

The STRATEGY of PREACHING

A Handy Guide for
Sermon Preparation

by
W. Max Alderman



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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my dear friend, Evangelist C.L. Roach who has been such a blessing and also an encouragement to me.

FOREWORD

This book has been written as a practical study guide for the preacher. It is my hope that this study will stimulate and inspire new and different venues of study from the precious, never changing “Word of God.”

In my ministry, I use only the King James Version with great admiration, trust, and love for it.

I am indebted to so many wonderful people who assisted in getting this recent book to the publishers. It would be difficult to name them all. I might also leave some deserving and helpful person out if I attempted to list them.

May the Lord bless you richly in your studies.

February, 1988

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INTRODUCTION

The most awesome responsibility that God has ever bestowed upon mortal man is the handling of His inspired Word from the pulpit.

The preacher is accountable to the listener who sits hungry to hear the truths of God as they fall from the lips of the Man of God. Truly greater is his accountability to God for the verity and Biblical accuracy of the message which he delivers to his people.

A man of God who realizes the gravity of his task would never step into the pulpit except he first prepare every fiber of his being to carry out this great office.

In the following pages, you will read words penned from the heart of a veteran pastor about this process of preparation and forethought. This volume is not simply a cold formula of homeletical precision but a strategy to be used in preparing to speak the truth of God to hungry hearts.

Pastor W. Max Alderman has proven himself a student of the Word through his pulpit ministry. In this volume you will read the heartbeat of a man who truly loves both preaching and preachers. Truly, your ministry will be enriched as you learn **THE STRATEGY OF PREACHING**.

Bro. Mike Eastridge
Associate Pastor
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Part I

Preparing The Message



Part I

PREPARING THE MESSAGE

THE VALUE OF PREACHING

The world may not recognize the value of the preacher and his preaching, yet God's Word says in Romans 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" What a privilege and honor it is to preach the glad tidings of good things, regardless of the notion of some.

The man that has that heavenly, holy, and high calling would almost rather preach than eat. Yet the desire, the joy, and the call alone is not enough; there must be the prepared heart! Having some neatly prepared homiletical gem does not in itself constitute the vehicle for true preaching power. The preacher may have the ability to sermonize, putting his thoughts down neatly on paper; yet he may not be able to forcefully and powerfully deliver them to the listener's heart. The whole man must preach under the anointing of the Holy Spirit for the sermon to live.

When a sermon really lives, the listening audience will crave for more of the same. The answer to many of the problems concerning empty church buildings could be conquered in the pulpit, even before the preacher enters it to preach. For this to happen, the preacher must take preaching seriously. He should be serious enough to be willing to prepare himself.

I have offered several steps that have been helpful to me in sermon preparation through the years. Certainly, a more experienced and wiser preacher will find many additions that could be made to this very

brief presentation (and much that could possibly be left out). Borrow from it if you can; add to it if you need; but let it be a help to you as you “Preach the Word!”

PREPARATION

Building a sermon requires as much preparation as building a literal structure. It would be foolish to begin building a large office complex without first having carefully laid plans. Yet many times a sermon is put together without any forethought or preparation. Often this is attributed to laziness. Laziness is not synonymous with being “instant in season.” This study will provide a simple homiletical sequence for sermon preparation. The preacher will find this study to be more practical than technical.

Each sermon should originate in the fertile heart of the preacher. If the preacher’s heart is empty, his sermons will be empty; if the preacher’s heart is full, his sermons will be full. Therefore, the preacher should keep his heart pure, and he should be filled with God’s Word (Romans 12:1-2). The Word clearly declares that “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.”

Before the sermon is prepared, the preacher must be prepared, the preacher should first be prepared in his soul. One could not honestly preach if he were not saved. He would have no message from God. Occasionally one hears of the conversion of a preacher who has preached for many years. This is, indeed, difficult to comprehend.

In addition to the preacher being prepared in his soul, he must be prepared in his mind. God uses all kinds of men to preach to all kinds of people. Yet God

never places a premium on ignorance. Regardless of his intellect, the preacher should have a craving for knowledge. He should have a desire to know, coupled with a careful discernment for truth. In addition to spending much time in the Scriptures, the preacher needs to have a system for developing his general knowledge.

A preacher also needs to be prepared in his body. Care should be taken that the preacher does not abuse or neglect his body. It is not smart to say, "I'd rather burn out than rust out." Why do either? Jesus demonstrated the importance of taking care of the body when He told the disciples to come aside and rest a while. The body should not be pampered, but it should be cared for. Just as one would prepare himself mentally and spiritually, he should also prepare himself physically for the rigors of study and preaching. The story was told of one preacher who would never think of preparing a sermon without wearing his plow shoes. He wanted to always be mindful of the hard work of sermon preparation. May we, as preachers, be truly prepared.

ASSIMILATION

One meaning of the word assimilation is to make similar or to take in and to appropriate. When preparing a sermon, the preacher must have an objective, a goal, a theme, a burden, etc. This part of the sermon comes as a result of the minister's pastoral contact with his people and his walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. He then chooses his topic and proceeds to bring in all the related Scriptures that might be profitable. In the case of expository preaching, the Lord

will often impress upon the preacher's heart a particular theme after many hours of study.

In both cases, once the scripture has been chosen, the process of assimilating the reference material begins. The minister should have access to a good personal library or to a convenient source for good study materials. There are those who object to commentaries or information available from sources other than the Bible. It was Spurgeon who appropriately said, "Me thinks it rather strange that one thinks so much of what he has to say and so little of what someone else has to say."

With a discerning mind, one can gain much insight from the studies of other men. We can be eternally grateful to God for the study aids that have been made available throughout the years. This does not mean that one is to readily accept everything he reads without Scriptural proof. All material must be in agreement with Biblical truth.

There are enormous storehouses of information available that may be assimilated into the mind during sermon preparation. Information concerning the historical background, the particular culture, the specific customs, the geographical data, etc., should be considered when bringing study materials together. Knowing how the people lived that you preach about will make the sermons live.

SATURATION

Once the sermonizer has assimilated the materials that he wishes to use in his sermon preparation, he may then proceed to saturate his mind with those materials. The first and the foremost piece of material

that should be used in the saturation process is the Bible. The student needs to diligently consume and digest as much of the Scripture relevant to his sermon as he can. Once he has done this, he may then carefully study commentaries and any other resource material available.

The saturation process involves reading and storing as much material as possible without taking very many notes. The Holy Spirit will then recall from memory the information that will be helpful in the preparation of the outline and also in the actual delivery of the sermon.

After the preacher has saturated his mind with the Word of God and other resource materials, he should then prepare to arrive at a proper interpretation. However, before the student settles upon a proper interpretation, he must give his mind time to meditate. The next step is called meditation.

