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

Insight into a Pastor's Heart, Part 1
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Thank you, and let me add my welcome to the welcome you've already received over the last week or so. How many of you are new students? Wow, great. Well, we do welcome you. I'm sorry I had to be away, I was having to suffer through a cruise in the inside passage of Alaska. It is a great exposure to the glory of God, His handiwork in the world. We had a wonderful time, about 300 Grace To You listeners, some of whom support the seminary. Just a wonderful time ministering to them. I really would rather have been here and now I face the fact that I'll be here Sunday and then I have to go on Monday to Italy...the first ever national pastors conference in Italy. And it's kind of a counter to the great big Catholic 2000 millennial celebration and they've asked if I would come and we'll be there for a couple of weeks ministering over there.

But this is hard for me. I was gone on vacation for a while, then I went away for this two weeks. I'm here one, I go two. When that's over, I'm back to stay. In fact, at the present moment I don't have any plans that are fixed to be gone at all throughout the entire year...I look at the school year as a year. So I'm looking forward to being regular in my pulpit.

When I came out of seminary I obviously was committed to doing Bible exposition. I had seen my father do it, who was the greatest influence on me, naturally, because I grew up under his ministry. I listened to him preach through the book of John, through the book of Acts, through the book of Romans and a number of other books. I went away to seminary to learn how to do Bible exposition. I was a student of Dr. Rosscup??, Dr. Thomas. When I was at Talbot I was particularly interested in Dr. Charles Fineberg. I didn't know Dr. Rosscup or Thomas when I went to the seminary, but I did know of Dr. Fineberg and I knew of his commitment to the text of Scripture and to the Bible. And my father and I both agreed that he would be the man that we wanted to have influence us and he made a great impact on my life.

So I came out of seminary committed to the exposition of Scripture. And that's what I began to do when I came here in 1969, right in this very building in which you sit is where it all began. In those days we had linoleum floor with shuffleboard on it and the walls were where the pillars are. And, you know, we would knock down all the chairs and have spaghetti dinner in here. It was that kind of a facility. And we began to grow from there. And through all these years, I basically did Bible exposition.

I think in many ways it sort of culminated when I did the Study Bible. That was sort of the...the, I guess you could say, the high point of the years of Bible exposition, drawing every bit of material I could get from my own studies through the years, with the help of the faculty of the seminary and some of the faculty of the college and some of my other friends in the ministry of Grace To You, pulling together everything that I could get together and even though there would be many more books that I could exposit in years ahead, if the Lord gives me the opportunity to do that, particularly in the Old Testament. That was sort of the pinnacle of it. And having done that, it doesn't mean by any means I'm through doing that, I'll do that the rest of my life, but I feel like the exercise, particularly those three years working on the study Bible, gave me the most comprehensive understanding of the Scripture that I...I have ever had. And because of that, in more recent times, I have expanded my reading a little bit to try to read a little more in the historical area. For all the years, and even now, it's still to some degree true, for all the years of my life, up until very recently, my focus was really always on the Scripture, so that I was always reading the Bible, studying the Bible, studying the text of the Scripture, reading commentaries, reading theology that related to my understanding of Scripture to just continue to build that. And it seems as though in recent...in the recent years, and particularly just in this last year, I've been more and more interested in filling in the gaps in my understanding of history. And so, I've gone back to read books, particularly books that would reflect something of the impact of people who really were the focal point on which history turned.

Recently I read a little book, I like something that's condensed if I can find it...I'm in the process of wading through some big tomes, such as the biography of Tyndale by Daniels who is a Tyndale scholar at Yale and it is a massive tome, full of stuff that nobody really cares about but you have to keep reading it just to get to what you do care about. And I've been reading some of those things. But also trying to read some condensed things at the same time so I can get a grip on how God has moved in the church. There's a little book by Christopher Catherwood called *Five Leading Reformers* . I would commend it to you. It is a Christian Focus Publication, they do a lot of Dr. Mayhue books. They're an excellent Scottish publishing house. And he has taken five leading Reformers, the familiar ones that you would know, Calvin and Luther and Augustine and throws in Kranmer? and Zwingli in a very condensed way. He's a very remarkable historian, this Christopher Catherwood, he has written probably the best history of the Balkans and teaches Balkan history at Cambridge and places like that. So he's a very fine scholar. He's the grandson of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. We had lunch the other day. I thanked him for his little book because it distills down something of these men.

