

A PASSIONATE CALL FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the noted expositor of the past century, remarked, “To me the work of preaching is the highest and greatest calling to which anyone can ever be called.”¹

THE EARTHLY MINISTRY OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ Himself was the foremost expositor of God’s Word. Our Lord gave the true interpretation of the law in a day when it had been greatly perverted by the Pharisees, Scribes, and others. The greatest sermon that Jesus ever gave, the Sermon on the Mount, was, in reality, a proper exposition of the law, contrasting what the Pharisees claimed it said with His own right interpretation of it. All preachers who would preach as Jesus did, must focus upon a true explanation of the Word.

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go to into the fiery hell.

- Matthew 5:21-22

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- Matthew 5: 27-28

“You have heard that it was said, YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.” “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you

- Matthew 5: 43-44

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF CHRIST

When the church was born, the first duty to which the apostles devoted themselves was the teaching of the Word. The apostles’ ministry of preaching and teaching is mentioned more often than any other activity in which they were engaged (Acts 2:42; 3:11-26; 4:1-2, 8-12, 19-20, 31,33; 5:20-21, 29-32, 42; 6:2,4,7-10; 7:1-53). Most notably, they, and those under their influence, were expositors of the Scripture. For example, Peter on the day of Pentecost expounded many texts in the Word.

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and

¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1971,1977), 9.

and give heed to my words. “For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says, ‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. ‘AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. ‘THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. ‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’

- Acts 2: 14-21

“For David says of Him, I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. ‘THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. ‘YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.’

- Acts 2: 25-28

“And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT ONE OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID HIS FLESH SUFFER DECAY.

- Acts 2: 30-31

“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.

- Acts 2: 34-35

Because the Bible is what it claims to be, the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God, preaching is, truly, the highest calling known to man. As heralds of the sacred Scripture, those who have been chosen to preach have been entrusted with the greatest privilege of all, that of being mouthpieces through which the living God has elected to speak. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. Therefore, to expound the unsearchable riches of His Word is to be appointed to an unspeakable honor.

As a result, all who would preach must be firmly committed to handling God’s Word with precision and excellence. Anything less would be unworthy of the high calling upon our lives as preachers of the Word. With this in mind, we want to sharpen our thinking in the nature of expository preaching. Many talk about expository preaching, but few

actually practice it. It is important for us to understand, specifically, what expository preaching *is* and what it is *not*. That will be our focus in this session.

In particular we want to address: What is the mandate of expository preaching? What is the meaning of it? What are its distinguishing marks? What are some models of expository preaching over the centuries?

THE MANDATE OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

First we want to establish that there is a mandate for expository preaching issued in Scripture itself. Such preaching is not an option for a minister. It is not one of many ways to preach. Neither is it a approach to the pulpit. Rather, expository preaching is an apostolic mandate that is laid upon all ministers, one that is authoritative and binding. This is obligatory for every servant whom God calls to preach. Two biblical texts in particular stand out as seminal, demanding our careful attention and full compliance. They are 1 Timothy 4:13 and 2 Timothy 4:2-5.

THE APOSTOLIC COMMAND OF PAUL

Writing the first of his pastoral epistles, the apostle Paul gave an imperative command regarding the primacy with which God's Word is to be delivered in the life of the church. Paul had placed his young son in the faith, Timothy, in the pastoral oversight of the church in Ephesus. But young Timothy found himself in a most difficult ministry situation. He was in desperate need of pastoral direction. So, Paul wrote to young Timothy in an attempt to solidify his leadership there. In so doing, Paul defined for Timothy—and for all preachers—the priority of biblical preaching in the local church, as well as what is its distinguishing marks. The apostle Paul wrote:

Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

- 1 Timothy 4:13

In this passage, Paul states that there is one chief duty to which Timothy is to devote himself until he can arrive, and that is the ministry of biblical preaching. That is job number one. Further, the apostle also states *how* it is to be done. It matters to God how His Word is proclaimed. No one is free to preach however they so desire. In the pulpit, Timothy is to: (1) *read the text*, introducing to the listener the passage to be expounded, indicating that this message will be a development of this biblical text, (2) *explain the text*, giving the one true interpretation of the passage, giving careful attention to the literal, grammatical, historical interpretation of Scripture, and (3) *apply the text*, showing the relevance of that passage to this congregation, exhorting and commanding with it. These are the essential parts of any expository message.

