

Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

Preaching the Book God Wrote, Part 5

Scripture: Acts 6:2, 4

Code: A230

John MacArthur

This concludes our series on the critical relationship between biblical inerrancy and expository preaching.

OUR CHALLENGE

One of the most powerful and effective preachers ever to live was Scotland's Robert Murray McCheyne. In the memoirs of McCheyne's life, Andrew Bonar writes:

It was his wish to arrive nearer at the primitive mode of expounding Scripture in his sermons. Hence when one asked him, if he was ever afraid of running short of sermons some day, he replied--"No; I am just an interpreter of Scripture in my sermons; and when the Bible runs dry, then I shall." And in the same spirit he carefully avoided the too common mode of accommodating texts--fastening a doctrine on the words, not drawing it from the obvious connection of the passage. He endeavoured at all times to preach the mind of the Spirit in a passage; for he feared that to do otherwise would be to grieve the Spirit who had written it. Interpretation was thus a solemn matter to him. And yet, adhering scrupulously to this sure principle, he felt himself in no way restrained from using, for every day's necessities, all parts of the Old Testament as much as the New. His manner was first to ascertain the primary sense and application, and so proceed to handle it for present use. (*Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray McCheyne*, 94)

The expositor's task is to preach the mind of God as he finds it in the inerrant Word of God. He understands it through the disciplines of hermeneutics and exegesis. He declares it expositively then as the message which God spoke and commissioned him to deliver.

John Stott has deftly sketched the relationship of the exegetical process to expository preaching:

Expository preaching is a most exacting discipline. Perhaps that is why it is so rare. Only those will undertake it who are prepared to follow the example of the apostles and say, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables....We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:2, 4). The systematic preaching of the Word is impossible without the systematic study of it. It will not be enough to skim through a few verses in daily Bible reading, nor to study a passage only when we have to preach from it. No. We must daily soak ourselves in the

Scriptures. We must not just study, as through a microscope, the linguistic minutiae of a few verses, but take our telescope and scan the wide expanses of God's Word, assimilating its grand theme of divine sovereignty in the redemption of mankind. "It is blessed," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, "to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in Scriptural language, and your spirit is flavoured with the words of the Lord, so that your blood is Bibline and the very essence of the Bible flows from you." (*The Preacher's Portrait*, 30-31)

Inerrancy demands an exegetical process and an expository proclamation. Only the exegetical process preserves God's Word entirely and exactly as He intended it to be proclaimed. Expository preaching is the result of the exegetical process. Thus, it is the essential link between inerrancy and proclamation. It is mandated to preserve the purity of God's originally given inerrant Word and to proclaim the whole counsel of God's redemptive truth.

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