At the same time I have been reading a book called *Evangelical Eloquence*by R.L. Dabney. I think that's a Banner of Truth Publication, if I can remember, looking at the spine. And this is a series of lectures that he gave on preaching. Now R.L. Dabney would have been a hundred years or so ago and the Reformers, of course, go all the way back to the 1500's.

At the same time I have read a book that I would commend to you, and I'll maybe largely do a book review of it for you this morning, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*by John Piper. John Piper is also a notable biographer, particularly when he gets a hold of the people he really likes...such as Jonathan Edwards or in the case of *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, he does a study of Augustine or Augustin and Luther and Calvin. And he gets down to the nitty-gritty. There's some very...there's some very human elements to those men. But he gets down to some of the very, very human elements of these men.

But the thing that I'm drawing out of this as I'm reading all of this is that it all points where these people began to turn the history of the church. It was based upon a breakthrough in their understanding of Scripture. It came about through exegesis. It came about through a commitment to exposition. And this is...this is greatly encouraging to me because there is so little of it going on today. The idea today is if you really want to affect society, put the Bible aside, people can't connect with it and, you know, speak to them in cultural terms and tell them stories they're going to be interested in and speak in relevant language and relevant paradigms and relevant experiences and etc., etc. And those are the kind of people who in adjusting to the world will simply be a part of the world where it is and make no real difference.

So, going back to these men upon which the history of the church has largely turned, men who have essentially been prime movers in that form of Christianity to which we're all committed today, as over against that against which they rebelled, we find that they were largely expositors. No one points this out better than Piper. I've read the book twice cause I wanted to really own what he says, it's very well done and it's very distilled information.

So that kind of prompted me in my discussion with Dick that we need to really emphasize to the men who are coming to the Master's Seminary. Essentially what we're trying to do with you is turn you into expositors of the Word of God, that is what we want you to do. We don't want you to do anything else and anything else that you might do if you were to go out and stand in a pulpit or stand in a classroom, if you do anything other than exposit the Word of God, you have somehow prostituted your education and your calling. I don't know how to say it any stronger than that. That is what we train you to do because that's what we believe God wants done. He wants His Word proclaimed. It's as simple as 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach...what?...the Word." If you are a pastor, you are a preacher above all else. That is what you are. You're not an entrepreneur. Another one of those ridiculous books from the Willow Creek Association came across my desk this morning and it says, "How to change your church...or something...without killing it." That's the title of it. And I looked in the book at the back of the book to find the resources and the resources were all secular resources. The entire list of resources to change the church were secular resources. I looked for a Scripture index and one didn't exist...did no exist.

This is...this is a serious prostitution of God's purpose for the church and ministry. If you are a pastor, you are a preacher. You are not an entrepreneur, you are not a CEO, you are not a quiz-show host, you are not...you are not a barker in a carnival, you are not a salesman, you are a preacher of the Word of God. That is what you do. And I will put it very simply, you will do that the rest of your life if you stay faithful to your ministry. As John Piper put it, you are a man utterly devoted to displaying God's glory by the exposition of God's Word. That is what you do.

And I told Dick the other day that we need a new motto here, something like that, I forget what I said, but something like, "We're training men to manifest the glory of God through the exposition of Scripture." That's what we do. We want to put God on display through exposition because God is revealed in the exposition. In fact, I will go far...go far as to say that the most powerful apologetic for the Scripture is just to preach it because it's so obviously discloses God. It is its own defense. The Word preached mediates to the people the majesty of God and the glory of Christ.

