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### Sermon Preparation.

RECENTLY READ BEFORE THE SOMERSET (KY.) PASTORS' CONFERENCE BY REV. W. J. WARD.

The preparation of a sermon should always begin with the preparation of the heart. A sermon is not wholly the product of the intellect. The heart must enter largely into it. Otherwise the hearer's intellect may be instructed and gratified while his heart will be untouched. In order to put much spiritual power into a sermon, the preacher should be much engaged in prayer at the beginning and during its preparation. Thus God's blessing is secured, thought is quickened and spiritual life is given to the whole discourse. In fact, the sermon should be born of the Holy Spirit amid earnest study and faithful prayer. When a sermon is thus prepared, the preacher prays not in vain for divine help in its delivery.

Having secured divine guidance, he is then ready to select his subject. The late Dr. Phillips Brooks once remarked to a friend that he knew nothing of the worry which many preachers experience in selecting themes to preach from. However, the average preacher finds this a very difficult part of his work. And yet I am convinced that the preacher who lives in close touch with God and with his congregation will seldom lack for subjects to preach on. The Word of God was given to meet the spiritual needs of human souls. And the minister who makes himself familiar with the Bible and with the needs of his congregation will find subjects crowding upon him. His own experience with the truth will be very suggestive. For what will do his own soul good will under the same circumstances do others good. But however his selection may be made, let him be thoroughly impressed with its importance. He should feel that much depends upon its appropriateness. In selecting his theme he has the earnest purpose of accomplishing something for God, and that something should be clearly defined in his mind to begin with. A sermon prepared and preached for the beauty of the subject as furnishing an occasion for oratory, for the simple entertainment of the people, or for the purpose of filling in time, can never accomplish holy results. A sermon should never be prepared and preached for its own sake. The preacher who can afford to do this has a very poor conception of his sacred calling.

The happy choice of a text has much to do both with the preparation and delivery of a sermon. A strained connection between the text and the theme, or unnatural divisions will impress the preacher with a sense of incongruity which will cripple his whole effort in preparation and delivery. When the text has been chosen, it will often be found that the mind is sluggish and refuses to act readily. In this case, it will be found very helpful to take up some book which has in it the properties of mental stimulus and read for a while. Here his mind comes in contact with another mind which was wrought up to intense activity at the time of writing, and his mind catches fire, and he is ready to take up his subject and forces all his powers of thought upon it.

The text should receive the most careful and painstaking study. Otherwise what is the significance of taking a text? The preacher should penetrate to the very heart of the text, and by the light of the Holy Spirit take his bearings. Let him work from within outwards, instead of gathering his materials from other quarters and dumping them down upon the text; he will thus get much of the materials for the sermon out of the text. Surface materials are easily gathered and therefore easily exhausted. This is why I insist on the penetrating study of the text. This delving into the text opens rich mines of truth not to be found elsewhere. Here we discover the relation of the truths involved in the text to other related truths. A close and discriminative study of those relations conduce to freshness of style, and suggest lines of thought replete with interest for other sermons. A sermon should be evolved out of the text, and made to glow by the touch of a soul on fire with love to God. Such a sermon has power in it to move souls nearer to God. It is not attached to the text by an imaginary nexus, but grows naturally out of it and reveals its

meaning and power. Let the text be studied in its own proper setting. The reflection from the jewels of truth about it often clothes it with a different hue, and frequently invests it with a new meaning to us. This may lead to the necessity of hunting a new text, or it may lead to a rich train of thought wholly different from that contemplated.

This is the telescopic view of the text which "takes in the wider sweep of the whole firmament of truth."

Nor should the preacher be content to study the text in the English if he has even a smattering knowledge of the original language. A professor of New Testament Greek recently said that "a preacher who knows anything about Greek and runs out of something to preach about ought to be ashamed of himself." I am firmly convinced that the text should be studied in the original where it is at all possible. Those passages which have become commonplace to us are, in the light of the original, often clothed with new life and beauty. The devout student of the original receives valuable impressions and suggestions which he would fail to get from any translation. These often furnish rich material for sermons. Ideas are never fully expressed in words. "For words, like nature, half reveal and half conceal the soul within." And as thought is greater than language, so language is always greater in its original tongue. Hence it pays in the preparation of a sermon to toil over the text in the original, though one should have a very limited knowledge of it.

The preacher should bring all his powers of analysis to bear on the subject in hand. It should be taken apart and polished piece by piece. Let it be thoroughly thought through and through. Until this is done, any effort at synthesis or sermon construction will be awkward and difficult. And it should be remembered that clear thinking here will guarantee clear expression in the delivery of the sermon. No man can make a thing clear to others which has not first been made clear to himself.