THE FINAL CHARGE OF PAUL

At the very end of his life, the aged apostle Paul wrote to Timothy regarding what is most important in pastoral ministry. Last words should be lasting words. Not surprisingly, Paul

charged Timothy to “preach the word.” This is a final charge for expository preaching. The apostle writes:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- 2 Timothy 4:1-5

In this text, the central charge is crystal clear, which is to “preach the word.” As a minister of Jesus Christ, Timothy is to declare the full counsel of God from the written Word. Such exposition is to be conducted in the following manner: (1) *continually*, “be ready in season and out of season,” with all readiness, when it is convenient and when it is not, (2) *convicting*, “rebuke,” correcting wrong behavior and false teaching, (3) *correcting*, “reprove,” to correct error and misconduct with biblical argument, (4) *encouraging*, “exhort,” coming alongside in love to encourage spiritual change, (5) *patiently*, “with patience,” persevering under difficulty, (6) *doctrinal*, “instruction,” carefully teaching the Word, (7) *level-headed*, “be sober in all things,” being stable, unwavering, steadfast, exercising discipline and self-control, (8) *thick-skinned*, “endure hardship,” remaining steadfast in the midst of difficulty, (9) *soul-winning*, “do the work of an evangelist,” preaching the gospel, upholding the cross, calling the lost to faith in Jesus Christ, and (10) *faithfully*, “fulfill your ministry,” bringing your ministry to completion, saying all that must be said, giving a full measure of the truth.

THE MEANING OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Any commitment to expository preaching begins with a basic understanding of these two words, “expository” and “preaching.” Herein lies the genius of biblical preaching. “Expository” is the adjective that describes the noun “preaching.” This is the *kind* of preaching that is being called for—*expository* preaching.

PREACHING THAT IS *EXPOSITORY*

If it be true to the biblical mandate, “preach the word,” all preaching must be *expository*. That is to say, it is preaching that must be *biblical* in content. It is preaching that has for its foundation one of several passages of scripture. It is preaching that is rooted and grounded in the giving of the God-intended meaning of a passage of Scripture. The word itself, expository, means “a detailed description, explanatory; an informing of the mind that gives understanding.” This aspect of preaching deals with the exegetical discovery and hermeneutical meaning of a biblical text.

Several words in the New Testament are used to describe how Christ and the apostles preached. Our Lord and His disciples were intentionally *expository* in their preaching ministry, continually instructing their listeners in the unchanging truths of the word of God. The key Greek words that are used in the New Testament to describe the cognitive nature of exposition are: (1) *didasko*, “to teach, to instruct with a view of shaping the will (Acts 11:26; 13:35; 20:20; 21:28),” (2) *dianoigo*, “to open up (Luke 24:31-32; Acts 17:2-3),” (3) *partithemi*, “to prove by setting forth side by side (Acts 17:3),” (4) *ektithēmi*, “to set forth the meaning of (Acts 28:23),” and (5) *katēcheō*, “to instruct, to teach (1 Corinthians 14:19),” Together, these words in the original language reveal that biblical preaching involves teaching and explaining the doctrines and duties of God’s word.

EXPOSITION THAT IS *PREACHING*

Yet at the same time, all pulpit exposition must be *preaching*. In other words, biblical proclamation must come with authoritative force in which biblical truth is declared in power and persuasion. The actual meaning of the word “preaching” is a “public proclamation, declaration, exhortation, heralding.” Various Greek words are used in the New Testament to describe the kind of delivery involved in exposition. These are: (1) *kerruso*, “to proclaim, to herald (Acts 9:20; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Timothy 4:2),” (2) *evangelizomai*, “to announce good news (Acts 14:7,21),” (3) *katangelo*, “to proclaim solemnly (Acts 13:5,38; 17:3),” (4) *anangelo*, “to proclaim (Acts 20:20,27),” (5) *parrēsiazomai*, “to speak openly or boldly (Acts 9:27-28),” (6) *diamartyromai*, “to declare thoroughly and solemnly (Acts 18:5;20:21,24),” and (7) *noutheteō*, “to warn, urge, admonish (Acts 20:31; Colossians 1:29).”

