

IS THERE A ROLE FOR DIALOGUE IN THE PREACHING OF THE
WORD OF GOD IN A SUNDAY MORNING SETTING?

by

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COURSE PAPER

Submitted to Dr. McGinniss
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Advanced Bible Teaching Methods – BII
Spring 2010

Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania
Friday, April 9, 2010

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ABBREVIATIONS

BibSac *Bibliotheca Sacra*

BJET *British Journal of Educational Technology*

CC *Christian Century*

CEP *Concise Encyclopedia of Preaching*, edited by Willimon and Lischer.

CPS *Craft of Preaching Series*

ET *Educational Theory*

ExpT *Expository Times*

Interp *Interpretation*

JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSWE *Journal of Social Work Education*

JTSA *Journal of Theology for South Africa*

LCCIE *Library of Christian Classics Ichthus Edition*

TMSJ *The Master's Seminary Journal*

RE *Review & Expositor*

SHE *Studies in Higher Education*

TynBul *Tyndale Bulletin*

WTJ *Westminster Theological Journal*

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

“The problem that most churches today are experiencing is apathy. There is a lack of meaningful involvement on the part of the congregation.”¹ So writes Craig Evans who has rightly seen a pervasive problem in evangelical churches. Why is it that so many sermons seem to be ineffective and, to be quite frank, boring? Can anything diagnose this pervasive epidemic? How can pastors and teachers involve the people more to not only see the need to listen and apply what God’s Word says but also to actively and deliberately implement the truths of God’s Word to their hearts and lives as they leave the worship service back into the battle zone of the world? Is there a hope? Or is it a helpless cause?

The Need for This Paper

The fact that so many congregations are bored during the sermon time week after week with the effect that God’s Word is not conforming and transforming the Christian more into the image of Christ presents a dilemma in contemporary ecclesiology. Many churches under the guidance of pastors and leadership boards think that resorting to “dialogue” in the Sunday morning sermon contains an—if not *the*—answer. That is to say, many pastors firmly believe that actively and intentionally incorporating and involving the listeners during the Sunday morning message will arrest interest, welcome interaction, and teach more effectively. There are some, however, who believe that biblical and expository preaching—

¹ Craig A. Evans, “‘Preacher’ and ‘Preaching’: Some Lexical Observations,” *JETS* 24, no. 2 (December 1981): 321.

especially during the Sunday morning sermon—ought not to involve congregational dialogue. It seems to go against the fabric of heralding the word of truth and authoritatively proclaiming God’s Word to God’s people for that day.

The Purpose for This Paper

The thesis of this paper is to analyze the benefits and pitfalls of dialoguing during preaching by looking at (1) the motivation for dialoguing; (2) the methods of dialoguing; (3) the motivation for expository preaching via monologue; (4) exegetical discussions from pertinent biblical texts; and, finally, (5) concluding as to whether or not dialoguing is appropriate in the Sunday morning sermon. This study will closely scrutinize the various reasons that some resort to dialogue, the ways that some have practiced dialoguing, the definition of expository preaching, and how dialoguing fits into expository preaching. This paper hopes to give a balanced and fair assessment from both viewpoints and then conclude with biblical, theological, and practical reasons supporting the chosen viewpoint.

Presuppositions

As in any paper or writing, presuppositions exist and the purpose here is to bring them to the fore. The assumptions are manifold. First, this paper presupposes the integrity and inerrancy of the Word of God. This means that what the Bible states in all of its contents is fully reliable, inerrant, and accurately breathed out (θεόπνευστος, 2 Tim 3:16) by God through His chosen mouthpiece (2 Pet 1:20–21). Second, this paper presupposes the authority of God’s Word. That God possess all authority in heaven and on earth is a biblical truth that rings throughout both testaments (Neh 9:6; Isa 42:5; Zech 12:1; Matt 28:18). Thus, when

God speaks through a prophet (e.g., Jer 22:1–2), an apostle (cf. 2 Pet 1:20–21) and through His written Word (Ps 19:9; 119:42, 51, 160; 1 Thess 2:13) it is fully authoritative.

Limitations

Because of time and space, this paper chooses to only deal with the Sunday morning church service. That is to say, many churches may have mid-week services, small group Bible studies, community groups, other Bible-institute type classes but none of these are in view in this paper. This paper exclusively deals with the ecclesiological climax of the week when the entire church congregation gathers together for the corporate worship service. It is with the aforementioned setting in mind—the Sunday morning worship service—that the paper will both ask and answer the question: “Is dialoguing appropriate during the sermon?”²

Defining Expository Preaching

Part of laying the foundation for this kind of paper requires the defining of key terms. Obviously one could easily get carried away defining, supporting, and proving all the various aspects, biblical supports, and tangents of both biblical preaching and teaching. But for the purposes of this study, a brief definition of each will be provided. Even phrasing the statement as such assumes a distinction between preaching and teaching. Though there may be slight distinctions between them, they ought not to be polarized from one another.³ There

² The author fully recognizes that there hopefully are many other opportunities throughout the week when God’s Word is taught—the Sunday evening service, a mid-week study, a home Bible study or community group, etc. It is only to be expected that dialogue, conversation, and interaction would be involved depending on the venue, the size of the congregation, the topic, etc. The specific focus of this paper, however, is to examine whether or not verbal dialogue is appropriate in the Sunday morning sermon when the entire church body is gathered together (including visitors).

³ See, e.g., John Stott who sees them as mutually exclusive as he writes: “heralding is not the same as lecturing. A lecture is dispassionate, objective, [and] academic. It is addressed to the mind. It seeks no result but to impart certain information and, perhaps, to provoke the student to further enquiry. But the herald of God comes with an urgent proclamation of peace through the blood of the cross, and with a summons to men to

should be deep and theologically accurate *teaching* in biblical preaching.⁴ And, there must be practical exhortations and life-challenges in biblical teaching (for, theology without application is useless). With that said, biblical preaching will first be defined followed by that of biblical teaching.

Many have provided sufficient definitions of expository preaching. Only a handful will prove helpful. James Daane says an “exposition means a ‘setting forth.’ In expository preaching the sermon ‘sets forth’ or ‘exhibits’ the truth of the selected biblical text. Such preaching represents the assertions of the text in the form of a sermon. The sermon must say what the text says.”⁵ Haddon Robinson sees it as:

The type of preaching that most effectively lays open the Bible so that men are confronted by its truth is expository preaching. At its best, expository preaching is ‘the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the *life of the preacher* and then *through him* to his congregation.’⁶

repent, to lay down their arms and humbly accept the offered pardon” (*The Preacher’s Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1961], 42). This is a quite extreme viewpoint regarding the distinctions between preaching and teaching (=lecturing).

⁴ For instance, John A. Broadus wisely comments: “Doctrine, i.e., teaching, is the preacher’s chief business. Truth is the life-blood of piety, without which we cannot maintain its vitality or support its activity. And to teach men truth, or to quicken what they already know into freshness and power, is the preacher’s great means of doing good. The facts and truths which belong to the Scripture account of sin, Providence, and redemption, form the staple of all scriptural preaching. But these truths ought not simply to have place after a desultory and miscellaneous fashion in our preaching. The entire body of Scripture teaching upon any particular subject, when collected and systematically arranged, has come to be called the ‘doctrine’ of Scripture on that subject, as the doctrine of sin, of atonement, of regeneration, etc.; and in this sense we ought to preach much on the doctrines of the Bible. We all regard it as important that the preacher should himself have sound views of doctrine; is it not also important that he should lead his congregation to have just views?” (*On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, rev. ed. [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944], 60).

⁵ James Daane, *Preaching with Confidence: A Theological Essay on the Power of the Pulpit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 49. Later he continues, “all authentic preaching is exposition of Scripture” (*ibid.*, 56).

⁶ Haddon W. Robinson, “What Is Expository Preaching?” *BibSac* 131, no. 521 (Jan-Mar 1974): 57 (emphasis added).

Similarly, Albert Mohler defines expositional preaching as: “that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible.”⁷

David Bartlett defines a sermon as “an oral interpretation of scripture, usually in the context of worship. Sermons are interpretations of scripture. Communities of faith employ and acknowledge other forms of edifying discourse, but a sermon properly understood interprets a sacred text for the life of a community and its members.”⁸ In an essay, J. I. Packer suggests: “Preaching should be defined as an activity of communication, whether by monologue or in dialogue . . . which has in view the evoking of a positive response to some aspect of God’s call to men.”⁹

Correspondingly, Richard Holland believes that:

Preaching is public hermeneutics. It reflects what are the preacher’s fundamental interpretations of his world, his task, his people, and most important, his Bible. How he handles the Bible in the pulpit becomes the exemplar for how the congregation approaches it at home. Church history is an undeniable testimony that the pulpit is the rudder for the church.¹⁰

John MacArthur similarly concurs: “Expository preaching is the proclamation of the truth of God as mediated through the preacher.”¹¹

⁷ R. Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 65. Mohler elaborates that this same book: “The heart and soul of expository preaching . . . is reading the Word of God and then explaining it to the people so that they understand it” (51). In Mohler’s estimation, “Expository preaching is: “the only form of authentic Christian preaching” (49). In sum, he gives a concise purpose for all preaching as he notes that “the preacher rises in the pulpit to accomplish one central purpose—to set forth the message and meaning of the biblical text” (66).

⁸ David L. Bartlett, “Sermon,” in *CEP*, ed. by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 433.

⁹ James I. Packer, “Preaching as Biblical Interpretation,” in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. by Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 189–90.

¹⁰ Richard L. Holland, “Progressional Dialogue & Preaching: Are They the Same?” *TMSJ*, 17, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 207.

From the aforementioned definitions, it is clear that preaching is public proclamation of God's truth which necessarily involves a heraldic element. Taking all these definitions into consideration, the author proposes the following definition for expository preaching:

*Expository preaching is the authoritative, forceful and persuasive explication of a message based solely from the Word of God after careful exegesis and an accurate understanding of the historical context where he explains clearly what is taught in the passage, and applies the text to the immediate audience's specific life situation.*¹²

¹¹ John F. MacArthur, "The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," *TMSJ* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 5.

¹² Biblical teaching, then, can be defined as the teaching of God's Word that can be more technical, much more discussion-oriented, and interactive, and lengthy.

