Expository Preaching
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Let me just say that what I want to do is to read off about 18 or so principles that are involved in exposition in one way or another, and then I'm going to try to just talk about those, okay? I hope it will be helpful to you and to those who will listen to the tape.

So what we want to do then is to review some key principles in expository preaching. I want to read the principle and then we'll talk about it. And again, let me say that some of this will touch on things that we've already discussed.

All right, principle number one, the Word of God is a holy and sacred thing...treat it with awe and respect, protect its purity and never knowingly violate its sanctity.

Of course I think we're all aware of this. But it is something we need to be reminded about that the Bible is the Word of God. It emanates from the holiness of God. It reflects the mind and the heart and the will of God. And as such, it must be treated with a tremendous amount of respect. The Bible is not to be dealt with flippantly, it is not to be dealt with...with lack of diligence, it is not to be dealt with in a cursory manner. It is to be dealt with with tremendous commitment.

You know, one of the things that's become apparent to me as you just kind of keep your ear to the ground and watch what's going on in terms of theology today is that expositors never come out of institutions with a low view of Scripture...never. Liberals make terrible Bible expositors...in fact, they don't make them at all simply because they do not believe there's anything significant about the terms, so why bother to deal with the terms. But it isn't only the liberals that concern me in that dimension, I think that even evangelicals and fundamentalists have the same problem. We would say that liberals attack the authority of Scripture in a head-on attack. They deny it. They want to deal with a different level of inspiration, whether it's the inspiration of someone's thought or whether it's the existential approach that if it zaps you somewhere then that's inspired for you, or whatever approach they take that's less than verbal plenary inspiration. The result of all of that is that there are no real significances attached to the terms themselves, so they don't bother to deal in an expository manner. They talk in broad generalities.

But it's amazing to me also that even evangelicals do the same thing. Recently I, and I've done this a couple of times, but when I was giving some messages along this line to a group of pastors, I said "The liberals attack the Bible by denying its truth," you know, and you can hear the "amens" ripple across the room. And I said, "And then the people who have sort of flipped out on the experiential end and on the Charismatic end and have taken those things to excess, they come along and say...Well, Jesus said to me...or I had a vision...or God spoke to me...or the Lord showed me what this meant." And what they're doing really is adding their own experience, their own revelations, their own visions to the Bible and in so doing that they undermine the authority of Scripture, too, and it becomes just as important to for them to teach their experiences as it does to teach the Bible. And so, the purity of expository preaching is watered down. And also what invariably happens is in that particular movement you wind up with a tremendous freedom to use the Bible almost as a creative instrument, it's almost like a paint brush. You can use it to paint anything you want. You can make verses say whatever you want them to say. You can be very fanciful. You can be very allegorical because your experiences and your feelings and your emotions and your intuitions and your visions and your revelations are substantively the equivalent of Scripture.

And then you have, of course, the evangelical and the fundamental people who would die for the absolute authority of Scripture but they get up week after week in their pulpits and never delineate its principles. And in my judgment, that's the worst of all because to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. I mean, we know that every word is pure, right? And if we don't deal in an expository manner with the Word of God, then we're denying the precept of the Bible itself, that it is in fact in every word the Word of God. And so the greater sin is at the door of the evangelical who affirms this high view of Scripture but number one, doesn't believe that he should be involved in an expository ministry, or number two, is involved in exposition in a superficial non-diligent way. You can't treat Scripture like that. If you're going to do it, you've got to get in and be diligent.

And I guess maybe this is where some things start breaking down. You cannot do Bible exposition unless you're willing to make the effort that it takes to apply yourself studiously, prayerfully to the text. And that's the heart of it. But I can't imagine treating the Word of God with any less diligence than that. People say to me all the time, "Why do you approach the Bible this way? Why do you go in to so much detail? Why don't you just hit the practical things?" The answer is because I really feel that what God says is more important than the application that I make to the present day. In other words, I've got to know what God said and what He meant by what He said. This is His Word. A very high view of Scripture and treating it as a sacred thing is the first key principle.

Now I took a little longer on that one because I feel it's so utterly essential that we understand that we must treat the Word of God as a sacred thing. Now that also mean that you're careful how you use humor. Humor is a great devise, isn't it? And we all use humor. I mean, frankly, not to use humor is to deny people a very normal human response and emotion. My father used to say to me years ago when I was young, "The pulpit is no place for humor." And I remember when he changed, you know. I

told a few good jokes and they worked real well so he wanted a few. Whatever opens up the channels of communication. That was years ago and he was taught that, that you should be absolutely serious. Now there are times when you should be. And if you don't learn when those times are, you'll have a flippancy that people won't understand and what it will tend to do is make the Bible's truths flippant in their minds. And let me make one other suggestion. When you use humor in your preaching, and it has a very good place, never use it at the expense of Scripture, always use it in the illustration. There are a lot of guys who will take a Bible story, Bible account, a passage and they'll turn it into a funny funny thing because they've got the imagination to pull that off. But they've adulterated the pure meaning of the text. If you want to be funny, be funny at the expense of an illustration, not at the expense of the Scripture.

You know, I always think about the typical youth speakers, you know. I've heard messages on Samson and David and you've all heard them too and Goliath and Jonah and Noah that are hilarious. And none of those were particular hilarious events. You need to treat the Bible with a sense of dignity otherwise people are going to go home and say, "Boy, when I read it, it's not nearly as funny as when he does." And that's not the point. It's a sacred holy trust.