THE NECESSARY BALANCE

In expository preaching, *both* these elements of exposition and proclamation are absolutely necessary. There must be the careful *explanation* of the biblical text and its delivery must include a compelling public *proclamation*. Simply put, there must be the presentation of biblical truth in a dynamic, persuasive manner. Expository preaching must include both substance *and* style. It must include both explication *and* passion. The exposition of a passage of Scripture must never be given in a sterile, stoic manner. Exposition is never license to be boring or irrelevant. Rather, it must come with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. The fact is, there *must* be both truth *and* passion. As the Puritans used to say, there must be a fire in the pulpit, which gives off both light *and* heat—the *light* of God’s truth with the *heat* of the preacher’s passion. This is the genius of expository preaching.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID

In considering expository preaching, it would be helpful to hear a few voices regarding its definition. John Calvin, the great expositor of Geneva, has said, “Preaching is the public exposition of Scripture by the man sent from God, in which God Himself is present in judgment and grace.” That is, preaching is wielding the sharp, two-edged sword of God’s Word, a supernatural weapon that cuts both ways. Biblical preaching

should both minister salvation *and* damnation. It should both tear down *and* build up. It should both comfort the afflicted *and* afflict the comfortable. It both hardens *and* softens, condemns *and* consoles. This magisterial Reformer stated, “Preaching is the explication and application of the word of God.” The preacher, Calvin concludes, is to give a careful explanation of a biblical text *and* show its relevance in the lives of his listeners.

J. I Packer, noted author and theologian, has stated: “The true idea of preaching is that the preacher should become a mouthpiece for his text, opening it up and applying it as a word from God to his hearers, talking only in order that the text itself may speak and be heard.” Packer adds that expository preaching is, quite simply, “letting texts talk.” This *is* the heart of the expository pulpit. It is the preacher letting God’s Word speak through his explanation and application.

Merrill Unger defines expository preaching as, essentially, *biblical* preaching. He wrote:

No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular Biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the overall context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be *expository preaching*....It is emphatically not preaching about the Bible, but preaching the Bible. “What saith the Lord” is the alpha and the omega of expository preaching. It begins in the Bible and ends in the Bible and all that intervenes springs from the Bible. In other words, expository preaching is Bible-centered preaching.²

WHAT EXPOSITORY PREACHING IS *NOT*

Having defined what expository preaching *is*, it is necessary to say a word about what it is *not*. Expository preaching is *not* a “data dump” of disconnected observations drawn from a passage of Scripture that lacks a central theme and convincing appeal. *Neither* is it a “barrage” of rambling comments devoid of logical order and sequential thought. *Nor* is it a “digest” of exegetical findings without compelling interest and powerful persuasion. *Nor* is it a “string” of word studies and cross references without a discernable movement of thought and powerful motivation. Expository preaching is *not* all factual information that is without any passion and persuasion. And it certainly is *not* a “sequence” of independent headings without a unifying thrust and final summation.

At the same time, expository preaching is *not* to be lacking the basic elements of what constitutes true exposition. Biblical exposition is *not* a religious pep “talk” that is without a biblical foundation and exegetical moorings. It is *not* a devotional “chat” without theological content and *gravitas*. *Neither* is it a shallow “monologue” without biblical depth and divine profundity. This is to say, it is not all passion that fails to explain the meaning of a passage of Scripture.

² Merrill F. Unger, *Principles of Exposition, Preaching*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1955), 33.

THE MARKS OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

Given what expository preaching is and what should be our commitment to it, it will be helpful to consider what are the non-negotiable marks of such a biblical approach to the pulpit.