CHAPTER 2

MOTIVATION FOR DIALOGUE IN PREACHING

Introduction

Preaching through dialogue is really nothing new. In *TIME* magazine on Mat 17, 1968, it stated:

Today, more and more U.S. clergymen are letting the people in the pew talk back by experimenting with ‘dialogue sermons’ as an alternate to the pulpit monologue. One reason for this communal approach to the exposition of God’s word is that today’s educated congregations are unwilling to put up with authoritarian preaching that lacks the stamp of credibility. Advocates of the dialogue sermon point out that since industry, government and education have discovered the virtue of the seminar and the conference, the church should also explore this avenue of intellectual discovery.¹

If preaching contains at its core to apply the text to the life-situation of the hearers *so that* they deliberately and specifically apply God’s truth to their lives, the question then becomes: “how can the preacher *best* teach God’s Word so the people are engaged, involved, and deliberately proactive in implementing those changes?” Many have seen public dialogue during the sermon as a solution to the dilemma.

Definition of Dialoguing

There are two main ways that dialoguing in the sermon may be viewed: silent dialogue through questions and verbal dialogue with the hearers. Both will be defined and examined respectively.

¹ Quoted in William D. Thompson and Gordon C. Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 7.

Silent Dialogue through Questions

One way a preacher may involve his congregation is to dialogue with his hearers silently. This does not involve verbal interaction (back and forth) between the preacher and the listeners but rather the preacher posing rhetorical questions to the congregation that draws them in and forces them to answer the question in their own heart and mind. Or, it may arise as the preacher anticipates objections that the congregation may be thinking and he poses the question and then provides the answers to those objections.

“Preaching must always be dialogical.”² Stott qualifies what he means by this statement:

Not in the sense of ‘dialogue sermons’, in which two preachers debate an issue, or one interviews and quizzes the other (an excellent arrangement for an after-church or mid-week meeting but, it seems to me, out of place in the context of public worship). Nor am I suggesting that we encourage hecklers, although, to be sure, some unscripted interruptions would enliven the proceedings in most Western churches and put us preachers on our mettle.³

Furthermore, Stott clarifies:

But the kind of dialogical preaching I am recommending is different. It refers to the silent dialogue which should be developing between the preacher and his hearers. For what he says provokes questions in their minds which he then proceeds to answer. His answer raises further questions, to which again he replies. One of the greatest gifts a preacher needs is such a sensitive understanding of people and their problems that he can anticipate their reactions to each part of his sermon and respond to them. Preaching is rather like playing chess, in that the expert chess player keeps several moves ahead of his opponent, and is always ready to respond, whatever piece he decides to move next.⁴

What Stott affirms is the fundamental need to keep the people engaged as the preacher preaches—and he can do this through various means. This kind of silent dialogue in

² John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 60.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 61.

public speaking can even be found in the Scriptures (Mal 1:12; 2:17; 3:8, 13, 14). A careful reading of Sidney Greidanus affirms the helpfulness of this kind of preaching:

Although most sermons are in the form of a monologue, the monologue ought to be a dialogue with the hearers, that is, it ought to respond to the reactions of the hearers as these might come up during the sermon. . . . This requirement does NOT mean that one should interrupt the flow of the sermon with the odd, ‘but I hear you saying . . .’ It means, rather, that one ought to consider what major objections and questions the audience might raise and try to address these issues in the sermon.⁵

If the preacher incorporates this kind of dialogue in the sermon, the hearers will sense themselves to be very much a part of the sermon.⁶ Those who adhere to this form of preaching do not downplay the involvement of the congregation, but the *way* that they are involved differs from others who affirm verbal dialogue during the sermon.⁷

Verbal Dialogue with the Hearers⁸

Though the previous method of dialoguing may be a good idea (and should certainly be implemented), some believe that verbal dialogue with the congregation during the Sunday morning sermon is not only acceptable, it is advisable! Thompson and Bennett provide a helpful definition: “We define dialogue preaching to be an act within the context of public

⁵ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 185.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 185–86.

⁷ Greidanus provides four helpful ways to engage people during sermon as the preacher anticipates the questions of the hearers and so the hearers are actively engaged during the message (*Modern Preacher*, 84–87):

1. Address the needs of the people.
2. Address the whole (entire) person as you preach (not only in terms of the entire congregation sitting in the building but the entire span of people present from youths to elderly, sports fanatics to homewives, etc., and finally, address the heart of the individual).
3. Use dialogue via rhetorical questions and anticipating the listeners’ objections and providing the proper answers in the sermon.
4. Use concrete, vivid language to captivate the people and keep them engaged.

⁸ For a helpful resource clearly and thoroughly defining and describing this kind of dialogical preaching, see William D. Thompson and Gordon C. Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969).

worship in which two or more persons engage in a verbal exchange as the sermon or message.”⁹ To elaborate more fully, quoting Cleator is advantageous:

The dialogue homily is that kind of homily in which people discuss the significance of the day’s liturgy instead of hearing a formal sermon by the priest. It functions so as to make the people active, forcing them to penetrate and apply the Scriptures for themselves. In this way, the Scriptures become more relevant to the people, since they talk about them in terms of the problems which they encounter and not in those of the priest. The dialogue homily also serves to stimulate the people with a greater variety of ideas. Furthermore, the fact that they are talking with each other, trying to help each other grow in knowledge and love for God, gives them a sense of community. The fact that the ideas come from their peers gives them a sense of inspiration and encouragement.¹⁰

A strong advocate of this sort of dialogical teaching is Doug Pagitt. In his book *Preaching Re-Imagined* he advocates “that we become communities who listen to the preachers among us, not just the preacher standing in front of us.”¹¹ Pagitt goes so far as to say:

Speaching [=preaching] sets the story of God in a prefabricated context where it all makes sense from the perspective of the person speaking. The context of others is therefore inconsequential. Speaching also creates a belief that even in the presence of dozens, hundreds, even thousands of other Christians, there are a select few who know God’s truth and who get to tell others about God. There is hardly a preacher who wants her hearers to leave with the notion that they must access the truth of God through the preacher. But that is precisely the message preaching perpetuates: The pastor has the authority to speak about God, and you don’t.¹²

On the one extreme is Pagitt who near exclusively proposes dialogue in “speaching”. He shuns the notion of monologue in preaching because, in his estimation, “when we create neat,

⁹ Thompson and Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching*, 9; cf. Craig A. Evans, “‘Preacher’ and ‘Preaching’: Some Lexical Observations,” *JETS* 24, no. 2 (Dec 1981): 315–22. For a helpful article in the university setting on how to teach effectively via dialogue, see Paul Gorsky, “Campus-Based University Students’ Use of Dialogue,” *SHE* 31, no. 1 (Feb 2006): 71–87; Paul Gorsky and Avner Caspi, “Dialogue: A Theoretical Framework for Distance Education Instructional Systems,” *BJET* 36, no. 2 (2005): 137–44 (esp. the chart on p. 138); Andrew Metcalfe and Ann Game, “Significance and Dialogue in Learning and Teaching,” *ET* 58, no. 3 (2008): 343–56.

¹⁰ Gerald Cleator, “Experiments in Dialogue Homily,” *Preaching* 3, no. 5 (1968): 28.

¹¹ Doug Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 26.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

three-point packages to explain away the mysteries of God’s work and leave no room for our hearers to ask their questions or express their thoughts, we send a clear message that God can be mastered. Progressional preaching assumes there will always be more to say than one person can say alone.”¹³

Pagitt expresses part of the core of postmodern dialogue and the refusal to stand as the authoritative messenger to preach as God’s mouthpiece to God’s people with an authoritative message not because the preacher has any authority intrinsic to himself but because he is the chosen messenger from God to pronounce His message. Leonard Sweet believes that verbal dialogue contains the answer as he sees the crack in the way church is done today: “In the modern world, explanation came to substitute for experience. The church in mission to postmodern culture must leverage spirituality out of the rational crack the modern world has wedged it into—wedged it so hard, in fact, that the last place anyone today expects to have a religious experience is in church.”¹⁴ And he even admits that “Postmodern preaching draws fewer conclusions than it does entertain possibilities. It is the preaching of departures, beckonings, thresholds . . . to a people On The Way.”¹⁵ Another advocate residing in this camp is John McClure who promotes this kind of dialoguing:

Inductive preaching relies almost entirely on the assumption of *relational symmetry*. Preachers and hearers can and should *identify* with one another. Preaching relies on a kind of empathic imagination through which preachers and hearers move onto common experiential ground and proceed down a common pathway to specific conclusions. In order for this to work, both preachers and their hearers must at least tacitly agree that there is symmetry of knowledge and experience between one

¹³ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴ Leonard Sweet, *soulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 215.

¹⁵ Ibid.

another. . . . Inductive preaching communicates that preachers and hearers trust one another's experiences, abilities, and vision.¹⁶

Again, "Postmodern culture is an 'age of participation,' and an 'age of access.'"¹⁷ Therefore, as Pagitt and Sweet affirm, the way people who come to church nowadays feel connected and involved is to present a forum where dialogue is welcome for individuals to share their insights and opinions on the matter at hand.

Motivations for Dialoguing

The world in which we live is interactive. No one would—or could—deny that. As Sweet has noted, "Postmodern is another name for *interactive everything*."¹⁸ There are a couple of motivations for dialoguing in preaching that must be revealed and assessed.

First, some dialogue to welcome the opinions and thoughts of others and hear how God speaks to individuals through His Word. As postmodern preaching entertains endless possibilities and different viewpoints, the sharing of thoughts and ideas must certainly be welcome.¹⁹ Cleator sees this reason for dialogue in preaching as nonnegotiable as he declares:

The dialogue homily allowed people to talk about their problems, their feelings, to answer their questions, and to expand ideas as they felt the need . . . It also demonstrates mutual edification since a dialogue homily enables a man to share his views with his peers and to discover their opinions. The participants learn from the personal experiences of others who have had the same problem and it demonstrates that others think the same way they do.²⁰

¹⁶ John S. McClure, *Other-Wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 51 (emphasis original).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁸ Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 218.

¹⁹ See Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 215–18.

²⁰ Gerald Cleator, "Experiments in Dialogue Homily," *Preaching* 3, no. 5 (1968): 24.