MEDITATION

As already indicated, in order to arrive at a proper interpretation, the preacher must give his mind time to meditate or ruminate. The rumination or meditation process is perhaps one of the most valuable steps in the sermon preparation. This is a period of time during which the mind is able to incorporate the previously gained information into an interpretation of the text. Theologically, a great deal hangs upon meditating over material. To obtain a proper exposition of the text, one must have the mind of God. Only then can he speak as the mouth of God. This maybe achieved through prayerful meditation.

Many times, after periods of detachment from his

study books and even from his Bible, the preacher will have the truth that the Lord would have him to preach pounded into his heart. Sometimes the interpretational truth comes while walking, riding, dreaming, or even upon awakening from a good night's sleep. The Lord so graciously rewards the meditation process in so many special ways that He indicates this truth in Psalm 1:2.

Meditation should be deliberate, but it should also be casual. The mind should be disciplined so that it can be called upon to thoughtfully digest the material with which it has been saturated and yet allow the subconscious mind an opportunity to do its work. The man of God should prayerfully ask God to increase this special ability of the mind so that he can truly be "redeeming the time." The meditating preacher will find it a wonderful joy to walk his sermon, to talk his sermon, to go to bed and dream his sermon—a message from God!

INTERPRETATION

The purpose of meditating is to give the mind and the heart an opportunity to settle on a proper interpretation. There are numerous hermeneutical devices that should be applied when seeking a proper interpretation. Before using these principles, the student must have a genuine confidence in the Word of God. A student who lacks confidence in the Word of God is not qualified for the most holy office of Pastor/Teacher. In recent days great criticism has been launched against the King James Version. By adhering to the Version unapologetically in the study, as well as in the pulpit, the man of God is certain to find it a completely trustworthy standard for study, for

preaching, and for genuine belief. By the use of Bible dictionaries, concordances, Bible atlases, etc., and sound hermeneutical principles, one should be able to overcome any disadvantage that might be imagined in studying from the King James Version.

A few of the hermeneutical principles that are most applicable in reaching a proper interpretation are (1) the typical principle, (2) the first-mention principle, (3) the progressive-mention principle, (4) the full-mention principle, (5) the context principle, (6) the agreement principle, (7) the direct-statement principle, (8) the Christ-centered principle, and (9) the numerical principle. A great book that defines these principles and gives example is *PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS* by J. Edwin Hartill, D.D. This book is a bargain, regardless of cost.

One certainly needs to strive to master the science of Bible interpretation. Any means that the preacher can employ to “sharpen his ax” should be used in reaching the proper interpretation. The preacher would be wise to use journalistic questions, such as: *who, what, when, where, how*. The preacher may need to examine the geography of the place being studied before making an honest interpretation of the passage of Scripture. It may also be necessary to determine the marital customs, the living habits, or the clothing trends of that day, before making a proper interpretation.

APPLICATION

Preaching is the applying of interpreted truth to the lives of the hearer. Preaching has not really taken place until the application has been made. The application

should never come before the interpretation. As the preacher labors in his study—assimilating, saturating, meditating, and interpreting his material—he is forging toward a clear, precise, and pointed application. All energies should be directed to strike the target of the hearer. If he has very carefully put his sermon together with “ultra-precisional” homiletical style but missed the mark of application, he has failed! The application of truth is paramount. A sermon remains detached until it is attached by application. The application should be the motivating impact, the it-speaks-to-me part of the sermon. When the preacher has gained a proper interpretation and application, he is then ready to begin the presentation.

PRESENTATION

There are many diverse methods that may be employed by the preacher in making his presentation or delivery. Sometimes the preacher will write a manuscript of his sermon and read it verbatim to his congregation. This method has, perhaps, more disadvantages than advantages. The biggest disadvantage would be the unnatural effect associated with an oral reading. Some preachers have the ability to write out their sermons, memorize what they have written, and then use this method to obtain a consistently good effect. Another common method of support used by some preachers is the use of notes. This method has its merit if the preacher does not become a slave to his notes and if the notes have a structural format that allows the preacher to travel a clearly defined trail which will ultimately reach his destination.

Outlining is a method that is commonly preferred because it allows the preacher to incorporate into his outline notes, illustrations, and other information helpful in preaching. The outline can be a tremendous tool to prepare the preacher for delivery. The outline can deter the preacher from “chasing rabbits.” The following is an outline that may serve as an example of this method.

Expository Outline

TEXT: II Timothy 3

INTRODUCTION:

The concept of progressive evolution is not Biblical. Through the ages man's wickedness has led him on a downward path. In these last days the proliferation of man's wickedness and defiance against God will demand that the Godly be strong in the truth.

I. THE PATTERN OF THE LAST DAYS. (vs. 1-9)

- A. It will be a time of rebellion against the truth. (vs. 1-4)
 - 1. As a result, the days will be troublesome. (vs. 1)
 - 2. As a result, the days will be terrible. (vs. 2-3)
- B. It will be a time of rejection of the truth. (vs. 5-9)
 - 1. The rejecter's worship will be false. (vs. 5-8)
 - 2. The rejecter's wickedness will be fatal. (vs. 9)

Illustration:

II. THE PERSECUTION OF THE LAST DAYS. (vs. 10-13)

- A. The Godly will be affected. (vs. 10-12)
 - 1. The persecutions will be intended against the Saints. (vs. 10-11)
 - 2. The persecutions will be intense against the Saints. (vs. 12)

- B. The godless will be increased. (vs. 13)
 - 1. The godless will be deceivers. (vs. 13a)
 - 2. The godless will be deceived. (vs. 13b)

Illustration:

III. THE PREPARATION FOR THE LAST DAYS. (vs. 12-17)

- A. Prepare by receiving truth for Godly wisdom.
(vs. 14-15)
 - 1. That the Saints might be secure in the last days. (vs. 14)
 - 2. That the sinner might be saved in the last days. (vs. 15)
- B. Prepare by receiving truth for good works.
(vs. 16-17)
 - 1. Truth is given for the Saint's profit. (vs. 16)
 - 2. Truth is given for the Saint's perfection. (vs. 17)

Illustration:

CONCLUSION:

In God's Word we have the only perfect manual for the direction of our lives. We can be prepared in these last days as we face persecution by recognizing the pattern that exists. May we be challenged to live a life "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" in these perilous times.

The outline needs to be grammatically parallel and correct in style to insure a logical, concise presentation of the material. By learning to identify and to categorize his research material in outline form, the sermonizer is better able to present his message.

The sample outline uses alliteration (the rhyming of sounds). The alliteration serves as a tool for memorization, helpful to both the preacher and the people. Never sacrifice accuracy for the sake of

alliteration.

Though the preacher uses outlines to aid him in preaching, he should not be a slave to them. He should attempt to memorize his outline and then be flexible enough that he can discard his outline if God should so lead. The preacher needs to be prepared, and he needs to keep on preparing himself so that his sermons come forth naturally and forcefully. A good outline can certainly help him to achieve this.