So while we were talking about this while we were going up to talk to the accreditation people about the accreditation of the college and seminary, which is always a challenge because they don't get it, they don't understand it, they don't understand us because they're not Christian people, they're just a commission that has, you know, worldly standards and I get the opportunity occasionally, I'm the only preacher that gets to address them and they're not used to hearing a preacher. But I manage in softer tones to preach, nonetheless. And we had a good time doing that. But on the way up I said, "You know, I think I would just like to emphasize this to the men and I really don't know how to do that."

And he said, "Well just come in and do whatever comes into your mind."

Well, I do want you to know, I do have it written down but it came into my mind in the last several weeks and last night as I was flying on the airplane from Vancouver here, I was writing it down and then when I got home I spent about three or four hours late last night sort of pulling it all together. Now let me start. Well, I'll give you a few little words, they'll all start with a "p" just so you can kind of know when I'm getting to the next point.

First word, perspective. I...this is my look at the preaching ministry and essentially back to what I said. If you are a pastor, you are a preacher more than anything else. That is what you do. That is what you do. And the first thing is to have a perspective on that preaching. And I think this is so very important.

I don't know if you have opportunity to listen to much preaching. I was on my vacation and for the first time I didn't preach for three weeks and I listened to other preaching. Some of it live and some of it on the television. And I was reminded again of how bleak the picture is...how really bleak it is. You have the sort of quasi maniacal preaching of rabid charismatics that couldn't even be classified as preaching from a biblical standpoint. And then you have the sort of homiletical stuff where it seems as

though the great achievement in preaching is to have a good outline. But what you don't have are the two things that all preaching must contain. And I'll just divide it very simply. Great preaching is both profound and transcendent I told this to our church some time back. Great preaching is both profound and transcendent and most of the preaching that I hear is neither. It isn't deep and it isn't high. It doesn't go down and it doesn't take me up. It's a flat line in the middle somewhere.

As a preacher, you need to be profound. That is you need to go down deep into the text, down deep into the truth of the Word of God to mine out its immense truths. And then having mined out the depth of Scripture and revealed the wonder and majesty and glory of God in the unfolding of that truth, you can then take your people up so that they know what worship is. If you're preaching is not profound, it is not transcendent. You understand that? And worst of all, if it culturally defined and man-centered, it is neither profound nor transcendent.

Now if you're going to go down into divine truth in order that you might carry people up into praise, if you're going to go to the depths of divine truth and the height of worship, you have only one tool to do that. What is it? Scripture. That is THE only tool. There isn't anymore. Your intuition isn't helpful, neither would be somebody's visions or prophecies. Scripture is profitable.

God has revealed and preserved divine truth in a book of which He is the author. You are here to learn how to dig deep into that book so that you can disclose to your people the majesty of God revealed in the depth of biblical truth which will cause your people to be elevated to the heights of praise and honor to God. Right? That's what we do. Divine truth is not in a church. That's what Luther fought. It's not in a bishop. You know the Roman Catholic Church, what really devastated Luther and why he wound up searching the Scriptures for an answer, what devastated him was the Church had sublimated Scripture as a secondary source of revelation to itself. Divine truth is not in a church, it's not in a bishop, it's not in a pope, it's not in a denomination, it's not in experience, it's not in intuition, it's not in ecstasy. Divine truth, all of it, is in a book, one book, the Bible. Martin Luther became convinced that God spoke only in that book. This was absolutely revolutionary. And that what God said in that book sat in judgment on the Church, rather than the reverse. That book alone, Luther was convinced, provided the truth that saves, the truth that sanctifies and that every time that book spoke, it spoke authoritatively.

Now that's why I battle that whole issue of creation and evolution so strongly. That is why it's such a curse on the evangelical church that so many evangelical institutions believe in some form of evolution. As I've said so many times, 100 out of 106 colleges in the Christian College Coalition believe in some form of evolution. What that means is they don't believe Genesis 1 and 2 because there's nothing exegetically in Genesis 1 or 2 to indicate anything other than God created the entire universe in 24 days...er, in 24-hour days, six of them to be exact. And once you deny the authority of Genesis 1 and 2, you have let the horse out of the barn, right?, for the rest of the way through the text.