Furthermore, if God works in all people and the roles of preaching and teaching reside not in the pastor alone, then certainly the church ought to welcome the opinions and thoughts of other believers.²¹ “When we move away from speaking (preaching) and give voice to the myriad ways in which the gospel infiltrates the lives of all people, we unleash the depth of life with God and allow it to mean something to us as individuals, not simply as congregations.”²² Pagitt concludes his book by pleading:

Listening to the voices of others is an essential part of being the church. We were never meant to close in on ourselves. We were never meant to engage with only those who share our positions. We’ve been called to live in the way of Jesus, who sought out the ordinary, the outsider, and the unbeliever, not only to make them whole, but also to bring his followers into the fullness of life in the kingdom. For it is often in the life of others where we find God at work in the most profound ways imaginable.²³

Furthermore, Arthurs contends that Americans live in a democratic and free-expression society and, consequently, Americans have free expression and the right to express his or her opinion.²⁴ Very simply, this means that “the people want in. They want out of the bleachers and onto the court.”²⁵

Second, others dialogue for the sole purpose of keeping the audience involved and engaged in the sermon. Few people can sit still during a 45 minute sermon given our fast-

²¹ Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 23, 29. Note, however, that this is not just a postmodern phenomenon. In November of 1966, a Roman Catholic Scholar wrote in the *Newsletter of the Catholic Homiletic Society*: “Proponents of the dialogue homily point out that the Spirit can speak through the laymen as well as through the priest; the authority of the Church to teach is safeguarded by the priest whose function is that of ‘judging the spirits’ rather than that of doing all the talking himself” (quoted in William D. Thompson and Gordon C. Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* [Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969], 28).

²² Pagitt, *Preaching Re-Imagined*, 30.

²³ *Ibid.*, 226.

²⁴ See Jeffrey Arthurs, “Connect Hearers through Dialogue: A Two-Way Street Can Be Paved with Gold,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today’s Communicators*, ed. by Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 141–43, esp. 42.

²⁵ Sweet, *soulTsunami*, 218.

paced and intensely-immediate culture. Harry Emerson Fosdick epitomizes this motivation for dialoguing in the sermon:

Many preachers . . . indulge habitually in what they call expository sermons. They take a passage from Scripture and, proceeding on the assumption that the people attending church that morning are deeply concerned about what the passage means, they spent their half hour or more on historical exposition of the verse or chapter, ending with some appended practical application to the auditors. Could any procedure be more surely predestined to dullness and futility?²⁶

Fosdick explicates:

The future, I think, belongs to a type of sermon which can best be described as an adventure in co-operative thinking between the preacher and his congregation. The impression made by such preaching easily is felt by anyone who runs into it. The preacher takes hold of a real problem in our lives and, stating it better than we could state it, goes on to deal with it fairly, frankly, helpfully. The result is inevitable. He makes us think. We may agree with him or disagree with him, but we must follow him. He is dealing with something vital to us and so he makes us think with him even though we may have planned a far more somnolent use of sermon time . . . Here, too, we are dealing with preaching in terms of good pedagogy. The lecture method of instruction is no longer in the ascendent. To be sure, there are subjects which must be handled by the positive setting forth of information in a lecture, but more and more, good teaching is discussional, co-operative. The instructor does not so much think for the students as think with them.²⁷

Therefore, congregational involvement at strategic points can only serve to enhance the listener involvement with the sermon. Plus, people love listening to other people. It engages them. It arrests their interest and curiosity. This, then, is one vehicle the preacher can use to draw people in so that he has their undivided attention throughout his message. There are a host of issues individuals have on their hearts and minds on a Sunday morning. One of which is apathy toward God and His Word. “The problem that most churches today are experiencing is apathy. There is a lack of meaningful involvement on the part of the

²⁶ Harry Emerson Fosdick, “What is the Matter with Preaching?” in *What’s the Matter with Preaching Today?* Edited by Mike Graves (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

congregation.”²⁸ Jeffrey Arthurs concludes with this note on dialogue: “I think you will find that encouraging more two-way communication in your preaching will invigorate you, your church community, and your sermons.”²⁹

²⁸ Craig A. Evans, “‘Preacher’ and ‘Preaching’: Some Lexical Observations,” *JETS* 24, no. 2 (Dec 1981): 321.

²⁹ Jeffrey Arthurs, “Connect Hearers through Dialogue: A Two-Way Street Can Be Paved with Gold,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today’s Communicators*, ed. by Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 143.

CHAPTER 3
METHODS OF DIALOGUE IN PREACHING

Ways of Dialoguing

It has been affirmed that “dialogue is welcome because **the listener matters.**”¹ Dialogue can be employed in a variety of ways during a message. Obviously, one would not want the dialogue to get out of hand in the form of a debate or argument since that would violate the principle of doing everything in brotherly love (Rom 12:10; cp. James 1:19–20; 1 Cor 14:26). That dialogue may be employed in a variety of ways to keep the listeners engaged during the Sunday morning sermon can be manifest in the following ways.²

Question and Answer with the Preacher

The possibility for the congregation to ask the preacher questions in the middle of his sermon is, perhaps, a common way dialogue is employed in some churches. This principle necessitates that the church congregation knows that it is permissible and even desirable for an individual to raise his hand in the middle of the sermon if there is a point that is unclear, if a question arises in his mind, or if he disagrees with what the preacher is saying.³

¹ Kenton C. Anderson, “Preaching as Dialogue: Moving Beyond the ‘Speaching’ of the Word,” *Preaching* 22, no. 4 (Jan-Feb 2007): 7 (emphasis original).

² This is not an exhaustive list by any means. For another lengthy list of ways dialogue can be brought into the church service, see Anderson, “Preaching as Dialogue,” 8–10.

³ Anderson brings forth this point when he writes: “preaching can seem a little one-sided, particularly when the listener disagrees with what the preacher is saying” (ibid., 6).

An example of this sort of dialogical method is revealed from a morning bulletin excerpt from a church in Illinois. It contained the statement: TODAY IS DIALOGUE SUNDAY. It then explained:

‘Dialogue’ means that the last ten or fifteen minutes of the worship hour will be left for discussion on the part of the congregation. This is our third Sunday to experiment with this particular way of learning, and we encourage your participation. At the close of the sermon, the minister will simply walk out of the pulpit and stand on the Chancel floor. Members of the congregation, as they wish, may ask questions, offer suggestions or in any other way respond concerning the life of the Church in our parish and in our world. The subject need not be limited to the sermon of the morning, and the questions and answers need not be limited to exchange between the minister and the people. After the conversation gets under way, there may be exchange of ideas from person to person in the congregation with the minister serving as moderator.⁴

Thus, this kind of question and answer with the preacher can involve the congregation and capture and keep their interest by inviting their spontaneous questions and comments even while the topic is being discussed.⁵

Question and Answer with the Audience

Another way congregational dialogue can manifest itself in the sermon is when the preacher asks questions of the audience. This differs from the preacher providing rhetorical questions and asking questions to probe the listener only to think because here the preacher asks a question to the gathered assembly and actually waits (as long as necessary!) for them to respond with various thoughts, ideas, concerns, or questions.

One way this category may be utilized is when the preacher is trying to illustrate a point and he asks the question to his listeners: “Has anyone been in this situation before?” “And if so, what happened?” This sort of interaction with the congregation not only involves

⁴ William D. Thompson and Gordon C. Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 24.

⁵ See *ibid.*

the individual speaking but it captures the attention of all the other hearers present because everyone loves to listen to other peoples' stories. If used properly—so the “storytelling” does not get out of hand—this can be quite an effective pedagogical device.

Interviews

Imagine, in the middle of the sermon, if the man preaching called someone up from the congregation for a brief interview. For instance, say the preacher is speaking on the topic of persecution and there is an individual in the congregation from China who was severely persecuted in his upbringing. This may be an ideal time for an interview with that individual as an illustration (or introduction/conclusion) to drive the point home that “persecution really happens” to the rest of the church congregation.

Or perhaps the pastor has been preaching through Ephesians and he comes to chapter 5 on the topic of the roles of the husband and wife in marriage. He may choose to call up a few couples and interview them to get their perspective and how they have implemented various principles in their marriage and how it has worked. (This can be effective with a couple married for a year or two, another couple with a few small children, and then another couple with grandchildren for varying perspectives.) Getting to know someone can certainly be an effective way to involve them and the other listeners who enjoy variety in the worship time.

Planned Questions to Arouse Curiosity

The preacher may choose to preplan some questions and designate a particular individual in the congregation to ask the “intended” questions at the proper time during the

sermon.⁶ Throughout the study in the course of the week, the pastor may have thought of a question that would be perfect to address during his sermon. He may choose to have a particular person ask that question, for example, in the middle of his second point so that if anyone was dozing off during the sermon, this preplanned question from another person in the audience would arouse that individual and awaken their attention.

Promoting Others to Share Ideas/Opinions

This method of listener involvement simply requires the pastor to call the congregation to share their ideas and opinions on a particular matter. For instance, the pastor may be preaching on Christian liberties from 1 Corinthians 8–9 and he may choose to bring up an issue such as going to a movie, drinking a glass of wine, or dancing and see how people interact in the assembly with their particular ideas, opinions, and convictions (with biblical support!). This must be accomplished with much planning and deliberate oversight so the conversation does not get out of hand or turn into a promotion of a sin (e.g., excessive drinking). But the fact that people know their ideas and opinions are welcome to be shared would, most assuredly, result in quite an interesting dialogue.

Planned ‘Devil’s Advocate’

The devil’s advocate can not only serve as a helpful break in the monologue sermon, but it can raise an objection that someone else in the audience was probably thinking. This method of dialogue could effectively be utilized if the preacher is speaking on the topic of

⁶ A spin-off of this issue is found in Howard’s book who advocates dialogue in preaching. He illustrates how it could be done this way (J. Grant. Howard, *Creativity in Preaching*, The CPS [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987], 81):

“Suppose you are preaching on 2 Timothy 2:22 and are developing the first clause: ‘Flee the evil desires of youth.’ A teenager’s voice might come into the room from an offstage mike, saying: ‘My friends and I need a bit of help. Every time we hear this from you adults, it seems to end up as a reference to sex. We are beginning to get the impression that life for us teenagers is basically staying away from each other.’

Now you have everyone’s undivided attention. You can go ahead and dialogue with the offstage teenager, letting the congregation listen in on your conversation, or you can inform the congregation that the question is valid and you intend to address it.”

sovereign election. Of course, the pastor could designate someone in the congregation with some very specific objections that are often raised against sovereign election. He could have a man raise his hand and stand and play the “devil’s advocate” to give the pastor ample opportunity to engage the individual from the audience, seize the attention from the rest of the congregation, and answer the objections raised by this person.

Hindrances of Dialoguing

With all the seemingly helpful methods just mentioned to obtain the attention of the congregation and involve them in the sermon, there are a number of serious pitfalls that dialoguing in preaching effects. Five of these objections will be listed and briefly noted below.