I held in my own mind the concept and I guess it kind of helps me that these words are not written but they are uttered out of the mouth of God. And in the understanding of that as a conscious thought it helps me to treat them with a sense of sacredness.

All right, principle number two, be sure you are acquainted with the human author, the person or persons to whom the passage is addressed and the historical culture and circumstantial context to and from which the passage is written.

Now that's a very basic statement, isn't it? You can't interpret a passage unless you understand the elements that are around that passage. You have to understand the author, the human author, insights in to his personality, in to his ministry, in to his circumstances at the time, why did he write what he wrote, to whom did he write it, what were their circumstances, what was going on in their particular time and place...historical cultural circumstantial context, utterly and essentially important.

And there's so many ways you can illustrate this. Every time I come to a passage, that's the process that I go through. I want to know who wrote it. I'm teaching Matthew right now. First thing I want to know is about Matthew...why...what was Matthew's perspective. Secondly, to whom is Matthew directing his gospel. Well primarily and obviously it's to the Jews. And what is his purpose? To present Jesus as the Messiah. So as you flow through the book you find that all of these elements that Matthew presents reflect upon the Kingship of Jesus Christ. And so that overview really helps to feed you in an understanding of the text.

Now as you come to a given passage, you determine what the historical, cultural circumstantial context is and then it begins to make sense. For example, on last Lord's day we were in Matthew chapter 8 verses 1 to 4, and in those verses Jesus heals a leper, a man with leprosy. Now in order to understand that passage, it's important that you have some understanding of the disease which the man had. And so you have to do a little bit of a background in that and in fact you find it's a rather illusive thing to track down because there is so much diversity of opinion about what the term lepros refers to. But once you've tracked it down and gotten some kind of an understanding, you can proceed in to the text. Once you get in to the text you find about this man and it simply says the man came to Jesus. And if you begin to study a little background you find out that that in itself is shocking because lepers weren't allowed to show up before anybody. The Talmud said you couldn't get any closer than six feet and if the wind was blowing, a hundred and fifty feet. So the very fact that he approached showed that he had set aside all caution, all sense of shame, all sense of social code because he was a desperate man, see. So as you begin to fill in the context, it makes sense.

One of the things that puzzled people for years and it still continues to puzzle Bible commentators and preachers is the statement that Jesus made to this leper, and by the way, He made it on several other occasions, "Tell no man...right?...about this miracle but go and show yourself unto the temple priests." And people have kicked that around as to why He told him that. I mean, didn't He want to spread abroad this whole thing? And wasn't there any way a multitude all gathered around? Well how are you going to find the answer to that? Well I suppose five out of ten people who would deal with the passage would maybe ignore that, they'd just talk about the miracle and go on to the next verse. I mean, that's a very common way to handle problems, you just pretend they're not there. Commentators even are adept at doing that.

But if you're going to deal with that, why does He tell him, "Tell no man, go show yourself to the priests?" If you really carefully study it you find out there are two very clear reasons. Number one, Jesus came not to destroy the law but...what?...to fulfill the law. And the one thing Jesus wanted to affirm to that man was that it was a matter of obedience to the law of God and it was so stated in Leviticus that when a leper found that he was being healed, and it may have been a rare thing, in fact I don't know what one person said...it's very likely that those priests in the temple would be seeing the first healed leper they had ever seen because basically its incurable. But were it to happen that it went in to some kind of remission, Leviticus said they had to come immediately and show themselves to the priests. And I believe what Jesus is saying is before you go running off in to your own activities, remember you're responsible to the law of God. That He was setting up a priority kind of life for this man.

Secondly, the priests went through a very intricate process described in Leviticus 14 where they had to examine the guy and then reexamine the guy over a period of eight days. And then if he was shown to be clean of the disease, then he had to take a couple of birds, kill one and dunk the live bird in the dead bird's blood, and I mean it was elaborate. A couple of lambs and a ewe and on and on

and on, all kinds of things had to be done. But what all this involved was a process by which the priests would discover the man was a cleansed leper. And then they would discover that and they would say it's happened, this man we have the evidence of the past life from these who know him, he was a leper and he's cleansed.

Now having discovered that the announcement would then come to them...would you like to know how this happened? Well, Jesus did this. And the strength of that is simply this, men, that when they had discovered the healing by themselves, they would be trapped in their own evidence to affirm the power of Christ, see. So when Jesus, you see, told him to do what He told him to do, He had in mind setting up a pattern of obedience to the law of God as well as confronting the Pharisees with their self-rendered verdict which would leave them stuck with the fact that Jesus Christ had healed a leper...how were they going to deal with it?

So if you understand something of context and background and the framework, it really makes the passage live. In fact, I've learned in my years of studying the Scripture and preaching that if your introduction is good enough your sermon will preach itself. In other words, if the setup is good enough, all you have to do is read the passage and it will all fall open for them. It's not that difficult. But if you don't do that background stuff and you don't really frame that, you're going to have a difficult time getting them to understand the meaning of the text. All right, so that is a principle that is very important. You understand who the human author is, the persons, the passage culturally historically and circumstantially dealt with then begins to open up...now that is the process, mark this, of interpretation. You have three things...what does the Bible say? That's textual criticism, that's involved in what is the right text, what are the right terms. You've got to look at your apparatus once in a while to find that out. But you want to find out what the text says. Secondly, what it means by what it says, and that is often the missing ingredient...what does it mean? Paul said to Timothy, "Till I come, give attention to reading...that's what it says...to doctrine...that's what it means by what it says, and what's the third one?...exhortation...that's how it applies." What does it say, what does it mean by what it says and what does it apply, or how does it apply to me? But you must have the interpretation step and that involves bibliography as well as textual familiarity.