Well Luther was convinced that God spoke only in the book, not in the pope, not in the bishop, not in the Church and not in anybody's intuition or experience or ecstasy or prophecies or whatever. Piper writes this, he says what is new in Luther quoting Hiko??? Oberman, what is new in Luther is the notion of absolute obedience to the Scriptures against any authorities, be they popes or councils. This is what was revolutionary. So we think of Luther, we think of the doctrine of justification. Preliminary to Luther's coming to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, Luther had to come to the place where he believed that the Scripture was the only and absolute authority, right? So more important in some ways than his doctrine of salvation was his doctrine of Scripture. If you're not there to begin with, then you're not able to accept authoritatively the Bible and set the limits at that point.

In other words, writes Piper, "The saving, sanctifying, authoritative Word of God comes to us in a book." The implications of this, simple observation are tremendous. In 1539, commenting on Psalm 119, Luther wrote, "In this Psalm David always says that he will speak, think, talk, hear, read day and night and constantly but about nothing other than God's Word and commandments. For God wants to give you His Spirit only through the external Word." This phrase is extremely important, the external Word is the book, that is it's outside of us. The saving, sanctifying, illuminating Spirit of God...Luther says...comes to us through this external Word. Luther calls it, writes Piper, "The external Word to emphasize that it is objective, fixed outside ourselves and therefore unchanging." It is a book. Neither a ecclesiastical hierarchy, nor fanatical ecstasy can replace it or shape it. It is external like God. You can take it or leave it, but you can't make it other than it is. It is a book with fixed letters and words and sentences.

Luther said with resounding forcefulness in 1545, the year before he died, quote: "Let the man who would hear God speak read holy Scripture."

Earlier he had said in his lectures on Genesis, quoting again Luther, "The Holy Spirit Himself and God, the Creator of all things, is the author of this book," end quote. And one of the implications of the fact that the Word of God comes to us in a book is, Piper writes, "That the theme of this chapter is the pastor and his study, not the pastor and his seance, and not the pastor and his intuition, and not the pastor and his religious, multi-perspectivalism," whatever that is.

"The Word of God that saves and sanctifies from generation to generation," writes Piper, "is preserved in a book and therefore at the heart of every pastor's work is book work. Call it reading, meditation, reflection, cogitation, study, exegesis, whatever you will, a large and central part of our work is to wrestle God's meaning from the book and then proclaim it in the power of the Holy Spirit."

That's it. That's why you're here. We're going to help you to be able to do that. Luther was also a great lover of the Holy Spirit. And his exaltation of the book as the external Word didn't belittle the Holy Spirit in any way. On the contrary, it elevated the Spirit's great gift to Christendom. In 1533

Luther said, "The Word of God is the greatest, most necessary, most important thing in Christendom." See that, you read that and you say...Now I know why he was able to commit himself to what he found there, right? "Without the external Word we would not know one spirit from another. And the objective personality of the Holy Spirit Himself would be lost in a blur of subjective expression." That's a great statement.

The fact that we have an external book does not take away from the Holy Spirit. The fact that we have an external book and that we are limited to that external book then truly defines who the Spirit is without the bizarre subjectivity to which the Holy Spirit has been made victim to those who define Him outside or beyond the pages of Scripture. In fact, Piper says, "Cherishing the book implied to Luther that the Holy Spirit is a person to be known and loved, not a buzz to be felt."

Another objective to Luther's emphasis on the book is that it minimized the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ Himself. Luther says the opposite is true. To the degree that the Word of God is disconnected from the objective external Word, to that degree the incarnate Word, the historical Jesus becomes a wax nose shaped by the preferences of every generation.

And did you see the Peter Jennings thing on ABC, "The Search for the Real Jesus"? You can't find the real Jesus if you don't use the Bible. It's just a wax nose you can shape it any way you want to shape it, right? The reason they can't find Jesus is because they don't go to the Bible because that is the only place where He is found. And so what he's saying is, a fixed view of Scripture as the singular and only authority speaking divine truth to us from God is the only place that you're truly going to understand and honor the Spirit, and the only place you're going to understand and honor the Son. You understand that? Of course.