When he stands to preach, he must have each word bathed in prayer. “Pray without ceasing!” If the preacher stands to preach with the fervency of God upon him—he will know it, the people will know it, and God will certainly know it.

When the preacher has reached the time to enter the pulpit to preach, he should enter it with great confidence in God, greater dependency upon God. He stands as the elder. The title “elder” defines the dignity of the office. As he stands with total dependency upon God, his very fiber, his very being should radiate God. He should be disciplined in his dress, his mannerisms, his sincerity, his compassion, and his call. He has a message from God!

Preach, preacher, preach! What a wonderful heritage, responsibility, and privilege has been placed upon you. You have been anointed to “preach God’s Word as it is, to men as they are.” What a joy!

If you have properly prepared yourself and your message, your sermons will come forth as from the very heart of God. Whether it be a message of comfort, exhortation, rebuke, or instruction—it will ring true. The message will prepare the hearts of the people for the invitation.

INVITATION

After the preacher has poured his heart, his soul, his every fiber of his being into his message and after he has received God's anointing to preach it, he may then feel great satisfaction in a job well done! May we, as preachers, forge ahead with the good news that Jesus Saves, Jesus Saves! May we never quit, may we never stop until the job is done.

SHALL I QUIT

Shall I quit when I've been given a JOB TO DO?
Knowing that the work is not complete, it's not
nearly through.

Shall I quit when there are perishing souls,
blinded and lost,
Knowing lest I tell the Gospel, they'll never
count the cost.

Shall I quit when there are still races to be won,
Yet though my legs grow weary, still I must be
sure to run.

Shall I quit when there are men who've
marched before,
Laboring in battle, carrying the Gospel from
shore to shore.

No! I will not quit; God's grace, my strength, it
shall be,
I'll go as long as I'm able or till the Lord's
through with me.

W.M. Alderman

Part II

Preparing The Messenger

Part II **PREPARING THE MESSENGER**

THE PREACHER'S CALL

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and the kingdom; preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. II Timothy 4:1-5

When Paul said, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (I Cor. 9:16), he was manifesting the reality of his own call. The God-called preacher must proclaim the God-given message. He must preach the Word of God as it is to men as they are.

Not all preachers are God-called; only those who have been selected and enlightened by the Holy Spirit are those who are genuinely called. Perhaps we have too many “mama-called, daddy-sent” preachers filling the pulpits across our land today. God grant, we indeed have preachers that are genuinely called of God to deliver, “Thus saith the Lord!”

Dr. Adam Clarke, in a letter to a preacher, stated:

No man should engage in the work in which you are engaged, unless he verily feels that

he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him that office. He must not presume that he is thus moved because he has been educated for the ministry; in cases of this kind, man may purpose but God must dispose. ¹

Everything that emanates from God comes with design. This is especially true when God calls a man to preach the gospel. The design of the preacher's call is for him to reveal the gospel of grace to fallen man (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 10:9-15). Though God could have easily employed another method for spreading the gospel, He chose that men be saved through the "foolishness of preaching" (I Cor. 1:21).

For each generation, God has raised up men to stand boldly, yet compassionately, to preach faithfully the gospel of grace. Whether it be a man such as R. G. Lee with his superb oratorical ability or one like D.L. Moody with his consistent misuse of the "King's English," God uses men as instruments for the very same purpose: to "preach the Word of God." Just as God called these men in days past, He continues to call out men to extend the gospel through this ordained method.

Some men look at the future of preaching with a skeptical eye, and many have already signed the death certificate regarding the future of preaching. Despite these, God has decreed that as long as the church dispensation lasts, preaching will survive. This is true because it fits within God's design.

The design or the purpose of the preacher's call is to perpetuate the gospel of grace. To compliment this, let us now focus our attention on the **description** of the preacher's call.

The God-called preacher can enter the pulpit with the calm assurance that he has a heavenly call—a call from on high. Even as God calls men to salvation, He also calls men to service. Moses is a tremendous example of this as God raised him up to lead the nation of Israel. Moses was useable because he recognized his own heavenly call. As Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, on the backside of the desert, a strange phenomenon took place. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, yet the bush was not consumed (Exodus 3:1-3). God said unto him, “Moses, Moses.”

Certainly this personal, powerful, heavenly call penetrated the silence of Moses’ heart like a cold steel dagger. Moses was overwhelmed by God’s Holy presence. At first he felt himself too insignificant to go before the Pharaoh (Exodus 3:11). Yet later, after God had assured him of His presence, Moses submitted to the call. The humble spirit that Moses now possessed was acquired only after God had ministered to him in the desert. The lesson that Moses learned from this experience caused him to recognize that his call was heavenly.

Moses’ call was also a high calling. The preacher who is ashamed of his calling or does not recognize it as a high calling is not fit for the office. He should certainly deem his call to be of the paramount importance. With a call of such magnitude, he should forge ahead with no ambition greater than the proclaiming of the Word.

J.H Jowett understood the essence and value of the call when he said:

Now I hold with profound conviction that

before a man selects the Christian ministry as his vocation, he must have the assurance that the selection has been imperatively constrained by the eternal God. The call of the eternal must ring through the rooms of his soul as clearly as the sound of the morning bell rings through the valley of Switzerland, calling the peasants to early prayer and praise. The candidate for the ministry must move like a man in secret bonds. "Necessity is laid" upon him. His choice is not a preference among alternatives. Ultimately he has no alternative; all other possibilities become dumb; there is only one clear call sounding forth as the imperative summons of the eternal God. ²

Another way of describing the call of the preacher is by addressing it as a holy call. The absolute holiness of God assures this aspect of the call to be true. Holy dignity should envelop the preacher in every aspect of his life. The preacher should radiate the joy of a holy life even in his quiet dignity. He should wisely balance his life to communicate to the world that he has a holy call, yet without communicating an attitude that has been coined as "holier-than-thou!"

Just as the call of God has a design and can be described, it also has a **duty**. No true call is without duty. When Uncle Sam sends out the call, "I want you," he has a duty in mind. There is a job to be performed. Likewise, when the Lord commissions the preacher, He has in mind a duty for him to perform. Paul reminded Timothy of his grave duty when he said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II

Timothy 4:2).

The duty calls for evangelistic preaching, that men might be saved from the clutches of sin. A preacher who does not covet the salvation of precious souls is negligent in his ministry. The highest imperative of life for the man of God is to preach the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ that men might be gloriously converted. While performing his duty of spreading the gospel, the minister should also preach practical truths designed to lead his congregation into the blessed path of service.

The preacher who inspires his congregation to serve is the preacher who recognizes the art of serving. Of all the attributes registered to Moses' credit, the most outstanding is that he was called a "servant of the Lord." Moses could have been known primarily as a great military genius, a great organizer, a great lawgiver. Yet, he was especially honored in being called a servant of God. It was his "leadership through servitude" that made him successful in training Joshua as his successor. Training workers plays a vital role in the preaching ministry. Only thus can the preacher multiply his efforts and exponentially increase the harvest. D.L. Moody said, "It is better to get ten men to work than to do the work of ten men." Certainly that is true in any effort—especially the Lord's work.