All right, principle number three, be sensitive to the sequence and understand the scope and depth of the divine truths contained in the passage and where they fit in to the total scope of the book in which they reside and the Bible as a whole.

Now what we're really talking about here are two things. Be sensitive to the sequence and the scope of the depths of divine truths. What you're looking at in the passage is the logical flow that reveals spiritual principles, that's the first thing. And then you begin to probe in to the depths of those spiritual principles. There's a phrase that I've used for years in teaching exposition and Bible study and that is principle-ize the text. Something that you always want to be involved in in your preparation is this process of principle-izing the text. In other words, you have a text in front of you and what you want to

do is transform that into principles. Now that flows out of the interpretative process. For example, what principle did we find in Matthew 8:1 to 4 that we could apply? Well Jesus wanted the man immediately to obey the law of God...now there you have a spiritual principle. That then becomes the substance of your application. The application of the healing of the leper is not "now all of you who look at yourselves...look at your arms and your...if you've got leprosy, find Jesus," that's not the application. Jesus isn't around and not too many folks in there have leprosy. That's not the application...the application is to draw out of the text a divine truth, a divine principle, therefore you have principle-ized the text. You have found in it a divine truth as you have followed the flow of the text.

To find out then secondly how it fits into the total scope of the book and how it fits into the Scripture...this is what the Reformers used to call analogia scriptura, the analogy of Scripture, how it interrelates. And I'll go a step further, I really believe and this is something that I could talk a lot about, but I really believe that preachers should be first-rate theologians, as much as our limited mental capacity permits. But I really believe that we must be theologians, theologians of the truest order, that is theologians whose theology emerges from their exegesis. In other words, as you develop the text, out of the text flows the principle, the principle then becomes the basis upon which you survey the Scripture. We get the principle, for example, in Matthew 8 that we are to obey the law of God. Now what you want to do is take that principle and you want to reinforce that principle with your people. Now what is the most intimidating, binding, heart-rending, convicting, demanding source of truth that you have in your hand? What is it? It's the Bible, simple answer. That's better than any illustration you can come up with, right? That's better than any story you ever heard...the Bible. So step number two then, after you have principle-ized the text, is to take that principle and find it wherever you can in the Word of God to support the fact that this is a Scripture-wide truth. And it's like a diamond, you want to come at it in all kinds of facets. For example, you might say, "And Jesus said to His disciples, If you love Me you will...what?...keep My commandments." Paul said in Romans that the mark of a servant is that he obeys the one who has called him to serve, and you talk about obedience. That becomes the message of that principle...and you relate it to Scripture.

Now there are some, believe it or not, some theologians who do not believe in analogia scriptura, who deny the analogy of Scripture. Frankly, that is a hopeless perspective if you believe in the authorship of the Bible by God Himself because God would have to be then inconsistent with Himself. And so we are affirming analogia scriptura and I really believe that as I said, we must be theologians. You know, there was a day when the theologians were the pastors. There's no question about that in the history of the church...the theologians were the pastors. You go back to the Reformation, those men were pastors. The great...the Puritans were pastors. The men of God were pastors. And now what happens in so very many cases is that we isolate the theologian from the church, put him in an ivory tower where his theology does not really...does not really understand pragmatism and where the people over here who need to understand theology can't get it and the sermon becomes a sermonette for Christianettes, you know, because the pastor hasn't got a clue about theology.

When I was back at the inerrancy conference on the entire basic committee that was involved in the thing, there were only two pastors and dozens of theologians because they don't even look to the pastorate, they don't even look to the church for theologians. And yet we ought to be as true in the affirmation of our theology as they should be for we're in the Word week after week after week after week. So learn to be a theologian. And by that I don't mean a philosophical theologian as much as I mean a biblical theologian...although there are some systematizing involved, all right?

So, the idea then is you find a principle and then you explode that principle throughout all of Scripture. And that's what builds the strength into that thing. Okay.

Another principle, do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit.

Now this is just a little warning. About this point you're beginning to feel real intellectual and you've got all this data and you've forgotten about prayer, dependence, you're just flying high with all your information. But I really feel this is where you need to stop and kind of spend some time allowing the Spirit of God to purify your heart and mind. You know, if you remember the promise of our Lord to the Bible writers in John's gospel, He said that the Spirit would come and lead them into all truth and bring all things to their remembrance. That's primarily for the writers of Scripture, not for us. But we have a similar promise in 1 John, don't we? That we have an anointing from God, an unction, so that we need not that any man should teach us for the anointing from God teaches us all things. In other words, we don't depend on human wisdom, we depend on the wisdom of God. And you never can be, I really believe, an effective student of the Scripture unless you walk in the Spirit, unless your life is yielded to the Holy Spirit. And it's easy to tell. If there are areas of your life that sin is constantly up in front of you and you don't have any victory at all, that manifests a lack of Holy Spirit control, not just there but everywhere. You know, it's either all or nothing kind of a deal. Spirituality is an absolute, do you understand what I mean by that? So is carnality. You either are or you aren't...I don't like to use those terms, because I think we misunderstand them, but you're either controlled by the Spirit or you're not. And if you are, that control is not elemental or partial, it's total. And so you can look at your life and see if all the parts are right, then when you come to the Word of God, you're going to know the direction and the leading of the Spirit of God. But if you've got areas of your life that are fouled up, you're going to find that that's going to manifest itself in the study of the Word.

