth: Sunday belongs to our Lord; we set it apart for worship that deepens our longing for home.

¹ Acts 20:7; Gen. 2:3; Col. 2:16-17; Mark 2:27; John 20:19; 1 Cor. 16:1-2

² Exod. 20:8; Rev. 1:10; Psalms 118:24

³ Isa. 58:13-14; 56:2-8

⁴ Psalms 119:15

⁵ Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 11:26; 13:44; Lev. 19:30; Exod. 46:3; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2, 3; Psalms 26:8; 87:3

⁶ Heb. 4:3-11

⁷ The Confession prohibits “sinful” recreations on Sunday. This does not mean that sinful activities are acceptable on other days. Rather, the point is that it is sinful to allow recreation to interfere with our commitment to corporate worship.

I. Sunday is the Lord’s Day.

- A. It is not a continuation of Sabbatarian law . . .
- B. But it is a day to remember the resurrection of Christ.

II. Therefore, we set Sunday apart to focus on corporate worship.

- A. We do this by abstaining from things that interfere with corporate worship:
 - 1. Such as unessential work,
 - 2. and inappropriate distractions.⁷
- B. We do this by faithfully pursuing the “ordinary means of grace:”
 - 1. Worship in the Word, song, and prayer . . .
 - 2. in both private devotion and public fellowship.

III. Through this weekly practice, we deepen our affection for Christ and the “rest” that awaits in his presence.



NHCF—Of Civil Government

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Baptists have always insisted the Bible teaches the separation of church and state. By this they mean that government cannot interfere with the affairs of the church. That does not mean, however, that they promote anarchy. The 16th article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith explains the biblical view of civil government. It is a timely subject for our chaotic times.

16. Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society;¹ and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed;² except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ³ who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.⁴

Text: Romans 13:1-7 (and other texts)

Today's take-home truth: We are citizens of heaven; we honor the King who rules *there* as we honor the kings he appoints to rule *here*.

I. Civil government exists by God's sovereign design.

- A. He uses it to provide society with good.
- B. He uses it to protect society from chaos.

¹ Rom. 13:1-7; Deut. 16:18; 1 Sam. 23:3; Exod. 18:23; Jer. 30:21

² Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:1-8

³ Acts 5:29; Matt. 10:28; Dan. 3:15-18; 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20

⁴ Matt. 23:10; Rom. 14:4; Rev. 19:16; Psa. 72:11; Psa. 2; Rom. 14:9-13

II. Since God raises up our leaders for his purposes . . .

- A. We must pray for them.
- B. We must respect them.
- C. We must obey them.

III. God does not permit civil disobedience—with one exception.

- A. He requires it when government leaders demand disobedience to Christ.
- B. He requires it then because Christ is preeminent.
 - 1. He is Lord over our conscience.
 - 2. He is Lord over our rulers.



NHCF – Of The Righteous and the Wicked

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: Most people believe that most of those who die “go to a better place.” Conversely (and ironically), most people also believe that hell does not exist. On what basis do they formulate these conflicting opinions? The Scriptures tell a different story. The seventeenth article of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith explains the biblical teaching on the eternal destiny that awaits the righteous and the wicked.

17. Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked;¹ that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem;² while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse;³ and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.⁴

Text: Malachi 3:16-18 (and other texts)

Today’s take-home truth: In all the world, there are only two kinds of people and the two fact very different destinies.

I. God divides all humanity into two groups: the righteous and the wicked.

- A. The difference between them is radical.
- B. The difference between them is essential.

¹ Mal. 3:18; Prov. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 6:16

² Rom. 1:17; 7:6; 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor. 11:32; Prov. 11:31; 1 Pet. 4:17-18

³ 1 John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Psa. 10:4; Isa 55:6-7

⁴ Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Prov. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; 9:23-26; John 12:25-26; Eccl. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14

II. The righteous are all those whom God:

- A. Justifies through faith in Christ . . .
- B. and sanctifies by his Spirit.

III. The wicked are all those who:

- A. Refuse to repent of sin,
- B. persist in unbelief,
- C. and despise God’s judgment.

IV. The righteous and wicked face different, eternal destinies.



NHCF—Of The World to Come

Pastor Steven Thomas

Introduction: The New Hampshire Confession of Faith concludes with a glimpse of the end of the Bible's storyline. The eighteenth article collapses together many of the end time events the Bible describes, giving us a summary of key ideas found in all Christian doctrinal traditions: Christ will return, the dead will be raised, all will face him as the great Judge, and the world will be forever changed!

18. Of the World to Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching;¹ that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven,² and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution;³ that a solemn separation will then take place;⁴ that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy;⁵ and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.⁶

Text: 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12 (and other texts)

I. Jesus is coming again . . .

- A. The world as we know it will end.
- B. Every human being will stand before him.

II. to set all things right . . .

- A. He will repay the wicked . . .

- B. and he will reward the righteous.

III. forever!

- A. Christ's judgment will never be thwarted.
- B. Christ's righteousness will prevail forever.

Today's take-home truth: Jesus is coming again to set all things right forever! What will become of you on that day?

¹ 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; 1 John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; 13:39-40; 2 Pet. 3:3-13

² Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11

³ Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:12-59; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:25-26; 2 Tim. 1:10; Acts 10:42

⁴ Matt. 13:49; 37-43; 24:30-31; 25:31-33

⁵ Matt. 25:35-41; Rev. 22:11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:32; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; 2 Cor. 4:18

⁶ Rom. 3:5-6; 2 Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev. 20:11-12; 1 John 2:28; 4:17