As the preacher exhorts men to enlist as servants (workers), he should also exhort men to sanctified living: being set apart. The degree to which a congregation is set apart to holy living is in proportion to the example set by the preacher before the people. For this reason the Pastoral Epistles give emphatic attention to the character and the faithfulness of the minister. The preacher must earnestly strive to actively

practice the message that he preaches on Sunday. May we never take the call to preach lightly!

The preacher who has been called should realize that his call is a **definite** and personal one. Charles U. Wagner, in his book *THE PASTOR: HIS LIFE AND WORK*, quotes Theodore Cuyler:

When God calls a man to the ministry, He is apt to let the man know it. I believe in answers to honest prayer, and I believe in the leading of Holy Spirit; and if you believe in them also, and will keep your eyes open and heart humble and docile, you will be likely to get some clear indications as to your duty. During the first eighteen months after I graduated from college—months mostly spent in teaching—I was balancing between the law and the ministry. Many of my relatives urged me to become a lawyer, as my father and grandfather had been; but my godly mother had dedicated me to the ministry from infancy, and her counsels all leaned toward the pulpit. One winter afternoon I rode off five miles to a prayer meeting in a neighboring village. It was held in the parlor of a private house. I arose and spoke for ten minutes; and, when the meeting was over a person said to me, “Your talk did me good.” If ten minutes talk today helped one soul, why not preach all the time? That one thought decided me on the spot. Our lives turn on small pivots; and if you will let God lead you, the path will open before your footsteps. ³

If God calls a man to the ministry, he will certainly know it! There will be a personal witness in his heart

confirming the reality of the call. In my own ministry, the call was so real that even though I have sometimes doubted my salvation, I have never doubted my call. The Lord, by giving personal assurance of the call, has provided a powerful awareness of His presence.

When the Lord calls an individual to preach, He equips that person with those things needful for the task before him. As I look in retrospect at my own call, it is apparent that the Lord was preparing me even as a small child. My father, who was a carpenter, built me a “preaching stand.” As a six-year-old boy I would preach my sermon after my brother would lead the singing. Today, as pastor, I still preach after my brother leads the singing. Praise be unto God!

I recently saw my first-grade teacher. Over thirty years ago she asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. My answer was, “I want to be a preacher.” As we began to renew acquaintances, she chanced to ask about my present occupation. With great joy I was able to answer, “I am a preacher.” Though I had forgotten my remarks as a little first-grader, she remembered and reminded me of them. The little “preaching stand” and the scores of times when I stood behind it playing church had helped to prepare me for the call. Even the courses that I took in school and the experiences of growing up played a vital role in preparing me for the call.

THE PREACHER’S CHARACTER

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary

part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Titus 2:7-8

Exxon Enterprises made a great contribution to metallurgical science when it was able to combine silicon carbide “whiskers” with aluminum in a metal matrix. With this process the scientists and engineers drastically changed the characteristics of aluminum. The aluminum began to take on steel-like qualities; **yet**, it retained its lightness of weight. Just as the silicon carbide has a pronounced effect upon aluminum, so does a preacher’s character have a profound effect upon his ministry.

The character of the preacher will influence every aspect of his ministry. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. has said, “I’d rather a man have bad character than no character at all.” The preacher’s character will effect the way he walks, talks, eats, sleeps, pays his bills, feeds his dog, cuts his grass, and keeps his appointments.

The preacher’s character will effect his **aptitude**. Perhaps aptitude is thought of as being that fixed quality that describes one’s natural tendency, talent, or ability. Yet, as proper training can enhance a person’s skills in athletic contests, so Godly character can have its effect on one’s aptitude. Consider, for example, the preacher’s aptitude for receiving truth. It is absolutely imperative that the preacher be constantly expanding both his general and Biblical knowledge. His ministry requires it! His congregation demands it! His character insures it!

A preacher who is lazy, for example, will become negligent in his study and his mind will atrophy. He will rehearse the same ideas, stories, illustrations, and messages that he preached fresh a decade earlier. The staleness of his preaching will stagnate his ministry.

Oh, what a pitiful plight! Yet, many preachers have already fallen victim to this awful condition. Their ministry no longer has challenge or purpose. The preacher in this condition, dreads the time he enters the pulpit. He is simply marking time. His lack of character will not let him honestly face the facts—for all purposes his ministry is over. A change of pulpits might camouflage the real condition for a short period, but in time the truth will again become evident.

Real study is work! The preacher tells us in Ecclesiastes that “much study is weariness of the flesh” (Eccl. 12:12). Very few endeavors drain the mind and body as does study. The preacher who is void of character will lack the industry to consistently spend hours digging in the Book, searching for its many hidden treasures. Ecclesiastes goes on to say,

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest (Eccl. 9:10).

Many preachers simply do not prepare themselves because of the laborious nature of study.

In preparing for the pulpit, the pulpiteer may be blessed with a formal education which can serve as a foundation upon which to build his continual study. With this advantage he has courses in systematic theology, word studies, language studies, hermenutics, homiletics, etc. The courses that I have found to be extremely beneficial were courses in pastoral theology and hermenutics.

Though advantageous, it is not absolutely necessary for the preacher to have a formal education. The greatest necessity is that he have enough character to

be diligent. He should have a time for study just as he should have a time for his family. During this time he should take advantage of every available tool. There are many good tools available that the preacher may have in his library. With godly character, the preacher will use these tools to increase his aptitude for receiving truth.

As he increases his aptitude to receive truth, he will increase his aptitude to recognize truth. The preacher, as he ministers over his flock, should have the discernment to recognize truth so that he may be able to expose error. Certainly the greatest defense against error is the offensive weapon of truth (Psalm 119:30). Just as David, the man of God should not only choose truth, but pursue it as well. The man who chooses, pursues, and knows truth will be more equipped to reveal truth.

In order that truth might be revealed, it must first be received. To be received it must be recognized. God's Word, the King James Version of 1611, is the unquestionable truth. God's Word not only contains the truth; it is the truth! There is nothing superfluous in God's Word, nor is there anything left out. Paul, for this reason, told Timothy to "preach the Word" (II Tim. 4:2a). The charge was to preach the Word, not just preach about the Word. One of the greatest ways to reveal truth homiletically is through the use of expository sermons. In this way, truth can be contextually delivered with a most excellent effect, and the exhorter can be confident that he is preaching the Word.