You know, it says in 1 Peter 2:2, that very familiar verse, "As babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby," but the only way that you can really get into the pure milk and grow is when you followed what it says in verse 1 and verse 1 says, "Laying aside all evil and guile and deceit and evil speaking, then you can desire as a babe does the pure milk of the Word." So, important that you have the recognition of the presence and the power and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit so that you don't begin to run amuck and then you find yourself into something that isn't really true but you've developed it so far you're not interested in checking it with the Holy Spirit because it sounds so

good and it makes so much sense to you. And believe me, people do that a lot.

All right, another principle...keep in mind that Jewish thought...and basically the Bible, I believe, reflects Jewish thinking patterns...Jewish thought is always pragmatic...it's always pragmatic whereas Greek thought tends to be conceptual and idealistic.

Most if not all Scripture is written from the Jewish or pragmatic viewpoint so it must be preached from that perspective. Now what do we mean by this? Well when a Jew talked about wisdom and when a Greek talked about wisdom, they were talking about two different things. To the Greek, sophia, wisdom was ethereal, cognitive, conceptual, idealistic, philosophical, abstract, subjective. In other words, the Greek concept of wisdom was to know. They were real big on "to know." They weren't so hot on "to do." But to know was ultimate. And we have a classic illustration in what group in the New Testament time? The Gnostics. To know was the epitome, to conceive, to perceive, to have the ability to think on these, even though abstract as they were. Whereas on the other hand, the Hebrew mind, wisdom was the very opposite, wisdom was to do. And the dumbest person of all, the biggest fool of all was the man who knew and didn't do.

And when you go to the book of Proverbs, for example, it's a book about wisdom, isn't it? Have you ever noticed how pragmatic it is? Amazingly practical. In fact, the entire flow of Proverbs eludes the idealistic, it evades the subjective. It is extremely concrete. It is extremely objective. And I think if you've studied the languages, are some of you taking Hebrew now? Wonderful experience, isn't it? But what you're going to find is that Hebrew is relatively easy compared to Greek. It's all memorization. But what I'm saying is that the language itself in its concepts and terms is relatively easy. The vocabulary is much more simple and the Hebrew speaks in concrete terms rather than abstractions. But God knew that and, of course, the New Testament can deal with the mind of Paul and the things that he talks about in the culture of his day by using Greek, but basically Hebrew is a concrete language. It affirms and affixes things in a very practical way. And that's the way it is, too, when you study Scripture where God is presenting His truth, it is practical, it is life-related stuff, not just things spun off in the mind. And so when we preach we are not preaching with a view toward people understanding something, as much as we are preaching with a view toward them doing something. They have to understand to do, right? But if they only understand it don't do, they're the biggest fool of all. To know to do it and not do it is the worst, or to conceive it and not be able to apply it.

I mean, you can imagine, this is not uncommon in the religions of the world where you have, for example, in Buddhism, the ultimate exercise of Buddhism is to reach nirvana where you've just sat and thought yourself into nothingness, you've contemplated your belly-button until you've ceased to think that you exist. I mean, that's total detachment. You have the monastic approach, that is not the Hebrew approach to life. It is "that I know therefore I do and my life manifests what I know."

So keep in mind in your preaching, you're not feeding the ego, you're not just putting stuff in the mind. And that can happen, you know. There are people who just operate an information dump. I can think of one well-known teacher in America who just walks in, unloads a ton of cognitive stuff, turns around and walks out. And nobody is even supposed to bother to apply it particularly, it's just a monstrous ego trip that you now know it, but that's the height of folly.

All right, another principle, all derived doctrine must be tested against the attributes of God.

All derived doctrine must be tested against the attributes of God...that is no doctrine can be true if it violates or contradicts any single one of God's attributes. In other words, the ultimate backdrop in all conclusions is the character of God, right? Because nothing in the Bible will ever under any circumstance violate God's character. And if you keep that in mind and, of course, that's why you have to know God, that's why you have to pursue that, and you have to constantly be alert to that. If you don't understand the nature of God, you have no ultimate backdrop to validate the principles you're discovering.

For example, if you don't know that God is sovereign, then you're going to make a lot of strange conclusions in the record of Scripture because you're not really going to be able to bounce everything off the ultimate sovereignty of God. If you don't know God is just, you're going to read the Old Testament and you're going to say...Wait a minute, whole peoples were wiped out...why this, why that? And you may conclude the wrong things if you don't understand the character of God. So it's important that you really be a theologian at this point. I was talking about this on Sunday night, that basically I see in the church of Jesus Christ today, we have our little denominational distinctions and all of that, but there is a terrible absence of a theology, especially a theology proper theology, right? The nature of God. I mean, for example, we are so bent over on the thing that "God is love," that we basically start from that premise for everything and that is not the premise. You see we say, "Well, God is love, God is love...God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. God is love and God is good and God is kind to everybody." And so we look at the Old Testament and say, "How could He ever do that?" When you stop to go backwards you start in Genesis you start this way...in the day that you sin you shall surely...what?...die. When were they going to die? The day they sinned. Did they? No...no, in a qualified sense spiritually yes, but not in the sense of physical death or eternal death. So at the very beginning God laid down the standard but then immediately mercifully mitigated it, didn't He?