The Authority Issue

The very first hindrance to dialoguing in the midst of a Sunday morning sermon is the sheer fact that the proclamation of the Word of God is interrupted (for whatever reason) with other individual’s questions, ideas, opinions, or stories. At the heart of biblical exposition and preaching is the notion that the preacher is *the* authority in that building—*the* authority. This authority does not come intrinsically from the preacher himself but it comes from the office of the preacher to speak for God the words of God to the people of God with the authority from God. Paul commanded Titus “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (Titus 2:15). The “these things” refers back to the gospel message (v.11) and holy living (vv.12–14). The message of the gospel and the mandates for holiness are those truths which Paul under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit charged Titus to speak exhort and reprove (λάλει καὶ παρακάλει καὶ ἔλεγχε) with “all authority” (μετὰ πάσης ἐπιταγῆς).

Elsewhere Paul charged young Timothy to “prescribe and teach these things” (1 Tim 4:11) which refers back to vv.1–5 about the infiltration of false teachers and false doctrine in the later times (ὕστεροις καιροῖς). In fact, he is to remind the brothers of these truths just mentioned (4:6) and exhort them to train themselves for godliness (4:7). These things are to be commanded and taught by young Timothy (cf. 4:12) to the church. All this to say, in two distinct places Paul firmly charges both Titus and Timothy to preach and teach with all authority (cf. 2 Tim 4:1–2) because it is the Word of God being taught. It is the Word of God which profits a man (ὠφέλιμος) and makes him sufficient for every good work (πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν ἐξηρτισμένος, 2 Tim 3:16–17).

Therefore, when the preacher substitutes the authoritative proclamation of God’s Word for the interviews with people, the question and answers with people, the engaging in dialogue to hear people’s opinions and experiences on particular matters, the preacher whether consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally is thereby substituting God’s Word for man’s word.

The Heresy Issue

It is quite possible that a dialogue may raise various theological issues and how likely is it that someone raises a seemingly unimportant issue that in actuality is quite erroneous theologically. The preacher then finds himself in a bind. Does he interrupt and clear up all the theological errors or does he choose to let those slide and not address them at that particular point? What if the preacher is speaking on James 1 on subject of God’s purpose for trials in the Christian’s life. What if someone stands and objects that God cannot bring trials for his own glory because trials are painful for us and they are no fun. And the individual is adamant that God would never do anything to upset us, or harm us, or disappoint us. How should the

preacher respond? Does he take the rest of the sermon time (that was originally planned to be used for James 1 on God's purpose in trials) and unpack the theological error and man-centeredness of that individual's statements or does he choose to let the statements go unresolved leading to a shallow and misguided theology in that church? With dialogue, this possibility always lingers.

The Preparation/Readiness Issue

Another hindrance could show itself in a question that is asked by someone in the assembly where the pastor has not the foggiest idea of the answer. In other words, in dialogical preaching the unpredictable can happen.⁷ If the sermon text is Matthew 5 and the topic of the "kingdom of God" comes up and an astute person in the congregation stands up and asks a technical question about how the kingdom of God in Matthew 5 relates to the hearers today or if it is a future kingdom only—visible or invisible, millennial or spiritual, already or not yet or both—the pastor may find himself absolutely at a halt in his tracks and embarrassed that he does not have the answer. It is not to suggest that the people deliberately attempt to stump the preacher, but this certainly could happen with near any subject. (And, if the pastor responds by saying that he will study the issue and provide the answer the following Sunday, that would then take up sermon time next Sunday from that particular message.)

The Guidance Issue

The guidance issue means nothing other than it may be difficult for the pastor to be the active guide and overseer of the conversation/dialogue for a particular topic. What if the topic of the wife's submission to her husband arises in a Sunday morning and there is a woman who inflexibly says that women must not submit to a man—even her husband (or,

⁷ See J. Grant Howard, *Creativity in Preaching*, CPS (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 81.

she proposes mutual submission). How does the pastor gently and graciously reside over this sort of dialogue? The individuals may be stuck on that particular topic and, if left to themselves, they could argue till nightfall yet the preacher needs to progress to the next point in his sermon to finish the message. This can be a real possibility in preaching with dialogue.

The Time Issue

The final hindrance, and a very practical one, is the time issue. Frequently, a preacher who studies well, delves deep into the biblical text, understands the meaning and how it specifically applies to his particular audience will have more to say than his time allows. To open the service up for discussion and dialogue at various points (especially “conversation”) can eat up much time that the preacher could have used for heralding forth the word of God with boldness and application.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has set forth both some methods and some hindrances of dialogue in preaching in order to help the reader understand how dialogue in preaching is practiced by some and what some of the snares that dialogical preaching can create.

CHAPTER 4

MOTIVATION FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING VIA MONOLOGUE

Introduction

Now this study shifts to explore the motivations for expository preaching using monologue—that is, without verbal dialogue. Walter Kaiser suggests that: “Regardless of what new directives and emphases are periodically offered, that which is needed above *everything else* to make the Church more viable, authentic, and effective, is a new *declaration* of the Scriptures with a new purpose, passion, and power.”¹ And this would find its form in a monologue type proclamation of God’s Word.

Greco-Roman Understanding of κηρυξ

The responsibility of a messenger to speak on behalf of his superior the assigned proclamation is nothing new in the first century A.D. Philologists reveal that κηρυξ has an “old-Persian root *xrausa*, meaning to cry out loud and clear, as when one cries out a message in the presence of many people.”² In Plato’s dialogues, a stranger asks Socrates, ““And is not the preacher (*keryx*) under command, and does he not receive orders, and in turn give them to others?” ‘Very true,’ answers Socrates (*Statesman* 260d).³ Broadus notes that: “in the

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 242 (emphasis original).

² See Klaas Runias, “What is Preaching According to the New Testament?” *TynBul* 29 (1978): 7.

³ Quoted in Victor Paul Furnish, “Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching,” *Interp* 17, no. 1 (Jan 1963): 55.

Graeco-Roman world of the first century A.D. The preaching philosopher, employing the finely polished instrument of Greek rhetoric, was not an unfamiliar figure.”⁴

During the time of Christ preaching was essentially “the simple proclamation of the facts of the gospel.”⁵ Stott writes that the concept of κηρύσσω in the New Testament connotes “a proclamation made by a herald, by the town crier, in the full light of day, to the sound of a trumpet, up-to-the-minute, addressed to everyone because it comes from the king himself.”⁶ Additionally, “The herald often announced an athletic event, or at other times religious festivals. He also functioned as a political messenger, the bringer of some news or command from the king’s court. One essential qualification of the herald was that he have a good strong voice so all would hear the news or the order.”⁷ The practice of systematically explaining the Scriptures “goes back to the worship of the synagogue long before the time of Jesus, when the Law was read through Sabbath by Sabbath, beginning each time when one had left off the Sabbath before. The idea was that the whole of the Law would be regularly read through in the course of worship.”⁸

⁴ John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 1.

⁵ Charles W. Koller, *Expository Preaching without Notes Plus Sermons Preached Without Notes*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 1:16.

⁶ John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher’s Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1961), 34. Interestingly, Craig Evans—an advocate of dialogical preaching—sees heralding as monologue yet he sees it as having the possibility of being detrimental to the church. He states: “Since preaching or heralding is almost always monologic it is no wonder that the congregation begins to feel like an audience. Monologue is inherent in heralding—appropriate for gospel proclamation—but it can be detrimental for edifying and the “equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (“‘Preacher’ and ‘Preaching’: Some Lexical Observations,” *JETS* 24, no. 2 [Dec 1981]: 321–22).

⁷ Victor Paul Furnish, “Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching,” *Interp* 17, no. 1 (Jan 1963): 55.

⁸ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 1, The Biblical Period*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 1:9. Old notes that “According to rabbinical tradition it was Ezra who was supposed to have organized the regular reading of the

Historical Practice

If it is true that preaching is what it has been for centuries, namely, “a speech delivered in a Christian assembly for worship by an authorized person that applies some point of doctrine, usually drawn from a biblical passage, to the lives of the members of the congregation with the purpose of moving them by the use of narrative analogy and other rhetorical devices to accept that application and to act on the basis of it,”⁹ then it behooves preachers to look into church history to see how dialogue has played a role in preaching, if any.

In the early church, it was the responsibility of the preacher “to explain [the Bible’s] meaning to them.”¹⁰ The pastor would open the Bible and explain the meaning of a text to his congregation to instruct them “in what to believe about God and how to live lives that reflected a Christian commitment.”¹¹ As early as the middle of the second century A.D., Justin Martyr wrote:

On the day which is called Sunday we have a common assembly of all who live in the cities or in the outlying districts, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, as long as there is time. Then, when the reader has finished, the president (ὁ προεστῶς) of the assembly verbally admonishes and invites (διὰ λόγου τῆν νοουθεσίαν καὶ πρόκλησιν) all to imitate such examples of virtue (*I Apol.* 67).¹²

There is no activity more characteristic of the historical church than preaching.¹³

Scriptures, and apparently what was meant by this was that this marathon reading of the whole Law was simply unfolded at the regular Sabbath assembly of the congregation so that a portion was read each week” (ibid.).

⁹ O. C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 3–4.

¹⁰ Steven A. McKinion, *Life and Practice in the Early Church: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 73.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See Thomas B. Falls, *Saint Justin Martyr, The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation*, ed. by Ludwig Schopp (New York: Christian Heritage, 1948), 106–7.

That many pastors today feel burdened because the people seem uninterested in the sermon and set church attendance to the backburner is nothing new. In fact, John Chrysostom faced the exact same quandary in the late fourth century A.D.: “John Chrysostom struggled to get people to come to church. He noted people’s insatiable desire to attend the theaters, athletic events, and festivals yet they were slothful in attending the times of preaching where the Scriptures were *explained*.”¹⁴ Philip Schaff notes the impact of this remarkable expositor: “He is generally and justly regarded as the greatest pulpit orator of the Greek church. Nor has he any superior or equal among the Latin Fathers. He remains to this day a model for preachers in large cities.”¹⁵ When it comes to keeping the attention of the hearers, Chrysostom knew this was his duty and he was able to captivate their interest during his monologue. “Chrysostom attracted large audiences, and among them many who would rather have gone to the theatre than hear any ordinary preacher. He held them spell-bound to the close.”¹⁶

Shortly thereafter Augustine of Hippo rose to the scene (354-430 A.D.) and he, similarly, wrestled with how to keep listeners engaged in the sermon. A passage from his *On Christian Doctrine* proves quite relevant at this point to be quoted in full:

¹³ Edwards, *History of Preaching*, 3.