I recall in my early ministry how I would attempt to find a brief portion of Scripture to preach from—the shorter, the better (I thought). I was under the

impression that preaching was the application of the smallest portion of Scripture possible; anything else was teaching. The following example illustrates this style of preaching. I began by selecting part of a verse similar to this one, "Satan doth desire to have you. . ." Having chosen a text my title would read, "What does Satan want?" The message would commence like this: "For my first point of consideration, Satan wants preachers that won't preach!" After dwelling on this point for a time, I went on to subsequent points: "Satan wants teachers that won't teach;" then, finally, "Satan wants deacons that won't 'deak'." This was the extent of my sermon. It was later that God came to my rescue by leading Dr. Harold Sightler to say in my presence, "Never give the application without first giving the intepretation." In essence he was saying, make sure that you reveal the truth before you apply it.

Satan consistently mounts his offensive against the truth by attacking God's Word. The introduction of so many "different translations" has caused further confusion and chaos in the realm of Christianity. This is, indeed, serious. Equally serious, but perhaps less blatant, is the inability of the minister to reveal truth because he lacks the character and discipline to search for Scriptural answers. God grant that we as preachers may have the character to honestly discern and to fervently proclaim the truth.

Just as character affects the preacher's aptitude, it also affects his **actions**. The actions of the man of God should be consistent with the Scriptures. For the pulpiteer to boldly cry, "Don't do what I do; do what I say," is a tragedy which takes place all too often across our land. The pattern for the preacher's living is the Word of God. The Pastoral Epistles ought to be a

regular, steady diet in ministerial character training.

One of the most regretful tragedies imaginable in Christendom is for a man to pretend to be an exhorter of truth and a proponent of righteousness but fail to practice these virtues in his own personal life. The study of God's Word for reproof, for doctrine, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness is as necessary for the minister to pattern his life as it is for his people to eat. He needs to develop a strategy for maturity from the Bible in a systematic manner. If he aims to "know" the way, he is more apt to strike the target of "doing" the way.

He might prayerfully analyze his own life as a minister, looking for flaws and ways in which he might improve, in a Scripturally disciplined manner. It would do each preacher of the gospel well to follow the admonition of James 1:22-25:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

God's Word, like the mirror, reveals the person standing before it. The diligent minister must position himself directly before the power of God's Word.

Recently, my young son appeared after taking a bath, bearing no real evidence that he had thoroughly

washed. Chocolate icing still covered most of his face. I instructed the child to look in the mirror and then go and bathe again (or rather the first time) since he was not clean. Many times the “icing of sin” will be revealed after looking into the Word. Upon recognizing sin, it should be subjected to a thorough washing.

The secular humanism taught today will influence even the preacher, causing him to act contrary to sound Biblical teaching. Society is constantly being bombarded on every hand with these erroneous and dangerous values. Thus, the preacher is also susceptible to humanistic teaching and its diabolical programming effect. To counteract this effect, one must apply self-discipline and gaze in to the “perfect law of liberty.” There is certainly a degree of character required to discipline one’s life so that his actions will be in agreement with the Scriptures.

His actions should complement his preaching, not contradict it. The preacher’s dignity ought to be in harmony with that of the Scriptures. His honesty should be in harmony with the truth of the Scriptures; his virtue ought to be in harmony with the purity of the Scriptures.

In considering the importance and role of Godly character in the life and ministry of the preacher, it is necessary to consider how his character also affects his **attitudes**. The man of God must first have the proper attitude about his call. The minister must always regard his personal call to the gospel ministry as a call which carries great responsibilities. The magnitude of these responsibilities requires that the pastor be available at all times. He should be totally willing to avail himself as a servant of the most high God, ministering to the people. This “availability of service”

will come quite naturally when a man has the right attitude about his call. When the minister has the proper attitude about his call, he will have the proper attitude toward his congregation. An important question arises, "How should the minister regard his congregation?" Many church battles have ensued because the pastor had an improper attitude toward his people. To illustrate this point, I remember a pastor who very boldly declared, "Me, a dictator? Why, I am not the dictator, I am only the 'tator'!" It was not long before he got his "tator" baked!

I Peter 5:1-4 scripturally reveals the attitude and relationship the pastor should have with his congregation:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The greatest role that a pastor will perform before his people is that of being a good example. The man of God will accomplish more by showing them than he can just by telling them. It is easy for the preacher to develop a system of standards and convictions for himself and demand the same from his people without patiently leading them to change. The predominate attitude that should permeate the minister in his pastoral and preaching ministry is an attitude of love.

If he has the character of love for his congregation, his ministry will prosper. "Love hides a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Having a proper attitude toward the community is of utmost importance. The preacher should be respected by the community so that he might be able to minister to it. He must portray the dignity of his office in his manner of dress, in his daily walk, in his manner of speech and in his daily contacts. He must practice proper ethics in all his dealings. By this means he can attain the respect of both the banker and the bum, the ditch-digger and the doctor. His rightful attitude toward the community is that of an ambassador who proudly represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

The preacher should cultivate a friendship with the city fathers, even though he may not support or agree with everything they do. For if he gains their respect, he might also gain their audience.

The preacher's character affects his very being, either projecting his ministry into the realm of success through Godly character or plummeting his work into the pits of failure through the lack of it. May we, as preachers, develop Godly character.

THE PREACHER'S CONVICTIONS

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Titus 1:7-9

BIBLE CONVICTIONS FOR THE PREACHER ARE A MUST

The exhorter of truth is endowed with a great responsibility and a great privilege as he preaches. For him to continue to enjoy this privilege and fulfill this great responsibility, he must possess clear, Biblical convictions. He must be Scripturally convinced of a truth himself, if he hopes to convince others. The development of convictions is directly proportional to the manner in which one develops and applies an adequate general knowledge of the Scriptures.

The Lord “gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” (Eph. 4:11-13).

The Lord gave the church the pastor/teacher for the purpose of developing the characteristics mentioned in Ephesians 4. God uses human vessels to perform the ministry of edification of his saints to develop their maturity, and to do the general work of the ministry. The extent to which the preacher will lead his people is dependent upon his own convictions.

Just as a person is convicted of his sinful state (I Cor. 14:24), the minister must also be convinced or convicted to do good rather than evil. The preacher, with honest, Bible-based convictions, will be much more likely to travel the straight-and-narrow path and remain on it throughout his ministry. He will be kept straight in his doctrines; he will also be kept straight in

his duty.

The active practice of convictions demands courage. It has been said, “A man will fight for his preferences and die for his convictions.” God gives us courage to practice our convictions! To gain the needed strength and the courage, we must be confident in the promises of God’s Word. Many preachers have voiced publicly what they have called their convictions only to discard them later when faced with the many pressures of the ministry. I must not be haughty when I write this, for I know that the pressures to conform are very real. Conformity, the casting aside of convictions, seldom happens in a moment but usually happens slowly over a long period of time. The subtle forces of Satan continuously hammer, driving its nail into the heart of one’s convictions. It is imperative that we seize the strength needed to practice our convictions even though the enemy continues to hammer away.