And then God gave...in fact, everybody should have died who ever committed any sin. People say, "Well why in the world did God institute capital punishment?" And there are about 30 some things that you could get capital punishment for in the Old Testament. "Well why did God ever do that?" Listen, that's only 30, when He started in Genesis it was every sin. I mean, He's easing off. And as you progress through the revelation you find that by the time Jesus comes along and He finds somebody

who is caught in that very thing for which they should die in John 8, He forgives her. But you see, if you understand to begin with that God is holy, holy, holy...you know that He should have wiped out everybody who ever committed one sin. And the fact is that it's mercy beyond mercy that any of us live at all. You have to start with the right premise.

Now what I'm trying to say is that we suffer from the absence of theology. Frankly, it's really shocking to get together with a group of people who are responsible to be teaching the Word of God and who don't know what they believe...even about the nature of God. Tragic...tragic. We must then have clear understanding, clear as is humanly possible, of God's attributes so that becomes a backdrop against everything, against which everything is related.

You know, I was reading...shocking this week, I was reading a sermon and in this sermon, for example, the guy was trying to come off as sort of avant-garde and radical and he was trying to kick off the traces and he was sort of antinomian, and he said...these are several statements that I took out of the sermon, "Should I seek to submit to a discipline of routine prayer in my life? No." Then he said, quote: "Bible study is not essential to spiritual growth." Another one, "A hunger for Bible study is not necessary." Another one, "Discipline is valid only for those who are weak."

In other words, what he's trying to say is we're all free, do whatever we...but you see, he doesn't take into account the character of God...the character of God demands a rigid obedience to divine standard, a discipline, an obedience to the Word of God. We're not living in a free and easy swinging libertinism, and I think it reflects a little too much relational stuff and a little too little understanding of God. But that's very typical.

Okay, another principle, due to our human frailties and finiteness there are some doctrines, however, which appear to be paradoxical, or apparently contradictory to other doctrines.

If we are to deal with these, we must be able to accept...are you ready for this?...non-closure. We must be able to exist with ambivalence and to preach and teach that some things...oh this hurts...are past knowing. We just don't know. Deuteronomy 29:29, there are paradoxes in the Scripture, and this is something I go over all the time because every time you have a question and answer session with anybody they always ask you about sovereignty and free will, right? Every time...it's the number one issue. My son came home the other night and he went to a Bible study and he said, "Dad, the Bible study went great until somebody asked about sovereignty and free will..." it was a high school Bible study. And the leaders, they were all high school kids, there wasn't even an adult there. And he says, "We were all fouled up, Dad." So he said, "What is the answer? Is it sovereignty or free will?" I said, "That's right, you've got it." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "That's right."

I saw a bumper sticker the other day, first time I had ever seen this bumper sticker, I was coming to church Sunday, it said, "God votes for you, the devil votes against you and you cast the deciding

vote." The only thing is, you just destroyed two doctrines, right? If you over here, if I ask you, does the Bible teach the sovereignty of God, what's the answer? Absolutely, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. I mean, your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. I mean, He did it, it's all Him, chosen, formed, predestined, Ephesians 1, Romans 9. I believe it, I preach it...absolutely. I'm as reformed as you can get because that's biblical there at that point. You say, "What about volition?" That's fine, I believe that, too. "You believe that you can choose to be saved?" That's right, I believe you never will get saved unless you do make that choice. "You believe you can just come to Jesus?" Sure, "Him that cometh unto Me I'll in no wise...what?...cast out." Well you say, "If God absolutely chooses, how can you possibly have a choice?" And so we tend to say..."Let's see, then there must be something in the middle. Oh, I see, God chooses because He looks ahead and He sees what we're going to do and He says...Oh, I see what they're going to do...I got it...therefore I'll choose them." And you know what you've done? You've just taken away His sovereignty and you've made us sovereign and you've wiped out the entire doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

You say, "Well what do you do?" You just leave sovereignty over here, you leave volition over here, and you do not harmonize them, you live with the paradox. You teach this one in the passage where it appears, and you teach this one in the passage where it appears, have a wonderful time doing that and leave it alone. Now if you're hung up on that ask yourself a simple question: who wrote the book of Acts? Who wrote it? Luke, written by a human author, a man wrote the book of Acts...the Holy Spirit wrote it. Well who wrote it, Luke or the Holy Spirit? Well, Luke wrote one verse and the Holy Spirit wrote one verse and they alternate....no. Who wrote it? It's all Luke, are they his words, his thoughts, out of his mind, his heart? Sure. What about the Holy Spirit? He controlled every word. You can't have 100 percent Luke, 100 percent Holy Spirit, that's 200 percent. You can't have 200 percent of something. But you do. Another question: is Christ God or man? Yes. Another question: who lives your Christian life? Who lives it? "Not I but Christ liveth in me." Is it just Christ? Do you just "let go and let God?" Is that it? "I beat my body to bring it..." who is doing this? The same paradox, exactly the same. In every...as John Murray has well said, "In every major doctrine of Scripture there is an apparent paradox because you cannot reduce the infinite mind of God to finite understanding without a lot of leakage." There's more there than you're every going to handle and you must live with that tension.