¹⁴ Steven A. McKinion, *Life and Practice in the Early Church: A Documentary Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 91 (emphasis added). Hughes Oliphant Old writes regarding John Chrysostom: “John Chrysostom was a verse-by-verse interpreter of the Pauline Epistles and this was one of the ‘pinnacles of the art of preaching’” (*The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church: Volume 1, The Biblical Period*, 5 vols. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998], 10).

¹⁵ Philip Schaff, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 9:22. Additionally, “He knew how to draw in the easiest manner spiritual nourishment and lessons of practical wisdom from the Word of God, and to make it a divine voice of warning and comfort to every hearer. He was a faithful preacher of truth and righteousness and fearlessly told the whole duty of man” (ibid.).

¹⁶ Schaff, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 9:22.

It is the duty, then, of the interpreter and teacher of Holy Scripture, the defender of the true faith and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right and to refute what is wrong, and in the performance of this task to conciliate the hostile, to rouse the careless, and to tell the ignorant both what is occurring at present and what is probable in the future. But once that his hearers are friendly, attentive, and ready to learn, whether he has found them so, or has himself made them so the remaining objects are to be carried out in whatever way the case requires. If the hearers need teaching, the matter treated of must be made fully known by means of narrative. On the other hand, to clear up points that are doubtful requires reasoning and the exhibition of proof. If, however, the hearers need to be roused rather than instructed, in order that they may be diligent to do what they already know, and to bring their feelings into harmony with the truths they admit, greater vigor of speech is needed. Here entreaties and reproaches, exhortation and upbraiding, and all the other means of rousing the emotions, are necessary (4.6).¹⁷

In their helpful book, Thompson and Bennett affirm that “formal dialogue, in the sense of a planned, structured exchange between two or more persons, was not generally employed in the Christian church until medieval times. Then dialogue was adopted for evangelistic and didactic uses by the church. It became a popular form of teaching.”¹⁸

Inerrancy

The inerrancy of the Scriptures beckons for expository preaching.¹⁹ That God’s Word is wholly inerrant and perfect in everything that it affirms necessitates that the man of God proclaim its truth with all authority. Because there are no errors in the canon of revelation it all the more seems plausible and mandated to speak of its truth—the whole truth—as with the derived authority from God’s Word. Just as Jesus gave His authority (ἐξουσίαν) to His apostles to perform miracles as they were going out to preach the gospel (Matt 10:1; cp. Matt

¹⁷ McKinion, *Life and Practice in the Early Church*, 95–96.

¹⁸ William D. Thompson, and Gordon C. Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 18.

¹⁹ See John MacArthur, “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching,” *TMSJ* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 3–17.

9:35), so He gives authority to His servants today who preach and teach His Word (Matt 18:18–20).

Authority

Preaching carries with it the authority²⁰ from God because the messenger has been divinely chosen to confront the sinner with divine truth. Koller rightly recognizes:

“Preaching is that unique procedure by which God, through *His chosen messenger*, reaches down into the human family and brings persons face to face with Himself. Without such confrontation it is not true preaching.”²¹

Again, the preacher is not the source of the truth but the messenger of it. He is not the spring of fresh fragrances, but the servant that brings the fresh water to the thirsty hearers. He is not the deep well of divine wisdom but the bucket that digs down and carries the water to those for sustenance. In effect, the preacher is “the channel of a communication, and not the source of it.”²²

²⁰ David Bartlett lists a host of reasons why the preacher should not employ dialogue in his sermons for the very reason that the authority of the Word is diminished. Here are his reasons why the sermon already possess all authority (“Authority,” in *CEP*, ed. by William H. Willimon and Richard Lischer [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995], 22–23):

1. The sermon has authority because the sermon interprets Scripture.
2. The sermon has authority because it represents pastoral word suited to the real needs of the listeners.
3. The sermon has authority because of its place in the liturgy. It is not in the sermon alone but in worship, including word and sacrament, that the promise of God’s presence is fulfilled.
4. The sermon has authority because it is intellectually compelling.
5. The sermon has authority because of the integrity of the preacher. The preacher is present to the congregation as spiritual guide, as exemplar of God’s amazing grace, as fellow pilgrim, or as one who seeks to live the ethics of the faithful life.
6. The sermon has authority because of the rhetorical power of the preacher.

²¹ Charles W. Koller, *Expository Preaching without Notes Plus Sermons Preached Without Notes*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 1:13.

²² Halford Luccock, *In the Minister’s Workshop* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1944), 11. He explicates: “In real preaching, the preacher is a channel, not a source. That truth is pictured in the word commonly used for a sermon—‘message’—something sent, through a channel. It is the prophet’s charter. ‘The word of the Lord came.’ As the Old Testament prophets reached back into the dim, shadowy realm of inspiration, they were

If the preacher's responsibility rested only on keeping the attention of the listeners then dialogue and hearing opinions may be plausible. But the fact that the primary responsibility of the preacher—even more important than keeping their attention—is to be faithful in declaring the truth of God remains fundamental. James Stewart agrees: “preaching exists, not for the propagating of views, opinions and ideals, but for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God.”²³ Stott understands the source of the preacher's authority:

Here, then, is the preacher's authority. It depends on the closeness of his adherence to the text he is handling, that is, on the accuracy with which he has understood it and on the forcefulness with which it has spoken to his own soul. . . . The Christian preacher is best satisfied when his person is eclipsed by the light which shines from the Scripture and when his voice is drowned by the Voice of God.²⁴

In conclusion, Koller captures the weightiness of this authoritative responsibility: “All true preaching rests upon the basic affirmation, ‘Thus saith the LORD!’ This affirmation occurs approximately 2,000 times in the Scriptures.”²⁵ When the preacher faithfully communicates the Word of God, he speaks with authority. He is supplying something for which there is no substitute.”²⁶

Importance of the Occasion

conscious, not of their own wisdom or wit, but of something spoken and heard. ‘Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go . . . and say.’ ‘Thus shalt you say to him, the Lord saith thus.’ The primary fact about preaching is that which is behind the preacher—the reality of a God who speaks. Any discussion of preaching which does not begin there, might as well not begin at all” (ibid.).

²³ James S. Stewart, *Heralds of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), 5.

²⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1961), 30.

²⁵ D. A. Carson writes: “there is an unavoidable heraldic element—an announcement, a sovereign disclosure, a nonnegotiable declaration” (“Challenges for the Twenty-First-Century Pulpit,” in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, ed. by Leland Ryken and Todd A Wilson [Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007], 177).

²⁶ Koller, *Expository Preaching without Notes*, 1:15.

The sermon is “the meeting place of the soul with God.”²⁷ If, for no other reason, the moments when God speaks to the soul through His Word ought to be solemn, reverent, and focused. Indeed, “preaching is therefore always a matter of life and death. The people in our churches depend for their very lives on the ministry of the Word; therefore our preaching had better be nothing less—and nothing *other*—than the exposition of the Bible. Nothing else will do.”²⁸ God’s Word is not a book containing pithy, moral principles to guide one’s life if he so allows. As preachers, “We are dealing with something which we believe is not only going to affect the lives of these people with whom we are concerned while they are in this world, but also with their eternal destiny.”²⁹

Just as the post-exilic community stood when the Word of God was opened to be read and explained (Neh 8:8) as it reads: “Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up” (Neh 8:5) so the solemnity of the occasion demands that the preacher faithfully expound the particular text at hand for that given Sunday so that God speaks through His Word to His people by means of the preacher.

There is no more holy occasion than when God speaks through His Word and tells His people about Himself and how to then respond in life in response to the proclaimed truths. Demaray sees the common thread through what he calls the “pulpit giants” of Church

²⁷ Halford Luccock, *In the Minister’s Workshop* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1944), 200.

²⁸ R. Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 63.

²⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 47–48. He maintains: “the very character and nature of the subject is such that it cannot possibly be placed in any context except that of the most thoughtful and serious atmosphere that we know, or can create. Certainly it should never be approached in a light spirit, or in a mere debating spirit; still less should it ever be regarded as a matter of entertainment” (ibid.).

history when he writes: “pulpit giants of the future, as those of the past must take their call to preach with utmost seriousness. A sense of urgency is all important.”³⁰

If the proclamation of the Word of God is substituted for dialogue and interaction with people (in whatever capacities and for however length of time), it is diminishing the solemn moments when the individual interacts with God through His Word and through the messenger sent by God with the message. The ideas, experiences, and perspectives of the people can come from quite a wide range and the proper place for the sharing of these opinions is not when the gathered assembly is together to feast upon the Word of God. This is when some end up sharing “nothing more than personal or cultural values saturated with randomly chosen Bible verses.”³¹

Here it is appropriate to mention that because of the solemnity of the occasion, the last thing the Word of God should ever come across as is sheer entertainment. The Word of God is doubtlessly filled with stories and exciting history but allowing a dialogue, a disagreement, or a debate to arise during the public proclamation of God’s Word provides dry logs for the fire of entertainment. People love emotions that rage; it is a sort of happy entertainment for them. “Dialogue provides entertainment, but it is rarely fruitful or effective as a means of winning people to the Christian faith.”³² When God’s Word speaks, God speaks. Accordingly, this calls for solemn, prepared, public, heraldic, and authoritative preaching.

³⁰ Donald E. Demaray, *Pulpit Giants: What Made Them Great* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 165.

³¹ Irvin A. Busenitz, “Must Expository Preaching Always Be Book Studies? Some Alternatives,” *TMSJ* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 148.

³² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 46.

Integrity and Call of the Preacher

It is those “holy men of God” who are ordained to preach (Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; Eph 3:5; 2 Pet 1:21; Rev 18:20; 22:6).³³ Not just anyone—biblically—can (or should!) stand in front of the gathered assembly to teach God’s Word. The preacher and teacher of God’s Word is not a slightly discussed issue in God’s Word. There are many Scriptures in both Testaments that support the notion that the messenger sent from God must be pure and holy and then, and only then, is he able to preach.³⁴ In fact, it was only after God had purified Isaiah’s lips was he ordained to preach (Isa 6:6-13).³⁵ The office of preaching, then, is for those who are “*divinely* called! To do otherwise is to fall under the indictment of God: ‘I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them’ (Jer 14:14).”³⁶

In dialogue type preaching, the interaction and conversation with various individuals in the assembly opens the opportunity for someone to speak about the interpretation, meaning, or application whose life may be impure and quite hypocritical. Someone who well knows this may certainly be less eager to listen to that person’s thoughts about the text (and rightly so!) and it may turn the person away from that particular assembly. Demaray has it right when he states that the effective pulpit giants are “those specially *touched* by the Holy

³³ See MacArthur, “Mandate for Biblical Inerrancy,” 8. John Broadus gives four requisites for preachers to preach effectively (*On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, rev. ed. [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944], 6–8):

1. Piety
2. Natural gifts
3. Knowledge
4. Skill

³⁴ See John MacArthur, Jr., “The Man of God and Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 85–101.