Having analyzed his subject, he wishes to begin to build his sermon. First of all, he must have the frame-work. He needs natural and clear cut divisions. These he should get without aid of note or commentary. Consultation of note or comment before this will often confuse the ideas which he has gotten pure and simple from his own independent and devout study of God's word. Dr. John McNeil of London says: "The true preacher prays and meditates on the Scriptures until he has a vision, and he never preaches till he gets the vision." He beholds the outline of his discourse, which, like the outlines of a great painting, needs to be filled out. He now addresses himself to this part of the work. He selects such materials as appropriately enter into the sermon, and the sermon grows until it comes to the finish and is ready for delivery. The Bible, of course, is the chief source of materials for a sermon. However, the true preacher lays all his store of knowledge under tribute as sermon materials, and the larger a man's supply of knowledge is the more useful he may be. But whatever else may be introduced into a sermon, it should be for the sole purpose of illustrating, applying and enforcing the truths of God's word. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation."

Many a sermon fails of its highest good because the introduction and conclusion have been left to the inspiration of the moment. These should be prepared with especial care since it is necessary to make a good impression at the beginning of the sermon in order to attract and rivet the attention. Then the interest which is awakened in the beginning should rise higher and higher till it reaches its climax at the conclusion. This is not likely to be the case if the conclusion is left to the inspiration of the moment. Both of these will often grow naturally out of the body of the discourse. At other times the circumstances may furnish materials for the introduction while a vigorous application of the sermon forms a fit conclusion.

After all, whatever suggestions we may get by studying sermon preparation, a man's gifts and circumstances will largely mould his theory and practice of sermon making. And the same thing is true as to delivery. But whatever methods of preparation and delivery one may follow, the burning purpose which should thread every sermon should be to save souls, build up christian character and glorify God.

### The Preaching of the Day.

"As dull as a sermon" has passed into a proverb. Yet there is no necessary connection between the pulpit and platitude. Even in our own days, when the influence of the press is supposed to overshadow the preacher, we can point to not a few whose words have won the attention and gained the hearts of multitudes who hung spell bound on their lips. There may be many who in their sermons "aim at nothing and hit it," but the man who is mastered by his theme and declares the whole counsel of God has never failed to command an audience.

Nor is there any reason why the pulpit should ever cease to maintain its proper place or to exercise its peculiar power. So long as the preacher is true to his mission and faithful in proclaiming the gospel of God, he holds a position second to none. For in this world, where sin riots, and its curse has captured the very heart of man, he who worthily fills the pulpit is the mes-

senger of divine mercy and the harbinger of heavenly bliss. There is no higher message, no holier ministry, than his.

Nevertheless, it were folly to deny that many sermons are wholly lacking in worth. Without "grace, grit, or gumption," they fail to reach either the understanding or the heart. Containing no divine message, and wholly devoid of spiritual power, they effect no change in the faith or life of those who hear them. Now, surely, the purpose of a sermon ought to be the conversion of sinners or the "building up" of believers. The true function of the preacher is to persuade, not to please. Yet nowadays this is not seldom forgotten. The orator too often is mainly anxious to display his gifts, and win the applause of the groundlings. Provided he can satisfy himself and his hearers, he is too often well content. Thus lightly does he fail to use the vantage ground assigned him, and he both forgets and forfeits the high and holy privilege with which he has been entrusted. Sermons, however eloquent or profound, ranging over the whole field of literature, while carefully avoiding all reference to the gospel, are a disgrace to preacher and hearer alike.

Evidently, if the pulpit is to remain true to itself, it must allow only and always the exposition and enforcement of the truths contained in the Word. In other places and at other times it may be lawful to deal with the "burning questions" of the hour; but when the congregation meets on the Lord's day, the one question demanding an instant answer is, "What saith the Scripture?" People who believe that God has given us a rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him, care very little about the thoughts or opinions of the man who speaks; they are only anxious to learn and love the true sayings of God. It is worse than impertinence merely to amuse or interest an audience when its one real concern and need is to be saved and sanctified by the truth of God.

One of the highest compliments ever paid to a preacher by a king was addressed to Massillon by the ruler of France. "When I listen to other preachers, I go away pleased with the preacher; but after listening to you, I depart displeased with myself." The reason is not far to seek. While others cared only to tickle the royal ear, the more faithful priest was anxious to awaken the sleeping conscience and to make some impression on the hardened heart. The weight and worth of a sermon are alone determined by its effect. When preaching sends truth to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, sinners are saved and saints are edified. And it is by "manifestation of the truth" that the genuine preacher commends himself "to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

There are two qualities essential to success in winning souls. Fitly are they thus indicated in a recent address from the president of the Congregational Union of London:

"There are two things which a preacher must ever keep in himself: love of Christ and his gospel, which ensures personal piety—the one thing which one cannot learn from another, and which is not transmissible; and the love of men and their eternal welfare, which makes him a true Christian philanthropist. These two, if watched and fed, will make a living interest, if not an eloquent preacher. Ineffective preachers, as a rule, are lacking in one or two things—in real personal religious conviction, or in sincere interest in the welfare here and hereafter of their fellow-men. And if you question the fact that there are preachers without any interest in their fellow-men, read the advertisements where church livings are offered for sale. The last recommendation often dwelt upon, after describing the pleasant scenery, the spacious vicarage, the salmon pool, and the almost total absence of Dissenters, is that there are only so many inhabitants in the parish. Yes, 'a recommendation' that there are no people to take trouble with. No people to be loved, saved and edified; and the living is bought with avidity.