But you know what's wonderful about that? If man had written this book he would in desperation have relieved those tensions...lest he would have foisted on the world a book that nobody would accept because of its logical inconsistencies. One of the greatest proofs of the authority of Scripture is that there's no resolution to the ultimate and continuous apparent paradoxes of Scripture which tell us that God wrote this book and left us to live with the ambivalence that remains because of our finite mind and His infinite mind. So that's important for you to know. So don't worry about that. Just go ahead and preach it. And every time you have a section on sovereignty, you don't have to take twenty more minutes to talk about the other side. Just fire it out, that's the way it is in the text. You know, people

say to me, "You know, last week, pastor, you said so and so and so and so and there is another side." I say that's right, and I'll get to that, you just keep coming. I can't preach all sides of all issues in every sermon. Just keep coming and we'll get there.

All right, another principle, it is important that a preacher, a teacher have and maintain a parable perspective...a parable perspective.

That is, like Jesus, he be able to see God and His divine truth manifested in all that He has made and to draw on the concreteness of the material realm to teach spiritual and abstract truths. You must teach with a parable perspective. And you get this from Christ, don't you? The Hebrew mind thought this way. The Old Testament is full of narrative stories, isn't it, out of which the initial ABCs of spiritual truth emerged. God gave them credibly concrete illustrations, all the sacrificial systems were pictures, pictures, pictures, pictures of Christ. Tremendous analogies in the Old Testament. Jesus comes into the world, immediately starts teaching and He taught in...what?...mashals(?), veiled sayings, parables. And the Apostle Paul speaking in analogies and illustrations, all good communicators, all the best communicators very naturally speak in analogies. In other words...they keep saying...in other words...in other words...and they draw you pictures because that's how you can perceive things more clearly. So learn to be able to see God manifest in the material realm, all around you draw...and here I'm talking about illustrative material...draw on everything that is available to make pictures.

We were talking earlier about the vividness of John chapter 18 where Jesus would have descended the slope from the eastern city of Jerusalem...would have jumped across the little brook Kidron and ascended the hill to the garden where He was to be arrested that night, and it's interesting as you look backwards in that period of time that when He jumped the little Kidron brook, that brook would have been vivid red with blood because all of the lambs that were slain at that time of the Passover drained out of the back part of the temple and were drained right down into the Kidron, and how vivid, how tremendously vivid it must have been for Christ to step across all of the blood of all the lambs. And some historians tell us there would be as many as a quarter of a million of them slain at any given Passover time. How vivid it would have been in His own mind that He was the Lamb of God to be slain for the sins of the world. Seeing in the scenery around, the analogies of the Scripture and then extending beyond to our own life and the things around us that can enrich and fill us.

I remember one time reading about this certain kind of a rodent that was a very interesting rodent. When eagles, you know, will descend to capture a rodent, but there are certain kind that when the eagle picks them up they're able to roll their bodies around and they sink their teeth into the eagle and the eagle while trying to carry that rodent up to its nest finds its life blood utterly drained away and dies before it can ascend very high. And what an apt picture that is of sin. We pick up a certain behavior because we want to fly, we want to soar, we want to do our thing and we find that all the while it drains us. Well those are the kinds of things in life, and that's just one sample, but those are the kinds of things that you need to perceive. This is why I've always said that a preacher is the only

profession in the world that can use everything...everything. I mean, be a voracious reader. Everything is either true or it's an error, and you preach on both. And everything is something that can be used as a fact or an illustration. I mean, you...you know, Dr. Fineberg told me one time, he said, "John, I read a book a day." And I said, "Well, what are you reading today?" He said, "I'm reading the life of Bach." The life of Bach? He said, "Man," he said, "I see so many things in here, analogous to spiritual life, just illustrating." You know, there's nothing you can't absorb and use. So learn to have that parable perspective. Learn to perceive those things that are around you.

All right, another one, a problem whether it be in the understanding of Scripture or a problem in living should always be met with a thorough examination and clear definition of the problem first. A delineation of all the possible alternatives or options, secondly, and finally the selection of the alternative or option which will best satisfy the scriptural parameters. The option which would best please God.

In other words, don't avoid problems. Your integrity is at stake. Sometimes you'll spend two hours on eight verses and three days on one...just trying to unscramble what's in that verse because of the difficulty of the text. You know, it might seem silly to you but when I was teaching in Romans chapter 6, it took me a month to get an understanding of that chapter. I mean, a month of reading and reading and studying and studying and listening and feeding my mind and rereading before I understood because of the difficulty of some of the problems that passage had. When I went to 1 John, I felt like abandoning the ministry, trying to figure out the outline in the book and trying to do it inductively rather than just read commentaries, trying to figure out precisely what John is saying in certain parts of that book, many problems. You're going to find there are problems, there are problems in the text, there are problems in the interpretation of the text, you're going to get to 1 Corinthians some time, you're going to preach on being baptized for the dead, right? And you've got to preach it cause that's where you are. I just went through Daniel, I came to the 70 weeks of Daniel. Frankly, folks, that's a pain in the neck. The 70 weeks of Daniel is very difficult, not only because of the 70 weeks, but the passage has so many textual variations. And everybody says, "Well, this word comes from this word," and this guy says, "Nah, it comes from this root," "No, it comes from this root," and, you know, it's very hard because these are the experts and who are you to judge, right? So you just flip a coin and say...You win today...or whatever. I mean, you've got to go through the process.