³⁵ MacArthur, “Mandate for Biblical Inerrancy,” 8.

³⁶ Alex Montoya, *Preaching with Passion* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 79.

Spirit, *toughened* and made *tender* by Him, and *tutored* in skills and knowledge essential for proclamation.”³⁷

The Purpose of Preaching

Fundamentally, the purpose of preaching is the authoritative, bold, and accurate teaching from a text of Scripture. This is the teacher’s task every week, namely, to study the Word so thoroughly that he masters that particular passage of Scripture that he knows the exegetical facets of the text, the theological issues involved in the passage, and the specific life-application truths from the text to call his hearers to implement.³⁸

All of this calls for a preacher who rightly sees his position before God and the gathered assembly, namely, a messenger of the great and sovereign King who is called to deliver a message faithfully, accurately, and authoritatively. The preacher does not contrive his own message but he is the carrier of the King’s command. How absurd for the messenger to alter the message and redefine the delivery requirements of the King! Charles Hodge explained it thus: “[The herald] represents his sovereign. He speaks with authority, as accredited to act in the name of his master. Any neglect, contempt or injury done to him in his official character, is not a personal offence [sic], but an offence [sic] to the sovereign or state by whom he is commissioned.”³⁹ Busenitz agrees: “The preacher's proper task is to deliver the goods, not to manufacture them. He is the waiter, not the chef. Therefore, the biblical text must be his resource, the fountain of truth to which he constantly resorts, from

³⁷ Donald E. Demaray, *Pulpit Giants: What Made Them Great*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 174.

³⁸ “A preacher who has mastered the subject matter in order to produce a sermon manuscript will likely be capable of speaking from the overflow of a full heart” (Donald E. Demaray, *Pulpit Giants: What Made Them Great* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1973], 168).

³⁹ Quoted in Klaas Runia, “What is Preaching According to the New Testament?” *TynBul* 29 (1978): 28.

which he himself continually drinks, and from which he faithfully draws to satisfy the thirst of others.”⁴⁰

Theological Precision and Accuracy

Paul solemnly charged Timothy: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling (ὀρθοτομοῦντα) the word of truth (τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας)” (2 Tim 2:15). Timothy also received the command from Paul:

Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching (τῆ διδασκαλίᾳ); persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you (1 Tim 4:13–16).

The words from Paul challenge Timothy to pay scrupulous attention (ἐπεχε) to his doctrine so that he rightly handles the word in his exhortation (τῆ παρακλήσει) and teaching (τῆ διδασκαλίᾳ, 1 Tim 4:13). The preacher who understands the exactness of the responsibility to study the Word, pray over the Word, bathe in the Word, and get the point right from the Word, and forcefully and persuasively proclaim the truths from the Word must not be so arrogant to think that he could teach God’s people without overwhelming humility and meticulous study.

As soon as individuals begin to dialogue the possibility exists for someone to hint at or speak of a theological error—whether consciously or unconsciously. And this can even happen in the form of a person’s question.

⁴⁰ Irvin A. Busenitz, “Must Expository Preaching Always Be Book Studies? Some Alternatives,” *TMSJ* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 140.

The Incapability of the Natural Man to Contribute to the Conversation

This may not apply as much to a question and answer form of dialogue, but this certainly applies to the occasion where the preacher strikes a nerve of the non-Christian and the allowance and welcoming of the disagreements are vocalized before the entire congregation. Biblically, the non-Christian cannot understand the things of God. The words and ways of God are total foolishness to him. The Apostle Paul states: “But a natural man (ψυχικὸς) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him (μωρία); and he cannot understand them (οὐ δύναται γινῶναι), because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor 2:14). Elsewhere Paul writes that “we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness” (1 Cor 1:23). Earlier he wrote: “the word of the cross is foolishness (μωρία) to those who are perishing (τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις)” (1 Cor 1:18). Jesus said: “no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*” (Matt 11:27; cp. John 17:6). Lloyd-Jones has it right in purporting: “the man who is not a Christian is incapable of entering into a discussion about these matters.”⁴¹

Man’s Constant and Frequent Need of Being Humbled

What person receives no feeling of self-fulfillment and self-gratification when he stands before an assembly and provides a helpful thought, a right perspective, a better solution? But is the Sunday morning sermon the proper place for this to occur? Man’s greatest enemy is pride (cf. 1 John 2:16). When the Word of God is preached, there is nothing more heinous to God than an arrogant, self-consumed, proud individual who congratulates himself for his well-articulated dialogue with another person in the assembly.

⁴¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 49.

James' words could not be more apropos: "*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger. . . . Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:19, 21). James commands the brothers (=the congregation) to receive the word with humility. Note just two verses earlier he commanded that everyone be quick to *hear*, slow to *speak* and slow to anger. "What the natural man needs above everything else is to be humbled. This is essential before we can do anything with him. The ultimate trouble with the natural man is his pride."⁴²

The Effectual Working Accomplished through the Holy Spirit Alone

John Calvin rightly knew his need for the Spirit's unction⁴³ as he preached as he would mount his pulpit stairs, he prayed the prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit, come." The man who teaches God's Word must be absolutely dependent upon God the Holy Spirit for any effectual working whatsoever. Apart from the active and powerful enabling of the Holy Spirit, nothing will (ever!) come from the preaching of God's Word (cf. 1 Cor 2:6–11). Broadus concurs: "[The Spirit] empowers his preaching, and only the Holy Spirit can give spiritual victories. Only he can convert and consecrate."⁴⁴

Jesus told Nicodemus "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 'Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit'" (John 3:6–8). Lloyd-

⁴² Ibid., 49–50.

⁴³ See John MacArthur, "The Spirit of God and Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 102–15.

⁴⁴ John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 17.

Jones' words ring true as he firmly believes "Truth is revealed to us in the Scriptures and by the illumination that the Holy Spirit *alone* can produce. Then, the notion of having a debate or a discussion or exchange of views concerning these matters is something that is contrary to the very character and nature of the Gospel itself."⁴⁵

The Character of God is Not Up for Debate or Dialogue

Finally, and if for no other reason whatsoever, this ought to drive the expositor to consider monologue as his means of proclamation. This reason states very simply that God is not to be discussed or debated. "God is not a subject for debate, because He is Who He is and What He is."⁴⁶ God is revealed ever so clearly in the pages of Scripture and they are not difficult to comprehend. What is written reveals who God is, how God acts, and what God does. The "Godness" of God is not up for debate. Yahweh Himself said to Moses: "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex 3:14). Not only is God the ever-existing God (Ps 102:24–27), but He is the sovereign God (Ps 93:1; 103:19; 115:3) who does not change (Mal 3:6; Isa 46:10; cp. Heb 13:8; James 1:17). As soon as the leader opens the door for dialogue and discussion over a particular issue, truth, meaning, interpretation it, in effect, says that how the people interpret that Word is the best way it should be interpreted rather than the preacher authoritatively standing before the assembly and boldly proclaiming for Yahweh His word to His people. God is not up for discussion and neither is His Word.

⁴⁵ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 50–51 (emphasis original).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

CHAPTER 5

EXEGETICAL DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT BIBLICAL TEXTS

Introduction

Obviously one's biases regarding pedagogy and andragogy surface when talking about methods of teaching and how to better engage and involve the hearers in order to draw them to respond to what was taught. However, at this point in the paper is the most authoritative portion of this study as a select portion of relevant biblical texts will be examined to see if dialogue has a role in preaching. Part of the limitation in this study is the sheer quantity of biblical passages that provide examples of public speaking (teaching or preaching). Additionally, there are no specific New Testament examples that apply exclusively to the issue of preaching with dialogue in the Sunday morning assembly. There are times when the apostles may teach in the Temple throughout the course of the week (see, e.g., Acts 2, 4, 5) or where the apostle commands the younger protégé regarding *how* to preach and teach (e.g., 1 Tim 4 or 2 Tim 4). But no specific examples exist of preaching God's Word to the gathered assembly for a Sunday morning "church service." Nevertheless, some pertinent passages shall be observed to see how God's Word was predominantly taught.

Exegetical Observations

Deuteronomy 31:1–13—Moses' Last Counsel to the Israelites

These verses are Moses' final words to the nation of Israel before he (1) commissions Joshua as his successor, (2) before he teaches them the “song” (ch. 32), and (3) before he blesses the nation (ch. 33). The charge here is given by Moses as he goes and speaks (וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר) the words of Yahweh to His covenant people (31:1). He told the nation that he was about to die (31:2) and that it was Yahweh their God who would lead them as they enter Canaan and defeat their foes (31:3–5). He commands them to “be strong and courageous (חֲזִקוּ וְאַמְצוּ), do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you” (31:6).

Moses then called Joshua forward in front of the gathered assembly (חֲזִק וְאַמֵץ) for God also will go ahead of him as he leads the nation (31:7) to charge him to also be strong and courageous (חֲזִק וְאַמֵץ) for God also will go ahead of him as he leads the nation (31:8). Subsequently, Moses wrote down the law and gave it to the priests (31:9) and commanded them to “read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing” (תִּקְרָא אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת נֶגֶד כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם) (31:10). The people of Israel are to be assembled (31:11) and be careful to *observe* (וְשָׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת) all the words of the Law (31:12) which could be accomplished through the solemn reading of the Law and explication of it (Neh 8:8; 1 Tim 4:13).

An overly brief survey of this passage reveals that Moses spoke to the gathered assembly and charged them to read the Law and obey the Law as they enter the Promised Land.

Nehemiah 8:1–8—Ezra’s Public Teaching of the Law in Jerusalem

This passage speaks of the occasion when the exiles (Neh 7:1–73) gather at the Water Gate (Neh 8:1) and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law to read so they could listen to God’s Words to them (8:2). After a quite lengthy reading of the Law (8:3) Ezra the scribe stood in a wooden podium (מִגְדֵּל-עֵץ, 8:4) where he “opened the book” (8:5), “blessed the LORD the great God” (8:6). Also, some Levites “explained the Law” to the people (לְתוֹרָה ... מִבְּיָנִים, 8:7).¹ They read from the book translating and giving the sense (מִפְּרֹשׁ וְשׁוֹם שְׂכָל) so that the people understood (וַיְבִינּוּ בַּמִּקְרָא) the reading (8:8). From this passage it seems quite clear that Ezra and the Levites led in the teaching of God’s Word as they read from the Law, translating and giving the sense from the Law and made it understandable to the assembly. Dialogue is not hinted at in this specific teaching context.