Not only will Biblical convictions help keep the minister straight, but they will help him to stay strong in the ministry. Joshua was convinced of the truthfulness of God’s Word and with great conviction he continued to lead the nation of Israel. The promises found in Joshua 1:7-8 doubtless bolstered his courage along the way:

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shalt meditate therein day and, night, that thou mayest observe to do according to

all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

As one might observe, the preacher's relationship to the Word of God effects almost every phase of his existence. Certainly, this is true relative to his convictions. The men who are used strongly or powerfully in the Lord's work are those who have Bible convictions.

I have often told the young people in our church and in our Christian school, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." I tell them to be a "live" fish swimming against the current of conformity, modernism, liberalism, and worldliness rather than a dead, stinking, bloating, floating fish drifting without purpose or plan! Be alive in your convictions as a man of God!

If one is kept strong in the ministry as he maintains his convictions, he will be settled or established. I Corinthians 15:58 reminds us to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." To do this, one must be settled in the Word. A wishy-washy, unsettled person most likely will be very weak in his convictions. Men whom I have admired the most are those who just keep on plowing, regardless of the circumstances. The predominant reason for such persistence is strong, Biblical convictions.

BIBLE CONVICTIONS FOR THE PREACHER ARE A MEASURE

Not only are Bible convictions a must for the preacher, but they are also a measure. Show me a preacher that has convictions, and I will show you a

preacher that has convictions. It is that simple. His convictions will be visibly apparent in all that he does. It will show forth his position doctrinally, theologically, ecclesiastically, and personally. Only this week I was reading in our local paper that some of the area church youth directors were planning to take their young people to a “Christian rock concert.” I have strong convictions about what constitutes Christian music. If it is a “rock concert” it is NOT Christian; and, if it is not “rock,” it still MAY NOT be Christian. By their action and by my stated position, one is able to measure to some degree each of our convictions.

Convictions serve as a measure of how far one will pursue truth and of how much one will protect truth. If someone is genuinely convinced that something is right, he will actively strive for it and seek to protect it. The degree to which he will do either is proportional to his convictions. My mother often said about me, when I was a little boy, “When Max sets his head to do it, he is going to do it or ‘bust’.” All too often she was referring to the things that I should not have done. One may have some good convictions and some bad convictions, but the most important thing is to have Bible convictions that which you are determined to hold to or “bust.”

BIBLE CONVICTIONS FOR THE PREACHER ARE A MISSING INGREDIENT

A common syndrome of this generation is for preachers who are void of real, Biblical convictions themselves, to pattern their convictions after someone else. Pitifully, this person is only an imitator simply moving with his peers. True personal convictions are

missing, and his ministry will eventually expose him. Such instability in a minister will cause him to be a reluctant leader and a careless follower.

Conviction communicates a genuine message to those under the authority of the pastor. People will quickly recognize that a man is void of convictions, even though the language of his sermon says otherwise. No one can continue to fool people for a long period of time. The truth will eventually find its way to the surface. "You may fool some of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time."

A person who is void of convictions will further expose this condition by maintaining a weak position doctrinally as well as a weak position in relation to Biblical separation.

May we preachers never be weak in our convictions, but rather "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

THE PREACHER'S COURAGE

Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say on the Lo rd. Psalms 27:14

Courage comes when one is obedient to the Word.

The aging, white haired, stooped preacher struggled to find the strength necessary to transport himself from the aisle to the pulpit area. He very feebly mustered the needed strength to open his mouth and say, "Thus saith the Lord." When he began to speak, he spoke with the power and authority of a prize fighter punching his way to victory. The courage with which he spoke was visibly apparent to the several thousand

that sat before him. I was there, too, as Dr. R.G. Lee preached! This old warrior, over ninety years of age, had a bandage on his head where he had been mugged and beaten the night before. Yet, courageously he pushed that horrible night aside and preached with great power.

God has called men over and over again, filling them with the power of the Spirit and then loosening them to shake a city or even a country for the cause of Christ. He uses men that are physically weak to serve his purpose. Old men, young men, educated men, and uneducated men have all been used to preach the Word with courage.

The source of that courage is the Word of God. Throughout this study our minds should consciously reflect on the Word of God. God's Word influences one's call, one's character, one's convictions, and one's courage. Perhaps this entire study could be condensed into this single great command: "Take heed to the Word of God." As James states, "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only."

Having a strong faith in God's Word has firmed me to stand tall in the midst of many crises. If it were not for the perfect standard which is completely sure, I would have lacked the confidence to stand courageously and contend for the faith. Men not only have stood courageously in the pulpits but also have stood in the work place, the courtroom, the playground, and many other places when called upon to defend truth.

The preacher should have confidence in the Word not only because it is true, but also because it is tried. The Word has stood the test of time. Voltaire, the noted eighteenth century French philosopher, thought

that he could destroy Christianity with the stroke of his pen. He said, "I'll show how just one Frenchman can destroy it within fifty years." Only twenty years after Voltaire died his house was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society for the purpose of printing the Bible. His writings (a six-volume set) has sold for as little as ninety cents, while the Bible still remains a bestseller.

COURAGE COMES WHEN ONE IS OBEDIENT IN HIS WORSHIP

The Scriptures give many examples of people who, after worshiping, went on with great courage to serve the Lord. The book of Nehemiah shows how a people were revived in their service to the Lord through proper worship. It was only after learning the Word right that they worshipped right (Neh. 8:6). God is pleased when his people are right in their worship. Certainly the preacher ought to set the proper example as he worships the Lord. Hebrews 13:15-16 says:

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

By offering praises in Holy worship, one may please God well. To praise the mighty Christ is certainly well pleasing to Almighty God. As a little boy I was always confident in my father's presence when everything was well and he was well pleased with me. But when it was otherwise, the story was quite different. Likewise, the Lord is pleased when His own worship right. Thus, if the preacher worships right and the Lord is well pleased, then the preacher should have great courage.

The preacher needs personal devotion and time with God for purposes other than sermon preparation. For, if the preacher cannot worship as he ought to in private, how can he do so in the pulpit? Many precious jewels have been extracted from the soil of private devotion and worship. The Lord so wonderfully rewards the true worshipper. It is through right worship that we are able to have the right walk.

COURAGE COMES WHEN ONE IS OBEDIENT IN HIS WALK

As noted before, courage comes when one is obedient to the Word and obedient in his worship. But it is equally true that courage comes when one is obedient in his walk. For a correct pattern for walking, go to the Proverbs. Proverbs reveals the way of the wise and the way of the wicked (Prov. 4:11-19). The way of the Lord is peace and strength. It is imperative that the man of God walks right. The Old Testament priest had as many as one hundred and forty-seven external requirements placed upon him as he ministered his Holy office. These requirements were for practical reasons as well as spiritual ones. The priest had to be sanctified or set apart to fulfill the Holy requirements that God had placed upon service and worship. Typically, that priest foreshadowed our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. The priest was also forerunner of the preacher with regard to the great spiritual requirements placed upon God's servant. The pastoral epistles layout the Holy requirements of the pastor in detail. I have seen great men lose their ministry because of women, money, pride, laziness, or lack of character.