He says, "Luther had one weapon with which to rescue the incarnate Word from being sold in the markets of Wittenberg. He drove out the money changes, the indulgence sellers with the whip of the external Word, the book." When he posed his "Ninety-Five Thesis" on October 31, 1517, thesis 45 read, quote: "Christians should be taught that he who sees somebody needy but looks past him and buys an indulgence instead, receives not the Pope's remission but God's wrath," end quote. That blow fell from the book, from the story of the Good Samaritan and from the second great commandment in the book, the external Word. Without the book the incarnate Word would be everybody's clay toy.

See, people who don't accept an absolutely inerrant, inspired and authoritative book mold Jesus any way they want. They might use...who knows...they might use liberal approach to the New Testament in trying to recreate the historical Jesus, it's just a clay toy they mold their way in denial of Scripture.

The church needs to see the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way they'll see Him is in the Word. So Piper says, after further discussion, "The immense implications of this for the minister is this...ministers are

essentially brokers of the Word of God transmitted in a book." That's what we do. We are brokers of the Word of God transmitted in a book. We are fundamentally readers and teachers and preachers of the message of the book and all of that to the glory of God, the honor of the Spirit and the honor of the Son wherein they are truly revealed and known.

So when the preacher feeds his people the Word of God and nothing else, he is faithful to his calling. And as he goes deep into the Word to the rich meat, he disdains the flat, the trivial, the shallow, the superficial, the human...he rejects formulas, he ignores human wisdom like the Apostle Paul who didn't come to preach with man's wisdom, clever speech. He knows what Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." He knew that it was the Word, the Word alone that can separate people from sin unto God. And as a result of taking his people down deep into the Word, he is able then to lift his people high and they become lost in wonder, love and praise because they have grasped the profound realities of the majesty of God that are revealed in an understanding of great truth.

David Wells, *No Place For Truth*, have you read that? Really a very excellent book, says, "It is this good, majestic and holy in His being, who has disappeared from the modern evangelical world."

Leslie Nuvgun(??) in a CT article in '96 says, "I suddenly saw that someone could use all the language of evangelical Christianity and yet the center was fundamentally the self and God was auxiliary to that." Now that defines the contemporary church and contemporary preaching, it's all about you and your comfort, it's all about you and your soul, it's all about you and fixing you, and helping you, and bumping you up a few notches on the comfort scale. And it's a far cry from where Martin Luther was. It's a far cry from where John Calvin was. I've been reading a lot about John Calvin lately because I've been in Geneva a couple of times and was able with John Glass to dig a little more deeply into some of the things in Geneva that reveal the nature of the man, the character of the man. B.B. Warfield said this about Calvin and probably this is as defining as anything that's been said about John Calvin. B.B. Warfield said about Calvin, "No man ever had a profounder sense of God than he." And that is the reason that the whole world turned on John Calvin, the power of that man was based upon his profundity. It was his profundity that...that catapulted him into a man who revealed the wonder and glory of God. That said Warfield in his book on Calvin and Augustine.

And really that was the key to Calvin's theology was his theology proper. Reformed theology under the influence of Calvin took hold, it took hold of the Scripture, first of all, sola scriptura, it took hold of the Scripture and it took hold and made deep root and ended up in the highest place. When you go back and you ask yourself...where do I find the deepest understanding of theology? You see it coming out of the reformed faith, don't you? Where do I go back and find the highest expressions of prayer? You find it in the same place, don't you because it is the depth that creates the height.

I just finished an article for Hank Hannegraff's Christian Research Journal, it will probably be out in this issue or the next one. I sent a copy to you, Clayton. I forget the name of it, something about psalms, hymns and praise and it's an article that shows the tragedy of how the current kind of Christian music reflects the insipid approach to theology.