1. BIBLE-CENTERED

Expository preaching is a sermon that is rooted and grounded in one or more passages of Scripture. It is a message that *starts* in a text and stays in a text, supporting it with other texts. Expository preaching is the presentation of biblical truth that is derived from the Word. It is not a message merely *about* the Bible, but the actual preaching of the Bible itself. In expository preaching, the preacher becomes a mouth piece for the Word, as he reads, explains, and applies it to the lives of the listeners. The expositor has nothing to say apart from the Word of God.

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.

- 2 Timothy 4:2a

2. PROPER INTERPRETATION

Expository preaching digs into a biblical passage and extracts *out* of it what is there. This is the essence of exegesis, which is the determination of the meaning of the biblical text in its historical and literary content. Where eisegesis reads *into* a text what *is not* there, exegesis pulls out of a text what is in it. Biblical preaching is intensely exegetical, deriving its message from what is found in a passage of Scripture. In preaching the Word, the expositor must rightly interpret the Scripture being expounded. He uses the fixed laws of hermeneutics, carefully interpreting the authorial intent of a biblical text. The expositor's goal is, first, to discover and, then, to declare the one, true interpretation of that portion of Scripture. He is well-grounded in the literal, grammatical, and historical approach to interpretation, which also gives careful attention to the peculiarities of that literary genre and recognized figures of speech. The meaning of the text *is* the text and until you have the meaning of the text, you do not have the text.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

- 2 Timothy 2:15

3. DOCTRINAL TEACHING

Expository preaching is not simply giving the correct grammatical sense of a verse or passage. It is rather to set out the doctrines which the words are intended to convey. True expository preaching is, therefore, doctrinal preaching. It is preaching that teaches specific theological truths that are given by God in the Word.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

- Matthew 28:19-20

But as for you, speak the things that are fitting for sound doctrine.

- Titus 2:1

preach the word...with great patience and instruction

- 2 Timothy 4:2

4. GOD-WARD FOCUS

An exposition of Scripture should be, primarily, theocentric. That is, a message from God's Word should be God-ward in its focus, an exaltation of the glory of God. It should be a revelation of the supreme greatness of God, unveiling His unrivaled grandeur. The chief purpose of the Word of God is to give the knowledge of the God of the Word.

But, we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- 2 Corinthians 3:18

5. AUTHORITATIVE TONE

Biblical preaching should come with the authority of Scripture itself. Expository preaching is not the setting forth of suggestions, to consider. Nor is it the presentation of human opinions to weigh. Rather, a biblical message is to command the listener to follow the way marked out in the Scripture. The truths of the biblical text are binding upon the congregation and should be presented as such. The entire message should bear the authority of Scripture itself.

When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

- Matthew 7:28-29

These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

- Titus 2:15

6. LOVING CORRECTION

As the Scripture is preached, it should provide a loving rebuke of sin. All exposition should include this corrective nature. Light exposes the things hidden in the darkness. So expository preaching should bring to light the sin in the lives of people. Further, the sin in the world should receive clarification. Admonition and warning should also be found.

Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

- Acts 20:31

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

- Colossians 1:28

Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

- 1 Timothy 5:20

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

- 2 Timothy 4:2

7. PASTORAL EXHORTATION

True exposition should have a positive element that exhorts, encourages, and edifies the listener. Bible preaching should build up, hold up, and fire up those who sit under its influence. The gospel is, after all, *good* news, which should have a strong motivative effect upon those who hear it proclaimed. An expository pulpit should provide hope for the downcast, comfort for the discouraged, and strength for the weak.

But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

- 1 Thessalonians 2: 7-8

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

- 2 Timothy 4:2

8. POLEMIC DEFENSE

The expositor must expose false teaching where it confronts the lives of those under its preaching. A faithful shepherd should be a defender of the truth of Scripture amongst those who would assault it. He must be a guardian of the gospel in the face of its attacks.

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge:

- 1 Timothy 6:20

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

- 2 Timothy 1:13-14

Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

- Titus 1:9

9. COMPELLING DELIVERY

Any exposition of Scripture should be delivered in a compelling fashion. This necessitates the deep conviction of the truth in the heart of the preacher. He believes; therefore, he speaks (2 Corinthians 4:13). He must ‘own’ the truth. As a result, he must speak with elements of passion, persuasion, and even zeal. He should ‘bleed’ the truth. The Scripture must grip him if he is to be convincing with those who hear him.