Albert Mohler applies this passage to contemporary preachers when he writes:

If you do believe that God speaks through His Word, then why would you substitute *anything else* in place of the expository preaching of the Bible? What is more important for your people than to hear from God, and how else is that going to happen unless you, like Ezra, open the book, read it, and explain it to them.²

Matthew 5–7—Jesus’ Sermon on the Mountain in Galilee

Matthew chapters 5–7³ comprise a lengthy discourse as Jesus teaches his followers about the requirements and behavior of His kingdom. Jesus is in Galilee (cf. 8:1, 5) and is on

¹ This harkens back to Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.” David Deuel sums it up well: “Ezra then read the scroll, and with the assistance of a select group, probably understudies, explained the passage’s meaning in whatever way was necessary, be it by translation or by interpretation (Neh 8:8). This is Bible exposition” (David C. Deuel, “An Old Testament Pattern for Expository Preaching,” *TMSJ* 2, no. 2 [Fall 1991]: 136).

² R. Albert Mohler, *He is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 57–58.

³ See the helpful chapter by Alex Montoya, *Preaching with Passion* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), 71–85.

the mountain and his disciples gather around him (5:1). He then begins to teach (ἐδίδασκεν) them about kingdom living (5:2). Not once in all three chapters are there any spoken words by any of his disciples. Additionally, there are no questions, no interviews, no opinions, or interpretations desired. Jesus teaches his followers about the proper conduct of His kingdom. When Jesus concludes his lengthy sermon the crowds (evidently many more people gathered as he continued to teach on the mountain) were amazed (ἐξεπλήσσοντο οἱ ὄχλοι) at his teaching (τῇ διδασκῇ, 7:28) because he was teaching them as one having authority (ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων) and not as their scribes (7:29). The authority of Jesus' teaching came because of his lengthy discourse as he boldly and convincingly taught in a manner that was different than the scribal norm (7:29).

Acts—The Public Proclamations of the Apostles

The book of Acts contains numerous discourses—some are quite lengthy—that could shed light on how the leaders taught in the early Church. Acts 2:14 notes that Peter took his stand among the eleven, raised his voice and declared a message (ἀπεφθέγγετο) to those present on the Day of Pentecost (2:14; cp. Acts 26:25). In Peter's message here, the Jews listened and heard him utter the gospel. Later in Acts 3, Peter preached again and taught to the onlookers who were amazed that Peter and John healed a lame man (3:11). He replied (ἀπεκρίνατο) to the people and spoke (λαλοῦντων) to the people (3:12; 4:1). Acts 7 recounts the lengthy discourse (ἔφη, 7:2) of Stephen before the hostile Jewish crowd (7:1–54). In this sermon, the Jews present do not interrupt Stephen until his piercing application (7:51–53) and they are “cut to the quick” (7:54) and they interrupted him in verse 57 and then began to stone him (7:58). In chapter 9, Saul is sovereignly converted by Christ and then begins to “proclaim Jesus in the synagogues” (ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ἐκήρυσσεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν, 9:20, cf.

9:22, 29). Many more passages could be examined in Acts and though there are instances of men interacting with the hearers *during* the discourse (9:29; 13:45; 23:9) by and large the picture painted by Luke is that monologue proclamations were standard (14:1, 3; 17:23; 26:1). It seems that in the book of Acts, the approach is that the discourses were normally monologue yet there are numerous instances where the Jews would interrupt.

1 Thessalonians 2:1–16—Paul’s Recollection of His Teaching Ministry in Thessalonika

The picture Paul paints of his experience in the city of Thessalonika is that of a deeply impacted journey. He reminds the church that he spoke (ἐπαρρησιασάμεθα ... λαλήσαι) the word of God and exhorted (ἡ παράκλησις) them boldly (2:2, 3). Paul claims that he did not come as a manpleaser (2:5–6) but as faithfully imparting the gospel of God in addition to his very own life to them (2:7–8).

His own testimony reveals that he and his companions did not fail to “proclaim” (ἐκηρύξαμεν) the gospel of God to them relentlessly (2:9). In fact, he reminds them that he “exhorted” (παρακαλοῦντες) and “encouraged” (παραμυθοῦμενοι) and “implored” (μαρτυρόμενοι) *each* of them as a father would his own dear child (2:11). It seems reasonable to surmise that this statement combined public proclamation in the assembly and personal teaching and application with individuals as time and opportunity permitted. The word of God proved effective because the believers received what they heard from Paul (literally “the word of the report”, λόγον ἀκοῆς) and his leaders not as words of mere men but as the Word of God (λόγον θεοῦ)—which performs its work in the believers (2:13). In this chapter, though there is no sermon of Paul, per se, his account does reveal that they exhorted, encouraged, implored, and taught (they “reported”) the Word of God to the Thessalonian church on the missionary journey.

1 Timothy 4:11–16—Paul’s First Charge to Timothy as a Teacher of the Word

This ecclesiological letter consists of various aspects relevant to church life and “how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15). In chapter 4, Paul commands Timothy to prescribe and teach doctrines that were as unpopular then as they are now, namely, apostasy in the latter days (4:1–5), biblical separationism (4:6–7a), and spiritual discipline (4:7b–11). Then he says “prescribe and teach” (Παράγγελλε ... δίδασκε.) these things (referring to what he noted earlier (4:1–10)). Paul charges Timothy also to devote himself to the public reading of God’s Word (assumed to mean with the gathered assembly), to exhortation (τῇ παρακλήσει), and to teaching (τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ). The ideas here convey the notion that Timothy must employ his spiritual gift (4:14), take pains in his diligent study and theological precision (4:15–16) and preach so that God can use His true word to save those who *hear* him speak (4:16b).

2 Timothy 4:1–5—Paul’s Second Charge to Timothy as a Preacher of the Word

Near the end of the Apostle Paul’s life, he “solemnly charges” Timothy to activate and accentuate his preaching gifts in the assembly. In fact, Paul tags this solemn charge with the reality that this duty is before the bar of God and of Christ Jesus. And, Jesus shall return and judge the living and the dead (4:1). After raising the bar and revealing the Judge, Paul commands Timothy to “preach the word” (κήρυξον τὸν λόγον, 4:2). This kind of teaching, Paul writes, includes reproof, rebukes, exhortations, and instruction all with patience. The words used here clearly denote an authoritative teaching from God’s Word (which could, in reality, evidence itself in both dialogue or monologue).

This epigrammatic survey of Scripture has shown the necessity of reading the Word of God, rightly interpreting the word of God, authoritatively proclaiming the Word of God, and applying the Word of God to the hearer’s lives. Again, as was stated at the outset of this

section, one is hard-pressed to find passages in the Bible specifically relating to the preaching of the Word on a Sunday morning gathered assembly as we now know it today. Nevertheless, the survey of Scripture does show the importance of proclaiming God's word so that the hearers listen, understand, and apply what God reveals in His divine word.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary Points

Dialogue in preaching is strongly encouraged by some because it is advantageous that “that the people feel they can participate intellectually and vocally in the process. They find it challenging and interesting. The pastor finds the service much more alive for him. People remember and are affected by what they participate in.”¹ Is this, however, the goal of preaching? In fact, is the goal of preaching even to *gain* and *keep* the listener’s attention? This is not to (even remotely!) suggest that the preacher has no responsibility of arresting and maintaining the attention of his listeners, he most certainly does.² Spurgeon told his students “we use [anecdotes and illustrations], first, to interest the mind and secure the attention of our hearers. We cannot endure a sleepy audience . . . you want to arouse every faculty in them to

¹ William D. Thompson and Gordon C. Bennett, *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 30.

² For a very helpful study on preaching that seizes and keeps the hearer’s attention and very practical ways to accomplish this, see Jack Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures: Illustrated from the Sermons of Thomas Watson* (Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2001), esp. 8–101; cf. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching & Teaching with Imagination: The Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994), 15–83. Along these lines, John Bunyan is said to have had people come from hundreds of miles away to hear his unvarnished and genuine proclamation of the gospel. But what made him so effective? Demaray answers: “What made him [Bunyan] a great and helpful preacher? Bible knowledge, experience with God, the sense of a divine call, continuing divine guidance, understanding of human nature, and the *ability to put all this into plain and picturesque language—these factors must have been key reasons for Bunyan’s pulpit effectiveness*” (Donald E. Demaray, *Pulpit Giants: What Made Them Great* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1973], 38, emphasis added). He concludes: “It was John Bunyan’s ability to draw accurate and spiritually sensitive word pictures about life that made him the great preacher and writer he was” (39).

receive the Word of God, that it may be a blessing to them.³ But, even more important than this is that he be faithful to proclaim the word of God faithfully and accurately (2 Tim 2:15; 4:1–2).

Is Dialogue Permissible in Preaching?

Martyn Lloyd-Jones pondered this same question:

Cannot all this [teaching of biblical truth] be done better by means of group discussions? Why must it be preaching? Why this particular form? Cannot this be replaced by a kind of ‘dialogue’, as it is now called, or exchange of views? Should we not rather encourage more questions at the end of sermons, and a dialogue between the minister and the people who have come to listen, all, of course, within the realm of the Church? Furthermore it is suggested that this can also be done on television by means of discussion; that you have a panel of people, some of them Christians and some of them not Christians, and they engage in a discussion together. The suggestion is that this is not only a good way of evangelising, and making known the message of the Bible, but that it is, in the present age, a superior one to preaching.⁴

Because the Scriptures reveal such dogmatic and, at times, radical truths it behooves the preacher to engage in preaching God’s Word forcefully to God’s people trusting that God’s Spirit will engage the hearers and move through His proclaimed Word to move their hearts to respond in faith and obedience. Indeed, “preaching has a long tradition of one-way communication.”⁵

The preacher has the responsibility to rightly exposit the truth and exhort the hearers to a response but the ultimate *result* of that public proclamation resides with the sovereign

³ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 378. Note the (accurate!) emphasis Spurgeon places, though, on the preacher’s responsibility to secure the interest of the hearers: “We want to win attention at the commencement of the service, and to hold it till the close . . . We cannot afford, in these days, to lose any opportunity of getting hold of the public ear. We must use every occasion that comes in our way, and every tool that is likely to help us in our work; and we must rouse up all our faculties, and put forth all our energies, if that by any means we may get the people to heed that which they are so slow to regard, the great story of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (ibid., 378–80).