"What better can be done with a preacher if human beings with their trials and eternal destinies are nothing but trouble to him, than to bury him alive in a district without people?"

"But let me quote a sentence of quite another spirit by Dr. Arnold: 'That which we know and love we cannot but communicate.' If we would be living preachers we must be loving ones; we must idealize our congregations, and see in the men and women and children around us those for whom Christ gave himself, and the glorious characters he can make them to be. What Emerson says of eloquence is not only true but very suggestive: 'It is the best speech of the best soul.' What additional powers, what increase of influence is opened before each one of us by making our preaching the best speech, full of the tenderest persuasion, the outflow of great love, and ourself the 'best soul,' telling upon our thoughts, words, and the very tones of our voice. What 'land to be possessed' is opened before us, in new and legitimate influence, on the one side and the other—'the best speech of the best soul!'—*The Preachers' Magazine.*

Some people measure their duty to their fellowmen by the benefits that they have received from them. Frequently such people are narrow minded and inefficient. We must measure our obligations to others by what Christ has done for us. This is the plan upon which the most useful of Christ's servants have always worked.—*Central Baptist.*

### A Rejoinder to Bro. White.

Dear Bro. Bailey:—I wish to set myself straight with Bro. Jno. E. White, then I am done. I am glad I have enough of the milk of human kindness in my heart to love and honor Bro. White, or any other brother for honestly holding on to an opinion, though his opinion, in my judgment, is not correct. I have great respect for the honesty of Bro. White, but mighty little for his opinion in regard to a call to the ministry.

Bro. W. says I did not deal fairly with his attitude leaving out the phrase, "With its attendant theatricals, scenes, visions, &c." What he means by the "etc.," I can't tell. I left that out because I did not wish to oppose a thing about which I knew nothing. The whole passage is as follows: "We no longer subscribe to the doctrine of apostolic succession. Why? Because it is neither scriptural nor reasonable. Besides, it tends to religious oligarchy. And the sooner we rid ourselves of the other and companion error of a personal and miraculous interposition of God in the calling of men into the ministry, with its attendant theatricals of scenes, visions, &c., nearer will we accord with truth, Scripture and common sense." Bro. W. in genially arranges his assertion, viz: that God does not interpose personally in the calling of men into the ministry by putting it in a capsule. On one side he places the assertion that he don't believe in apostolic succession, and on the other that he don't believe in theatricals of scenes, visions, &c. I can say as readily as Bro. W. that I do not believe in "apostolic succession," nor in "the theatricals of scenes and visions," but I do believe in the personal interposition of God in calling men into the ministry. I don't know whether I believe in his "etc." or not. His capsule was too big for me to swallow, so I took only its contents. Bro. W. ought not to have offered that great big thing to be swallowed. Such big portions can best be taken in broken doses.

If he will read my article carefully, I think he will see that I did not base the call to preach and regeneration on the same passage, but used it only as a simile, showing that the impressions made upon the heart, calling one to preach, is made by the same spirit and in the same way as in regeneration. But if I had based the two on the same passage, I hardly think it would have been a later development in theology than his doctrine that men should preach without a call.

Again he says: "The call to preach, the impression made by the Spirit, urging one to lay aside worldly ambition, in my opinion is no more miraculous and special than the impression made by the Spirit urging a man to do a certain act of charity." Certainly nothing can be more true. The only difference in the impressions made upon the two persons is that the one is impressed to engage in a work for life, while the other is impressed to do a single act. This, in my opinion, is all that is meant by a call to the ministry. It is not accompanied by any theatricals of scenes and visions. Now, I maintain that unless one feels these impressions of the spirit to "lay aside worldly ambitions" and engage in the public ministry, he has no right to preach. Will the brother admit this? If so, how shall we reconcile with this his assertion that "How he shall serve Him is determined entirely by his own judgment of his talent and fitness?"