What does that tell you? Hymns are of all music...there are psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...the psalms we know, spiritual songs are testimony songs, of all music, hymns alone...or I shouldn't say alone...hymns are primarily didactic. They focus on God. They focus on Christ. They focus on the Holy Spirit. They don't focus on us. And they tend to be instructive...didact. They were replaced in the last century by spiritual songs and they have again been buried deeper under this endless barrage of praise songs which are intended to be like some kind of Hindu mantra that induces you into some state of semi-consciousness which you interpret as worship.

Worship is cognitive and the more theology you have in your expression, the more worship it is. So when you go back, you find these Reformers were not only great profound theologians but they wrote...what?...they wrote hymns. Martin Luther wrote hymns. They wrote hymns because you can't go down without going up. And if somebody says to us in our church, "You know, you guys...your worship is stiff and stodgy and you sing all those hymns." Sorry, folks, we have no choice but to praise our God and that is an expression, that is the reaction to what we know to be true about Him because of the exposition of His Word. This idea that you come into a church and you make everything superficial is simply a reflection of the kind of teaching you do. If people are content with that, that's because they're ignorant. If we made our worship here superficial, flat, trivial, pop kind of worship, as you...whatever they call it somewhere else...our people would not like it, they would protest because it's not enough to give expression to what they know in their minds. But if they don't know that, they don't know, they miss that so they sit and sing their mantras over and over.

The reason Calvin had such an incredible sense of God, a profound sense of God was that his entire ministry was exposition. Many people think John Calvin, they think of The Institutes which were written by his early twenties and refined five times through his life, but what many people don't know is he was a Bible expositor. He preached only Bible exposition from 1536 to 1564 in Geneva with a three-year hiatus when they threw him out of town. They threw him out in 1538, he came back in 1541. He had to go over to Bosil(?) and when he went over there in order to better exposit Scripture, he spent those three years mastering Hebrew. Can you imagine being in exile and mastering Hebrew on your own? Because he knew that's how you learn the Scriptures. He came back three years later and picked up in the next verse where he had left off when they sent him out three years before. That's right. He was relentless. You go to a library, look at Calvin's commentaries, they cover the reigns of the Bible...1536 to 1564 with the exception of those three years, he went in a little aud-de-twa(???), the auditorium next to St. Peter's the great cathedral there where he preached on the Lord's day and other times, but every day in that aud-de-twa he was teaching the Word of God. He had five guys sitting in the front row like these guys here and they were taking down in dictation everything he

said because no one of them could get it all but five of them collectively could get it. And that became his commentaries.

R.L. Dabney in his book on *Evangelical Eloquence*says, "All the leading Reformers, whether in Germany, Switzerland, England or Scotland were constant preachers and their sermons were expository." We may assume with safety that the instrumentality to which the spiritual power of that great revelation was mainly due was the restoration of scriptural preaching. In other words, Dabney says, "The Reformation was born out of Bible exposition."

You see, and what set it in motion was they viewed the book as the only source of divine truth. And with that they eliminated all other sources of authority. They went back to the book and they hammered at the rock of that book until they had broken it and the water of life had flowed out of it.

Dabney goes on to say, "A perversion of the pulpit is surely followed by spiritual apostasy in the church." You watch. You're going to live long enough to see what has been known as evangelicalism apostatized. You pervert the pulpit, take the Word out of the pulpit and you will send the church right down the drain.

Dabney says, "And it is exceedingly instructive to note that there are three stages through which preaching has repeatedly passed with the same results. The first is that in which scriptural truth is faithfully presented in scriptural garb. That is to say that not only are all the doctrines asserted which truly belong to the revealed system of redemption, but they are presented in that dress and connection in which the Holy Spirit has presented them without seeking any other from human science. This state of the pulpit marks the golden age of the church. The second is the transition stage. In this the doctrines taught are still those of the Scriptures, but their relations are molded into conformity with the prevalent human dialectics." That's a hundred-year-old book. "God's truth is now shorn of a part of its power over the soul. A third stage is then near in which not only are the methods and explanations conformed to the philosophy of the day but the doctrines themselves contradict the truth of the Word. Again and again have the clergy traveled this descending scale and always with the same disastrous result." So he says, "May we ever be content to exhibit Bible doctrine in its own Bible dress."