For a man to be courageously effective, he must be walking in the way of the Lord and in the will of the Lord. As Joshua of old, we must have courage as preachers to preach what we live and live what we preach!

THE PREACHER'S COMPASSION

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.
Acts 20:28-31

THE COMPASSIONATE PREACHER IS A SENSITIVE PREACHER

The preacher who pastors cannot bury his head in the sand and continue to perform his duty. He must be sensitive. In the chemistry lab one will find paper that has been chemically treated for the purpose of detecting whether a substance is either basic or acidic. This sensitive paper is called litmus paper. Likewise, the man of God is to be sensitive and discerning toward the flock.

The man of God who is privileged to pastor a group of people should be sensitive enough to his people and their needs that he anticipates their needs. Many times

the pastor will be able to comprehend and address certain physical problems by addressing spiritual problems first. The preacher who is sensitive will likely prove himself to be compassionate.

The people in our area of the country suffered from the worst drought in over a century, with intense heat plaguing those who worked in the factories and those who worked in the fields. Anyone constantly exposed to the outside felt its burden. Day after day the heat wave continued, causing the “temperatures” of the people to flare just as the air around them. As my concern grew, I began preaching messages in an effort to minister Scripturally to the people during this time. Finally, after much preaching, I told the people that I had the answer to their heat problem. I suppose their first thought was, “Here comes another sermon.” But instead I explained to them that God permitted this heat for the purpose of alerting us to spiritual needs in our lives and that I had already addressed those needs through preaching. I suggested that tonight after the evening services that we would deal with the heat on a practical basis. I designated some of our young men to start squeezing lemons so that we could make lemonade. The lemonade social, preceded by much preaching, broke the tension and returned things to normal. The Lord gave me a sensitivity to the needs of the people even during the hot spell that we were having. We as preachers need to compassionately anticipate the needs of the people. If we anticipate their needs, we will be more alert in meeting their needs.

THE COMPASSIONATE PREACHER IS A SYMPATHETIC PREACHER

When the real man of God who has been entrusted with a congregation of people sees his people suffering, he, too, will suffer. Often the pastor is called upon in the stillness of the night to help calm a raging storm in someone's life. An example of the way that storms play a major role in each of our lives can be found in Mark 4:35-5:1. Perhaps a brief exposition would be helpful concerning this thought as we consider "The Storms of Life."

THE STORMS OF LIFE

Mark 4:35-5:1

INTRODUCTION:

Volumes can be said about these two separated yet closely connected verses (Mark 4:35 and 5:1).

*And the same day, when the even was come,
he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the
other side.*

Note please: "Let us pass over unto the other side." Then the next verse mentioned says, "And they came over unto the other side of the sea. . . ." As readers of the Sacred Word we have the luxury of connecting these two separated verses together. The connecting link is a storm-tossed sea with all of its force and its fury lashing out against a fearful, faithless group of disciples who are in a boat with Jesus.

While Jesus slept, a great storm suddenly appeared, causing great real to seize the hearts of the seasoned sailors, thus demonstrating that storms may come quickly. Storms may also come at any time, and may repeat again and again. Storms even come to great sailors. A truly great storm can make a great sailor feel

rather small.

As the water swept into the ship, the sailors cried, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” In response, Christ arose and rebuked the wind, saying “Peace, be still.” Immediately, what was previously a great storm now became a great calm.

May we observe three great truths concerning the storms of life:

I. THERE WAS A REASON FOR CALMNESS IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM

Perhaps the most significant reason for them to have been calm was because of the Word of God. Christ told the sailors, “Let us pass over unto the other side.” He did not say, “Let us get to the middle of the lake and sink.” Praise God! Even if you are currently in the midst of a storm, you can be assured that you will, by the grace of God, reach the other side. Sometimes it seems that the storms are here to stay. William Dean Howell was heard asking Mark Twain as the two walked out of church into a flooding downpour, “Do you think it will stop?” Twain dryly responded, “It always has.” Whatever storm you might be facing, latch on to the sure anchor of God’s Word, and together ride the storm out.

II. THERE WAS A REBUKE FOR COWARDICE IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM

In verse 40, Christ asked, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” Note the part of the verse that says, “so fearful” and the part that says “no faith.” So fearful? . . . No faith!

The ingredient that was lacking in the disciples and that caused them to be so fearful was their having no

faith. Hebrews eleven illustrates how men of old were able to triumph midst the storms of life with that great ingredient called faith. They were able to face depression, doubts, discouragements, and disasters of all kinds.

Regardless of the storm, just knowing that the Lord is in the midst of the storm offers great encouragement. Recently, I was called during the night to go to the hospital to comfort a family who had just lost their only son in a wreck. I hardly knew what to say at a time like that. One never feels prepared, yet the Lord impressed upon my heart to say, "If you have the Lord Jesus Christ and lose everything, you still have everything! But, if you have everything and do not have Christ, you have nothing." His presence makes the difference during the storm.

If you are going through a storm or have just come out of a storm, there is a lesson to learn from the storm.

III. THERE WAS A REALIZATION FOR CORRECTION AFTER THE STORM

It is imperative that one heeds the message that comes forth from the storm. If you are going through a storm, be assured that the Lord has permitted it. The disciples were to learn a great lesson; they were to have their faith increased as a result of the storm.

Storms may come into a person's life to show him his need for a sure foundation. In Matthew the foolish man is told of building his house upon the sand. As the winds came and the storms came, they blew against the house, causing it to fall. Great was the fall! The wise man is told of building his house upon the rock. Again, the same thing happened that happened to the

house built upon the sand; yet the house stood! Make sure that your spiritual house is built upon the Rock, called Jesus, that you may stand at the day of judgment.

Storms may also come to strengthen a person for service. Abraham Lincoln suffered the storms of depression. He once said, "I am now the most miserable man living, whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell, I awfully forebode I shall not." He was wrong. He became one of the greatest presidents this nation has ever known. May we learn the lesson from the storms of life, realizing that in each and every storm there is the Great Presence of God! Above all else may we learn that the same One Who can calm the angry waters by saying "Peace be still," can also calm the poor lost sinner who is tossed by the angry waves of sin.

As Jesus was on the cross, the storms of Hell lashed out viciously against Him; yet He endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. Today, that same (and only) Lord and Saviour can save you if you will only believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not enjoy salvation, will you be saved today?

THE COMPASSIONATE PREACHER IS A SOOTHING PREACHER

In this message, just as the Lord Jesus Christ was a source of strength, the pastor also needs to be a source of strength. He needs not only to sympathize with his people, but also to soothe his people. The pastor is perpetually being called upon to impart spiritual understanding and consolation during the times of heartache and sorrow. The compassionate preacher is a

sensitive, sympathetic, and soothing preacher. As we labour, may we be preachers with compassion.