Paul says, in Romans 12: 4-8, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having, then, gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth with diligence; he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness." Now, he who feels impressed by the Spirit to engage in teaching, or exhortation, or the ministry, is called to do that special work. I think there are some whose duty it is to engage in making money to carry on the Lord's work. It would not be wrong to say that they are called to do that work. Some who give money are doing as acceptable service for their Master as those who give their time and talent to preaching His gospel. God does not, we think, call a man to any of these departments of His work unless he is qualified, but the man is not left to be the judge of his qualifications. If God call him He has a place adopted to his qualifications. He may not be adapted to the work in the city, but there is a work for him in the village or country. But Bro. W. does not seem to recognize the different departments of the Lord's work. He seems to make the mistake of classing all Christian work under the head of preaching. He says: "I still earnestly believe that if the growth of grace were persisted in, that every truly converted person could not, as the supreme importance of the gospel forced itself upon his heart, but go preach it to his friends, to strangers, everywhere, as did these members of the Jerusalem Church. If such was the case, who would do the other Christian work?"

There is a great difference in propagating the gospel and preaching it officially. Preaching is only one way of propagating it. All other ways and methods are just as honorable as preaching. 1 Cor. 12: 21-22: "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet I have no need of you; nay, much more those

members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." I agree with the brother that too much of the work has been left for the ministers to do. I think persons are just as imperatively called to other branches of the work as to the ministry.

The position taken is a work for every man, and every man to his work. Read Mark 13: 34.

If, as Bro. W. maintains, no special call to the ministry is necessary, why the custom of examining ministers, before ordination, on their call to the work. If there is no authority for it, then it must be wrong to require any evidence of a call when there is none. Is it possible that all the Baptist host, and other denominations, too, have been going blindly in this matter? It is possible, but not probable. Bro. White must be in the hopeless minority of Baptists, at least.

With the kindest feeling for all who may differ in opinion, I leave the subject with them. T. S. ANDREWS.

Cross Anchor, S. C.

### Thoughts By the Way.

In my rambles among the churches, I sometimes find that the church-members seem to worship their pastor more than their God; or it looks so to a spectator. Is this best for the pastor and congregation? Preachers are human beings liable to err like other people. If a preacher is a good man, he is as good and no better than a good layman. The adulation shown him sometimes makes him worship himself and dislike all those who do not worship him or sound his praises.

I think the pastor ought to be always spoken well of—hold up his hands and help him forward in all good works.

Some churches pay their pastors so little, that they almost starve them; and in that case I can't see how the pastor can love or respect them as he should (no pastor worship there). Surely the people who will not pay a fair salary don't respect him enough.

Again, I think some churches pay their pastors more than is necessary for his support; and this I think they do sometimes to worship themselves—to say, we pay our preacher so many thousand dollars a year; it would be a disgrace to us to pay less; we would be retrograding.

I think it is the duty of all working in a civilized country to pay liberally to churches, orphan asylums and all worthy charitable objects; and if it is, we ought not to cause one preacher to live in luxury, and our next-door neighbor preacher, who does as much or more work, to nearly starve. I believe in being consistent in church work as well as in other things, and think a church should be run on common sense as much so as a farmer's or a merchant's business. Further, I believe churches are rather anxious for rich men to join them, whether converted or not; and if the man thought to be rich (and they don't know that he can pay his debts, though he seems to be rich) does not pay very liberally, the members generally begin to talk about how stingy and mean he is, and thereby cultivate an unbrotherly feeling in the church. The reputed rich man will hear of such remarks, and will think if the poorer members had worked more and talked less, they, too, might have been worth more. Hence, it may not be best to make a special effort to get the rich in the churches unless surely converted. "There is more good, no not one," the Bible says; and if we are saved, it will only be through the mercy of God. This fact clearly shows that we should overlook the failings of others as much as we can, as we all have our faults, whether others know of them or not. So let us do all we can to help our erring brethren.

The RECORDER grows better and better as it increases in age. JUSTICE.

### Depreciating Other People.

Some men have a habit of depreciating others. They can always see the faults of their neighbors much quicker than their good qualities. Where no real fault exists they either imagine one, or by innuendo suggest to other people that so and so is not what he is generally supposed to be. The true inwardness of this evil habit of speaking depreciatingly of others, is an effort to elevate one's self in the estimate of the person addressed. When a man has no strong points to commend him, he seeks to appear important by ingeniously reflecting on his contemporaries. The spirit that will do this is little, narrow, selfish. Such conduct deserves the unqualified condemnation of all honorable persons. The man or woman who is betrayed into this ignoble practice will surely come to grief. Nothing is truer than that the world will ultimately measure us at about our true worth. He who for a time gains a fictitious merit by pulling down others, is destined to exposure. His methods will be found out, and there will come a time when without genuine worth upon which to base his claim for respect and confidence, and having forfeited the love of those who were once his friends, by insinuations against them, he will be pitiable indeed. Don't go through life reflecting on other people. Let your good works and kind speeches commend you, and you will always have friends.—*Epworth Methodist.*

Books are the true levelers. They give to all who faithfully use them the society, the spiritual presence of the best and greatest of our race.—*Channing.*