What I'm saying is when you come to problems, deal with problems, that's what excites people. They can figure out the obvious stuff, you tell them what they can't figure out. And you say...do you really dig in? Well, you have to use a balance. You've got to present the problem and present a solution to the problem. Now you can take them through the process if you want, or you can just give them what your solution is, but make sure you've gone through the process. But I think it's kind of fun to take them through it a little bit in a way that will be interesting to them. Don't get them all bogged down in a textual criticism problem, but if it's in the verse that they can see it's a problem, maybe it's good to kind of help them through it.

Let me just give you a thought on that. If you can, and I'll get to this in another principle, but if you can involve the people in the process of discovery, the learning is increased immensely. In other words, you pose the problem, right? What's the answer? And you start playing with the alternatives. They get excited about that kind of discovery of truth in the Word of God. So if you find a problem, examine it thoroughly, define it clearly whether it's a problem in the Scripture or the problem of the application. For example, you're going to come to a problem like I did when I was preaching in Ephesians, and I went over to Titus and it said, "Let the older woman teach the younger women to be keepers at home," that's a problem. Am I supposed to tell everybody that? I got up on Sunday, "Now, women are to stay home, that's what the Bible says, be keepers at home, love your husband, love your children, stay home." Now that immediately poses a problem...the problem isn't biblical, the problem is cultural, but you've got to deal with it, right? What are the parameters of that? What do you mean stay home? Can I...am I supposed to go to ladies Bible study? That's not at home. Can I walk down to the post office? Should I work half a day? My kids are grown. You've got a lot of problems, you've got to work through the problem. Don't avoid those things, those are what makes your messages interesting.

All right, another principle, always study for your own edification first...always study for your own edification first.

I'll be very honest with you, I don't go to a text to get a sermon, I go to a text to understand its meaning for my own sake, to know God and to know His Word and out of that comes the sermon. And the sermon is inevitably the tip of the iceberg if you're doing it right. You know what happens if you go to a text to get a sermon? Usually isogesis(?), you read into it, you make it fit your terrific outline. You know, like the guy said, "I've got a great sermon, I just need to find a verse for it." What happens when you start going to the Scripture just to get a message out of it, number one, you're thinking more about your people than you are yourself and number two, you will contrive so very frequently the text to say what you think it ought to say. Let it speak and first let it speak to you. Always study for your own edification first. Then out of the mastery of the text comes a development of message.

All right, another principle and I'll wrap it up in the next five, ten minutes, the preacher and teacher's role is to consistently cast thoughts or problems before the mind of the hearer, that is the preacher or teacher must make the hearer consider and be able to defend things they hold to and things they may not have considered before.

Now what I mean by this is simply this, when you teach you have to give people conclusions...but listen, you have to give them reasons for conclusions or they're stuck with conclusions they can't defend. You see? And the church literally is loaded with people who say...well, I believe so-and-so. Why do you believe that? I don't...I believe it, I've always believed it, our pastor said it. Don't treat your people as though they were ignorant and as though they were never going to open their mouth

to anybody else who was intelligent. Give them the answer, give them the solution, help them understand the problem, but let them in on the process. I could have said to the people Sunday, "Well, I can tell you the answer to this, He told them to go to the priests because that's where He wanted him to go and He's God." Okay, pastor. But you say...how do you know that's...well, that's just what the pastor... No. So if you tell them why and how and where for, then they have a sense of confidence in dealing with Scripture as they pass it on to someone else. So define the problem, solve the problem and give them enough of it so they can defend themselves when they pass it on.

And I would just add, too, that dealing with problems in your preaching is very helpful because it's a high-interest factor. If you can raise a question in your message that is a very provocative question, you'll get the attention of the people cause they want the answer. You know, they want to know why, what's going on, really does that say that, well how come...you know, pose a question...why did Jesus send that guy to Jerusalem? Man, if it was myself, I'd run around and say...hey, look at me, hey, everybody that knew me, I was a leper, you know that, look at me now...Jesus, why not just instant evangelism? As I said the other night, get him on the Christian TV and he can give his testimony and...but why in the world did He send him to the temple? What does he want to go to that place for? Well, see, now you've got a question. Let me show you why. When you use questions you stimulate people's interest and you draw them into the adventure of discovery.

All right, another principle, a preacher or teacher must always be ready and receptive to learn from those he preaches to.

Listen to the feedback. When I come down from the pulpit on Sunday morning and stand in the front, I have two things in mind. Number one is to greet the folks who want to see me or ask me questions or talk with me. Number two is to listen for the feedback. A lady came up to me Sunday night and she said, "I don't know why you said that," and she recited a certain thing I said, she said, "You know, you could have said it another way and it wouldn't have been as offensive, why did you say that?" I said, "Well, maybe I shouldn't have said that." And I listened to that because that's important because I'm not invincible and I want to hear that feedback. I don't always like what I hear, to be honest with you, and I don't always believe what I hear either. Some of them are all wet, you know, they missed the whole point. But you need to be sensitive to listen to that...listen to the feedback. Some people will come up and say, "Oh, you know there was one thing," a lady came to me Sunday morning and she said, "There was one thing you said in your message that I don't think any of us understands and it was this...and I never even thought of that," and she said, "Boy, could you emphasize that because we in our Bible study have been discussing that?" That's important for you to know, isn't it, to emphasize it. So listen to that. And sometimes you have to be humble enough to eat crow.