⁴ Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 45.

⁵ Jeffrey Arthurs, “Connect Hearers through Dialogue: A Two-Way Street Can Be Paved with Gold,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today’s Communicators*, ed. by Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 141.

and determined purposes of God and God alone. Contrariwise, Anderson suggests that:

“Preaching is, after all, about the listeners and their response to God. Sermons are too often written in the absence of the listener. Perhaps that is why they are so quickly forgotten. Let the listener in. Sermons belong to listeners more than they belong to preachers.”⁶ No preacher would doubt that practically and humanly speaking, it is the preacher’s duty to keep the listeners engaged and involved in the sermon (however long it is). A boring preacher who communicates God’s Word in an uninteresting sort of fashion is an abomination.

Nevertheless, God Himself authoritatively declares through the prophet Isaiah:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it (Isa 55:10–11).

The most comforting truth for a preacher who in and of himself has no access to the heart and soul of the hearer is that God is the One who does have absolute sovereignty over the heart and soul of the hearer and He can cause His Word to accomplish whatever outcome He so perfectly chooses (cf. Isa 46:10; Acts 16:14; 2 Tim 2:25).⁷

If it is true, as Koller purports, that “the preacher must lead his people *into* the text, not *away* from it,”⁸ then the preacher must make it his exclusive aim to open the Word and preach from the Word, point his congregation to the Word, bathe them in the Word, apply the Word to their souls, and wet their appetite to study the Word on their own throughout the

⁶ Kenton C. Anderson, “Preaching as Dialogue: Moving Beyond the ‘Speaching’ of the Word,” *Preaching* 22, no. 4 (Jan-Feb 2007): 10.

⁷ See John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 21–29.

⁸ Charles W. Koller, *Expository Preaching without Notes Plus Sermons Preached Without Notes*, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962), 1:22.

week on their own.⁹ The most plausible way to accomplish this goal is by the faithful proclamation of God's Word without dialogue or interruptions during the Sunday morning sermon. Though the method of dialogue preaching has revealed itself in many ways in many different churches, Klaas Runia still boldly concludes that: "All kinds of experiments with so-called dialogue preaching have not been very successful."¹⁰

Hughes' wise counsel serves as a fitting conclusion of this paper:

Many pastors are struggling to keep their churches from becoming like the church of Sardis. They try biblical exposition, but something doesn't seem to be working right. They faithfully preach the word, but contrary to the promise of God in Isaiah 55:11, the word of God seems to come back void. Their church doesn't grow spiritually or numerically. People don't seem to be responding. As they struggle to maintain a good attitude and fight the good fight, they see the church that doesn't do expository preaching growing by leaps and bounds. Legions of cars pack the car park of the 'seek sensitive church' Saturday night, Sunday morning, and Wednesday night because it is meeting 'felt needs'. . . . It can make an expositor have second thoughts. 'Maybe biblical exposition is a cultural thing. Times have changed. Maybe expository preaching is out, and we should try something new.' Snap out of it! Don't even begin to entertain such thoughts. Satan is willing to trade solid biblical preaching for numerical growth. He would be glad to fill your car park if you will dump expository preaching. Satan skips with joy when expository preaching is substituted with anything else. He knows, if he can get rid of expository preaching, he can steer the church any way he wants. Satan knows that, when faithful preaching is set aside, the church will become vulnerable to his subtle deceptions and become ineffective.¹¹

⁹ In Brossend's estimation, this length of study time can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. He explains: "The greatest advantage the preacher has on Sunday morning is also the greatest disadvantage: we are the only person in the room who has been thinking about the scripture lesson all week. Closing the gap between the time we have spent pondering the hermeneutical and homiletical possibilities and the time our listeners have not is critical to good preaching. The gap is much greater when we include those who are uninterested, unconvinced and unimpressed. How do we take seriously those who do not take us seriously?" (William Brossend, "Who's Listening to Sermons? Blank Stares," *CC* [April 21, 2009]: 13).

¹⁰ Klaas Runia, "What is Preaching According to the New Testament?" *TynBul* 29 (1978): 47. Martyn Lloyd-Jones places this kind of preaching in the category of "entertainment" in public worship which he thinks has no proper place (*Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 17). Later on, Lloyd-Jones says that "[dialogue] provides entertainment, but as far as I am aware, and in my experience and knowledge of it, it has very rarely been fruitful or effective as a means of winning people to the Christian faith" (*ibid.*, 46).

¹¹ Jack Hughes, *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures: Illustrated from the Sermons of Thomas Watson* (Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2001), 8–9.

Indeed, Calvin had it right when he believed that the preacher is the mouth of God: “God does not wish to be heard but by the voice of his ministers.”¹²

¹² John H. Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today in the Light of Recent Research,” *RE* 86, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 31.

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This is a very well-written, practical, and recent article suggesting that preachers introduce dialogue in their preaching. He discusses the potential for dialogue in preaching—engaging the hearers. He talked about ways to engage in dialogue (10 ways!). Then he briefly discussed the limits of dialogue in preaching. His concluding cry is noting that preaching is about the listeners and their response to God... let the listener in. Sermons belong to listeners more than they belong to preachers (10). Very helpful and relevant in advocating dialogue in preaching.

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This article was very helpful in supporting the viewpoint that churches/preachers today *should* incorporate dialogue in preaching for the sole purpose of keeping people engaged and disallowing them to become 'bored' in church. He surveys the words for 'preach' (*keryx*) diachronically and then in the conclusion suggests that preachers would do well to learn to 'incorporate their congregations more in the services.' Very helpful article in supporting the role of dialogue in preaching.

Falls, Thomas B. *Saint Justin Martyr*. The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation. Edited by Ludwig Schopp. New York: Christian Heritage, 1948.

Fosdick, Harry Emerson. "What is the Matter with Preaching?" In *What's the Matter with Preaching Today?* Edited by Mike Graves, 7–19. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.

In this article by Fosdick (reprinted from a 1928 journal article in *Harper's Magazine*), he shuns the practice of preacher preparing a sermon and delivering the goods in a monologue, boring, sort of way. He asks (quite mockingly), do we really think that people come to church excited to hear what Isaiah, Paul, or Moses meant in this particular text? Obviously not! So Fosdick's proposal is to introduce dialogue and discussions in preaching. He calls monologue and expositional preaching 'dull and futile.' He obviously supports the proposal of introducing dialogue to keep the people engaged and interested!

Furnish, Victor Paul. "Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers: A Study of the Biblical Concept of Preaching." *Interpretation* 17, no. 1 (January 1963): 48–60.

This article is an excellent survey of three fundamental questions: (1) what is the ‘word’ to be preached; (2) by what authority does the minister preach the Word of God; and (3) to what end is the word preached? (what is the intended goal?) This article has a wonderful introductory section on OT prophets and how they spoke God’s Word. It also surveys the NT apostles and their understanding of ‘preaching.’ Very helpful, biblical, and relevant to my topic.

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This article surveyed the differences and necessity of both interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue in university/college type settings. Gorsky analyzed various professors, lecturers, and students to see how they best learn in both small and large class-type settings. It is a helpful article showing the need for dialogue rather than just lecture and interpersonal dialogue. Well written from the secular university standpoint.

Gorsky, Paul and Avner Caspi. “Dialogue: A Theoretical Framework for Distance Education Instructional Systems.” *British Journal of Educational Technology* 36, no. 2 (2005): 137–44.

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Holland surveys the recent and influential book among the emerging churchmembers by Doug Pagitt, *Preaching ReImagined*. Holland concludes that Pagitt’s view on preaching (‘speaching’ as he terms it) is nonhistorical and unbiblical. The article critiques Pagitt and his work and upholds the historic viewpoint that the preacher is *the* messenger from God to deliver *the* message that God has presented in the Scriptures and then to explain that message to the community of believers present. A very helpful and relevant article to my topic.

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Grant Howard includes a goodly number of pages on dialogue in preaching in this book. He advocates dialogue in preaching as opposed to *only* monologue all of the time. In fact, Howard gives some very helpful and extremely practical ways to implement dialogue in the 'preaching service.' He is careful to clarify that dialogue and discussion in sermons does NOT mitigate exposition. It can only enhance it to keep people engaged. He certainly upholds the need for dialogue in preaching.

Hughes, Jack. *Expository Preaching with Word Pictures: Illustrated from the Sermons of Thomas Watson*. Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2001.

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This first volume of Old's work is super helpful as it surveys the definition of expository preaching and shows how men in history have implemented the reading of Scripture and the explanation of it (cf. Neh 8:8). He surveys from the Jewish synagogue tradition, to Jesus, to John Chrysostom, to Luther, to Zwingli and many others. It is a good survey of church history and its view of expository preaching (as monologue).

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This article suggests that the preacher should use dialogue for a number of reasons. The primary reason is because if someone in the audience resists or disagrees with what the speaker is saying he is more likely to tune out or turn a deaf ear to the rest of the sermon rather than engage and interact (via Q & A) with the speaker (e.g., p.13). Thus, Pieterse thinks that this is the best way to communicate in churches today.

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usefulness of preaching and the manner of preaching. In it, the only reference to dialogue is a scant phrase suggesting that the ‘new and innovative’ techniques of dialogue in preaching have ‘not been very successful’ (p.47). A good and thorough article overall.

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

Though the entire book isn’t relevant to my specific paper topic, Stott has about 4 pages directly relevant to the issue of “dialogical preaching”. He rightly distinguishes between cultures. (He notes that the Blacks often talk back—‘Amen!’ or ‘Preach it!’) But he does include a good discussion of what *he* means by dialoguing in the sermon. Not that there is verbal communication back and forth; but that the preacher anticipates the questions and then answers them in his sermon. A good section.

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Thompson, William D. and Gordon C. Bennett. *Dialogue Preaching: The Shared Sermon*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969.

Perhaps the best monograph written on this very subject, Thompson and Bennett go to great lengths and with great detail in showing the reasons why dialogue in preaching is so helpful. They show that it is NOT a new phenomenon (even since

Plato they argue, p.15) and that it has had tremendous benefits over the years as many have brought interaction into the worship services via dialogue. People are engaged, interested, enjoying the service, and they leave remembering what they learned! An excellent book supporting preaching with dialogue.

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