Preaching the Book God Wrote, Part 3
Code: A228

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5. *How did the preacher's message begin?*

The message began as a true word from God and was given as truth because God's purpose was to transmit truth. It was ordered by God as truth and was delivered by God's Spirit in cooperation with holy men who received it with exactly the pure quality that God intended (2 Pet. 1:20-21). It was received as *Scriptura inerrantis* by the prophets and apostles, i.e., without wandering from Scripture's original formulation in the mind of God.

Inerrancy then expresses the quality with which the writers of our canon received the text we call Scripture.

6. *How is God's message to continue in its original true state?*

If God's message began true and if it is to be delivered as received, what interpretive processes necessitated by changes of language, culture and time, will ensure its purity when currently preached? The answer is that only an exegetical approach is acceptable for accurate exposition.

Having established the essential need for exegesis, the most logical question is, "How is interpretation/exegesis linked with preaching?"

Packer answers best:

The Bible being what it is, all true interpretation of it must take the form of preaching. With this goes an equally important converse: that, preaching being what it is all true preaching must take the form of biblical interpretation? (Packer, *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, 187)

7. *Now, practically pulling our thinking all together, "What is the final step that links inerrancy to preaching?"*

First, the true text must be used. We are indebted to those select scholars who labor tediously in the field of textual criticism. Their studies recover the original text of Scripture from the large volume of extant manuscript copies which are flawed by textual variants. This is the starting point. Without the text as God gave it, the preacher would be helpless to deliver it as God intended.

Second, having begun with a true text, we need to interpret the text accurately. The science of hermeneutics is in view.

As a theological discipline hermeneutics is the science of the correct interpretation of the Bible. It is a special application of the general science of linguistics and meaning. It seeks to formulate those particular rules which pertain to the special factors connected with the Bible....Hermeneutics is a science in that it can determine certain principles for discovering the meaning of a document, and in that these principles are not a mere list of rules but bear organic connection to each other. It is also an art as we previously indicated because principles or rules can never be applied mechanically but involve the skill (technmae) of the interpreter. (Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 11)

Third, our exegesis must flow from a proper hermeneutic. Of this relationship, Bernard Ramm observes that hermeneutics,

...stands in the same relationship to exegesis that a rule-book stands to a game. The rule-book is written in terms of reflection, analysis, and experience. The game is played by concrete actualization of the rules. The rules are not the game, and the game is meaningless without the rules. Hermeneutics proper is not exegesis, but exegesis is applied hermeneutics. (Ibid.)

So exegesis is the skillful application of sound hermeneutical principles to the Biblical text in the original language with a view to understanding and declaring the author's intended meaning both to the immediate and subsequent audiences. In tandem, hermeneutics and exegesis focus on the Biblical text to determine what it said and what it meant originally (cf. John D. Grassmick, *Principles and Practice of Greek Exegesis*, 7). Thus, exegesis in its broadest sense will include the various disciplines of literary criticism, historical studies, grammatical exegesis, historical theology, biblical theology and systematic theology. Proper exegesis will tell the student what the text says, what the text means, and how the text applies personally.

Fourth, we are now ready for a true exposition. Based on the flow of thinking that we have just come through, I assert that expository preaching is really exegetical preaching and not so much the homiletical form of the message. Merrill Unger accurately noted:

It is not the length of the portion treated, whether a single verse or a larger unit, but the manner of treatment. No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the light of the overall context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be expository preaching. (Merrill F. Unger, *Principles of Expository Preaching,* 33)

As a result of this exegetical process that began with inerrancy, the expositor is equipped with a true message, with true intent and with true application. It gives him preaching perspective historically, theologically, contextually, literarily, synoptically and culturally. His message is God's intended message.

Now because this all seems so patently obvious, we might ask, "How did the church ever lose sight of inerrancy's relationship to preaching?" Let me suggest that the current drift is nothing other than the legacy of liberalism.

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