You can't improve on it because that's the way God chose to communicate it. Now we're in that transition, aren't we, evangelicals? There's still some Christian doctrine but nobody wants to put it in the Bible dress.

The Bible forms the whole content of our preaching. God set forth all its truths in such context, such proportions and such relations that He knew suited the soul of man under the work of the Holy Spirit perfectly. No other forms are as good. No other forms are acceptable to Him. Using anything other than the Word of God is infidelity and that kind of preaching breeds infidelity to the Scripture among

the hearers. Can you see that? If you teach the true doctrine from a non-biblical perspective using reason, then people will learn that the way to come to truth is through their reason. And you have told them that that is a better way than through biblical revelation.

So I'm back to where I started. Second Timothy 4:2, "Do...what?...preach the Word." "Be in season and out of season." People say...Well what does that mean? Well I don't know exactly what Paul had in mind, but I know this. There are only two possibilities. You're either in season or out of season, the bottom line is all the time. And right now it's out of season but that doesn't change the command, does it?

Now that's the perspective. Actually I had seven points, but one of my points is that slower is better than faster. This is one of my points, isn't it? Do you know why slower is better than faster? Because slower is deeper than faster. That's why seminary isn't a week-end course. That's why it takes, three, four, five, six...that's why some of these guys were in school 15 years because slower is better than faster.

A second point. You start with perspective and then you have to move to preparation. Now, gentlemen, if you don't understand how important preparation is now, I don't know what I can say to help you understand it. I just told you, you have to be able to tell people what's in the book and just frankly, that's going to take some preparation, right?

Since all true preaching must be expository, the preacher is called to study in preparation. I will tell you this. I'm 61 last June and I have spent most of my life since I graduated from seminary, I have spent most of my life studying...still studying. Cause there isn't any other way. I went to seminary to get tools so that I could give a life time of study. Study is critical. The Bible is the field you will plow all your life. It is the mine you will dig all your life. And it requires a radical commitment to diligence. You must preach the true sense of Scripture.

Here's a little thought for you. The meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture. The meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture. You have to preach the sense of it as God has intended it and He only intended it to say one thing and you have to discern what that is.

I'll close with this. Dabney says, "The preacher is a herald and that is God's Word which is committed to him as his instrument to herald. If his task is to deliver and commend God's message, what right has he to change it or to represent it as other than it is? Besides the risk of giving a fatal and specific wrong guidance to some soul in the very perversion of that particular proposition of Scripture, such a custom confuses the minds of hearers in their efforts to understand the Word and cultivates irreverent feelings toward its authority."

You can't tell people the Bible is authoritative and then handle it willy-nilly. It has to speak specifically. And Dabney is right, you will cultivate irreverent feelings toward the authority of the Bible if you are inept in its interpretation.

"The falsehood," he writes, "of that man is full of impiety, who avowedly standing up in a sacred place to declare God's message says that the Holy Spirit has said what He has not said." You don't ever want to do that. I mean, that's one way to look at it. Don't ever stand in a pulpit and say what the Holy Spirit has not said.

"I would impress you," he says, "with a solid awe of taking any liberties in expounding the Word. I would have you feel that every meaning of the text other than that which God expressly intended it to bear is forbidden fruit to you, however plausible and attractive, fruit which you dare not touch on peril of a fearful sin."

You see, God's sermon is far more powerful than yours. Make sure you give His. Well, I'll say more about that next time. We'll pick up on the preparation on Thursday, okay? Let's pray.

We're all overwhelmed by this, Lord, myself included. We understand it, we understand the perspective. We understand the call for preparation. That's why we're here. Lord, give us that great...that great and confined confidence in Your Word to say what it says, what it means and go no further...to give biblical doctrine and biblical dress because You have thus designed it to do Your work in the souls of men and women. And raise up mighty men of the truth among us all, for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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