I remember one Sunday night when I preached on why the Antichrist will be a Jew and the next week I preached on why the Antichrist will be a Gentile. That's right, that really happened right here in this chapel. That was a tough week. But you know, people will forgive you anything but invincibility, they

can't stand it. You wreck the curve. Remember when you were in class as a little kid, and you checked with everybody after the test and everybody got less than 50 except Maryjane who got 100 and wiped out the curve? Nobody can stand invincibility, perfection is repulsive. If you want to really alienate your people, just never let them know you have a fault. They'll forgive you anything but that. Be vulnerable.

Okay, the preacher/teacher should not attempt to cover up or ignore a mistake or erroneous teaching on his part. People will accept, respect and appreciate you if you're open about your own human frailties. You are even encouraged to make yourself the target of your own humor, rather than others. In doing so you increase your credibility and identity with those who hear you and those you teach.

This is really a very basic part of human psychology. It is amazing how much fun it is for them to laugh at your stupidity. There is such an identification with that. You know, but if you always come off as the guy who never has that problem and you're always using everybody else as the butt of the jokes, you're almost other-worldly. They can't connect with you. Yesterday, just to give you an illustration, yesterday I visited two people with cancer who were here when this church was founded. And the first...and this lady said to me, Marylou said to me, she said, "You know, John," she said, "I knew you were the right pastor for our church the first time I ever saw you." I said, "What was I doing?" She said, "You were eating peanuts and you were sitting there having trouble getting the peanuts in your mouth." She said, "Now that's a man I can trust." See, I mean, I didn't know about that but she's remembered that for twelve years, you know. Tell things on yourself that show your humanness and your weakness. Now you don't have to unbare your heart and tell all the evil in your mind, that doesn't help. You deal with those things with the Lord. Some things it's a shame to speak of, right? But, in terms of your human frailties, let those things be known, use yourself as the target of humor. People really identify with that as a sense of humanness in you, that helps them.

Okay, another one, a better kind of learning and deeper understanding occurs when the hearer is led to discover truth for himself rather than simply having the preacher or teacher give it to him.

Good preaching and good teaching forces people to be a part of the process of discovery. It forces them to do that. If you just stand up and unload all the stuff, it isn't nearly as exciting as if you carry them along in the discovery. I mean, you know, which would you rather experience...the discovery of gold or to have somebody hand you a piece of gold? Well, the adventure of looking and digging and finding it would be exciting. I mean, which is more fun to you to throw a line into a stream and yank out an eight pound trout, or to go to a place and order one? Right? Much more fun to catch it, that's the way it is in teaching. Good background material, good setup, good use of questions can make them a part of the process.

All right, just a couple more, preach and teach with authority. We call it soft confidence...soft confidence, with authority. Wherever the Word is clear and indisputable, when there does not seem to

be an absolute position, it is good to present the strengths and weaknesses of the views and encourage the hearer and learn to search out a position for himself.

And you know what I usually wind up with if there's three or four good views and I can't make up my mind about any one of them, I just teach them all and say...take your pick. Maybe it's a little bit of everything. But you need to preach and teach with authority. I remember the guy at the Police Academy, you know, that was flunked out, I work with the police department from time to time, he was flunked out because of his voice...that's really true, this was two years ago...no, three years ago. His voice, he just didn't have authority, you know, you can't go up to a guy and say, "Stick 'em up, you're under arrest," (high-pitched voice). "Halt in the name of the law." And they washed him out. You can't really effectively teach, you can't effectively preach unless there's a sense of authority. You have to teach with authority. That means you have to come down on some of your endings, instead of "this is a very important truth" (up and down voice), you know, you want to give it a little strength if it's really as important as the Bible says. And you have to...in order to speak with authority you've got to know where of you speak, right? You show me somebody tentative in the pulpit and I'll show you somebody who isn't studied up...who isn't prepared.

All right, another principle, once divine truths and principles are delineated, one must discern how they are relevant and applicable to his own life and test them out experientially.

Once you've delineated the divine principles, you've discerned it, you've got to apply it in your own life and in the lives of your people. That's just the pragmatic experiential application. And that goes without saying.

And finally, the preacher/teacher is to always encourage his hearers to see the relevancy and applicability of those same truths and principles in their lives and the teacher should develop...mark this...assignments which will maximize the possibility of them knowing those truths and principles experientially.

First you preach with conviction, but don't leave your people just with conviction, take it from there to a demand. What did Paul say to Timothy? "These things command and teach." Give them the doctrine and then you exhort and you rebuke, you reprove. In other words, you give them the principle, you give them how it applies and then you demand that application in their life. And give them some kind of assignments. In other words, structure for them how they can do that as much as you can so that you come right down to where they live.

Well, these are some general principles in no specific order but somewhat at random to add to our previous studies so that we understand the parameters of expository preaching. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank You for our time and I thank You so much for the graciousness of the men today to allow us this time to share with them here, and praying, Lord, in my own heart that these are great days for these young men who are studying, great days of spiritual growth and delight in You, days of preparation, days of vision, days of forming and framing perspective. I pray for their professors. God, bless these very special beloved men. Use them in mighty ways. I pray, Lord, for the spiritual devotion and the spiritual life of these students that it might be all that it should be in order that their receiving might be all that it could be. We pray that You'll build of these men true men of God who can touch this world with Your power, and we'll thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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