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.

- Acts 2:14

according to what is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke,” we also believe, therefore we also speak.

- 2 Corinthians 4:13

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction

- 1 Thessalonians 1:5

10. EVANGELISTIC APPEAL

Every expositor is to preach as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming the gospel to non Christians. As he preaches the word, he is to do the work of an evangelist. The preacher is a minister of the new covenant and should be always pointing people to Christ. He should be continually calling his listeners to repent of their sins and turn to Jesus Christ in faith. Let all expositors be those who faithfully appeal to sinners to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

- Matthew 7:13-14

Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”

- Acts 2:38

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

- Acts 3:19

Preach the word... do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- 2 Timothy 4:5

THE MODELS OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

A survey of church history is helpful in locating examples of godly men worth imitating in the Christian ministry. Throughout the history of the church, there have been several notable examples of men committed to expository preaching. It would be profitable for us, I believe, to note five highly-gifted expositors drawn from the last five hundred years of the church—John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, James Montgomery Boice, and John MacArthur. What we discover is that each man has his own unique style as an expositor. No two are exactly alike. Let us now note their distinctive approaches in the pulpit.

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564)

The great Reformer of Geneva, John Calvin, preached some 4000 sermons during his pastorate. Calvin was many things—a theologian, commentator, author, and the like. But first and foremost, he was a biblical expositor. Several features define Calvin’s expository pulpit: (1) *sequential*, preaching verse-by-verse through entire books in the Bible, beginning with the first verse of the first chapter and, ultimately, address every verse in the book, (2) *lengthy series*, extending for long periods of time, such as Acts (89 sermons), Ezekiel (174), Job (159), Deuteronomy (200), Isaiah (353), Genesis (123), (3) *no outline*, without the noticeable structure of homiletical headings, (4) *no notes*, without manuscript, or any visual notes or aids before him, (5) *Hebrew, Greek pulpit Bible*,

translating into French as he preached, (6) *short introduction*, essentially beginning each sermon where he left off in the previous verses, reestablishing the context, giving the flow of the authors' thoughts, (7) *pastoral exhortations*, warmhearted appeals, inclusive ("we," "us"), edifying, yet calling out sin with loving rebuke, and (8) *theocentric conclusion*, always calling the congregation to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.

CHARLES SPURGEON (1834-1892)

As the undisputed "Prince of Preachers," Charles Spurgeon thundered the Word of God from his London pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. To this day, the power of his sermons is still being felt through the printed page. Spurgeon's sermons were always excavated from a text of Scripture. In this sense, he is considered expository. Spurgeon's expositions are marked by being: (1) *not sequential*, never preaching through a book in the Bible, but each week from a different book, (2) *usually one verse*, giving careful consideration to the details of that text, (3) *minimal notes*, having only a skeleton outline before him, (4) *structured outline*, in typical Puritan fashion, with main headings, (5) *sub points*, highly structured with multiple subheadings, governing the direction of his thoughts, (6) *vivid imagination*, painting pictures in the minds of his listeners, using many metaphors, and some illustrations, and (7) *evangelistic zeal*, possessing extraordinary passion to reach the lost for Christ, pleading with their soul, compelling them to come to the Savior, following the example of George Whitefield.

MARTYN LLOYD-JONES (1899-1981)

Ministering in London a century later, Martyn Lloyd-Jones established himself as the premier expositor of his day. In a day of spiritual decline, his Westminster pulpit stood as a towering testimony to the power of the Word preached. To be sure, "the Doctor" was an expositor *par excellence*. The biblical preaching of Lloyd-Jones could be described as: (1) *sequential*, preaching consecutively, verse by verse, through entire books in the Bible, (2) *usually one verse*, virtually reading the entire Bible through one verse, (3) *building argument*, tracing the unfolding argument that the biblical author has been making, establishing the context and flow of thought, (4) *usually no outline*, speaking in a more spontaneous flow, rather than with structured headings, (5) *doctrinal emphasis*, giving careful attention to the theology of a passage (Preaching is theology on fire" he said, (6) *church history*, using church history, especially the Reformers and Puritans, to illustrate and inspire, (7) *fiery appeals*, preaching with unction, what he called a "sacred anointing."

JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE (1938-2000)

The imminent Bible expositor of Tenth Presbyterian, Philadelphia, James Montgomery Boice combined both theological precision with linguistic powers of skilled speech in his expositions. His sermons stand for all preachers as a worthy example of what biblical exposition should be. Boice's pulpit exposition could be characterized as: (1) *sequential*, devoting himself to lengthy series, moving verse by verse through entire books in the Bible, (2) *sometimes outline*, framing his messages with key thoughts, though not polished homiletical headings, (3) *doctrinal emphasis*, giving great attention to theological issues and nuances, (4) *master teacher*, a very gifted instructor in Scripture,

(5) *intentional application*, giving careful attention to showing the relevance of a passage of Scripture, (6) *rhetorical questions*, using the art of raising questions in order to provoke the thinking of the listener, and (7) *strong gospel appeals*, ending the sermon with a fervent appeal to the heart to believe upon Christ.

JOHN MACARTHUR (1939-)

The peerless expositor, John MacArthur is, in my estimation, the gold standard of expository preaching in this hour. With exegetical precision and razor-sharp analysis, MacArthur is the leading expositor of this generation. MacArthur's pulpit is distinguished by exposition that is: (1) *sequential*, strictly devoted to verse-by-verse preaching through entire books in the Bible, leaving no phrase unexamined, (2) *structured outline*, using polished, alliterated homiletical headings, providing much structure to the message, (3) *extensive introduction*, going to great lengths to establish the context and often review the previous message, (4) *historical background*, delving into the political religious, and social context of the ancient world, putting the listener into the skin of the biblical author and original recipients, (5) *word studies*, giving exegetical attention to the etymology of words, verb tenses, grammatical syntax, (6) *many cross-references*, demonstrating the analogy of Scripture, (7) *biblical illustrations*, using hardly any personal illustrations, but utilizing Scripture to illustrate those Scripture, and (8) *defending truth*, fulfilling his God-given responsibility to guard the truth and to refute those who contradict.

To be a legitimate expositor, you have to explain the text, and that rarely occurs in preaching. That does not mean taking a text of Scripture, finding an outline, and bouncing your way through a homiletical format. Explaining the text means giving to the people precisely the message that God intended when He revealed that Scripture. That is going to take you beyond superficiality, because frankly, there is not anything superficial about the mind of God. And there is not anything cute or clever about the mind of God. Everything about the mind of God is profound. Everything about the mind of God is systematic. Everything about the mind of God is clear, Everything about the mind of God is cohesive. Everything about the mind of God is orderly. And that is how the text should be explained.³

RISE UP, O MEN OF GOD!

In this critical hour of church history, pastors must recapture the centrality of biblical preaching, such as it rose to prominence in the Reformation and the Puritan age, preaching in a fashion that is Bible-based, God-exalting, and Christ-centered. May the Lord of the church raise up a new generation of expositors, men armed with the sword of the Spirit, to once again preach the Word. May the plea of Charles Haddon Spurgeon who witnessed the decline of biblical preaching in his day be heard and answered in this day.

³ John MacArthur, when asked to define a genuine expositor during a question-and-answer session in a recent chapel service at The Master's Seminary.

We want again Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitefields, men fit to mark eras, whose names breathe terror in our foemen's ears. We have dire need of such. Whence will they come to us? They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the Church, and will come in due time. He has power to give us back again a golden age of preachers, and when the good old truth is once more preached by men whose lips are touched as with a live coal from off the altar, this shall be the instrument in the hand of the Spirit for bringing about a great and thorough revival of religion in the land.

I do not look for any other means of converting men beyond the simple preaching of the gospel and the opening of men's ears to hear it. The moment the Church of God shall despise the pulpit, God will despise her. It has been through the ministry that the Lord has always been pleased to review and bless His Churches.