Part III

Preparing The Material

Part III

PREPARING THE MATERIAL

HERMENEUTIC TOOLS FOR PREACHING

There are numerous tools or literary devices that are available for the purpose of adding rich flavor to the preacher's message. When the preacher adds a nugget of information to his sermon, he is doing similarly what the gourmet chef does when he adds spice to the cake that he is baking. Though flavor enhances the sermon, it never takes the place of Holy Ghost-anointed preaching. But why not have the flavor as well as the anointing in one's preaching? The purpose of this section is to give some examples of how literary tools can be used to add flavor in the preparation and the delivery of the message. An example of such a tool is in the use of colors.

1. COLORS IN THE BIBLE

We live in a world of color. I am glad that it is so. The variety that color gives us is incomprehensible. Can you imagine everything being a dull gray? If that were so, I would have to wake up in the morning pushing aside the gray sheets that covered my gray bed that sat on the gray floor that was fenced in with gray walls that led to a gray bathroom that contained my gray toothbrush to brush my gray teeth with the gray toothpaste. Get the point? Thank God for colors. With colors, one is able to differentiate between, as well as appreciate, the elements of this life.

Colors communicate messages to the observer's eye.

In the steel mills, as the metal melts, it changes colors; the color signifies a change in temperature. The leaves change colors, showing that winter is on the way. The hair changes color, showing that one is aging. Everything in the world has color. We recognize the sky as blue, the grass as green, and the sun as yellow. Color is beautiful. The Lord used color to make our world more beautiful. We also associate certain things with colors. The color red reminds us of blood, while the color white reminds us of purity. The bride adorns herself in white, which symbolizes her own virtue and purity.

The Scriptures contain many references to colors. These colors often have meaning. For example, blue is the color associated with heaven; purple is the color associated with royalty, and black the color associated with sin. Observe closely some of the colors found in the Scriptures.

RED

The color red appears in the Scriptures twenty-five times.

Genesis 25:25,30; 49:12

Exodus 25:5; 26:14; 35:7,23; 36:19; 39:34

Numbers 19:2

II Kings 3:22

Esther 1:6

Psalms 75:8

Proverbs 23:31

Isaiah 1:18; 27:2; 63:2

Nahum 2:3

Zechariah 1:8; 6:2

Matthew 16:2,3

Revelation 6:4; 12:3

Homiletically the preacher may notice from the context how the color red is used in each reference, and then he may structure his message in such a way that the color will serve as a mnemonic device. Hopefully, when the listener sees red, he will be reminded of the way the color was used in the sermon that he heard.

An example of the use of the color red is as follows:

And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” (Revelation 6:4)

The preacher will observe that not only this horse but three other horses and their colors are given in the text from which this verse was taken. In putting together the sermon, the sermonizer would want to give a proper interpretation and utilize the color to cause the person hearing the sermon to remember that proper interpretation. In this verse “red” is associated with death by the sword. By implication the deaths resulted in much blood being shed. The message is quite clear! Those who go through the great tribulation will be potential victims of the sword. John, when he saw the red horse, must have associated this bloody beast with much blood shed.

BLACK

The color black seems to signify sin and judgment.

The Arab tents that can be seen in the deserts and wildernesses of Palestine are black and made of goat's hair according to Atchinak of Palestine. In Revelation 6:5 the third horse of the Apocalypse is mentioned as a black horse. Black is used 18 times in the Scriptures as follows:

Leviticus 13:31,37

I Kings 18:45

Esther 1:6

Job 30:30

Proverbs 7:9

Song of Solomon 1:5,6; 5:11

Jeremiah 4:28; 8:21; 14:2

Lamentations 5:10

Zechariah 6:2,6

Matthew 5:36

Revelation 6:5,12

In Jeremiah 4:28 the heavens were to become black because Jeremiah prophesied great judgment upon Jerusalem.

For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have. proposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

In preparing a sermon dealing with judgment, the preacher may give an exposition of the text along with the above verse. He then can make his application and entitle his message, "The Black Clouds of Judgment." If he addresses the subject properly, the minister has left an impression concerning judgment upon the listener's

heart that can be brought back to remembrance upon seeing a dark cloud. The minister should be constantly thinking of ways to make his sermons live long after they have been preached.

WHITE

The color white is more commonly found in the Scriptures; it appears 75 times. White is in contrast to black. White is figuratively used to denote purity or holiness. It was the color that the priests were clothed in as servants of the Holy One and as examples of holiness. Whereas black is associated with judgment, mourning, death, and sorrow—white is associated with festivity (Eccles. 9:8) and triumph (Zech 6:3; Rev. 6:2).

Below are the references where the word “white” appears in the scriptures:

Genesis 30:35,37; 40:16; 49:12

Exodus 16:31

Leviticus 13:3,4,10,13,16,17,19,20,21,24,
35, 36,38,39,42,43

Numbers 12:10

Judges 5:10

II Kings 5:27

II Chron. 5:12

Esther 1:6; 8:15

Job 6:6

Psalms 68:14

Eccles. 9:8

Song of Solomon 5:10

Isaiah 1:18

Ezekiel 27:18
Daniel 7:9; 11:35; 12:10
Joel 1:7
Zech. 1:8; 6:3,6
Matthew 5:36; 17:2; 28:3
Mark 9:3, 16:5
Luke 9:29
John 4:35; 20:12
Acts 1: 10
Revelation 1:14; 2:17; 3:4,5, 18; 4:4; 6:2,
11; 7:9,13,14; 15:6; 19:8,11,14;
20:11

BLUE

Blue is certainly a beautiful color; it is a color that suggests tranquility. Blue has been called the heavenly color or the color that symbolizes heaven. In the Hebrew culture it was the color that symbolized the revealed God (Ex. 24:10; Ezekiel 1:26). Delitzsch says:

Blue denotes the softened divine majesty
condescending to man in grace. (Delitzsch,
Iris, pg. 48).

The color blue appears in the Scriptures 50 times.
The color appears as listed:

Exodus 25:4; 26:1,4,31,36; 27:16; 28:5,6,8,
15,28,31,33,37; 35:6,23,25,35;
36:8,11,35,37; 38:18,23;
39:1,2,3,5,8,21,22,24,29,31
Numbers 4:6,7,9,11,12; 15:38
II Chron. 2:7,14; 3:14
Esther 1:6; 7:6; 8:15

Jeremiah 10:9

Ezekiel 23:6; 27:7,24

In Exodus 27:16 blue is used in the gate curtains of the tabernacle's court. Perhaps the blue curtains were to remind all that entered that their responsibilities to the Lord originated in heaven.

Of Esther 1:6, Dr. Walter Lewis Wilson in his book, *Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types*, says on page 65:

Esther 1:6 (c) The wicked king seeking to justify his sins had the blue woven in the curtains so as to connect his evil orgies with something of heaven and heaven's business. Most wicked practices have in some way a religious tinge to their ceremonies. The most wicked institution in the world, the apostate church, has a great religious program in order that they may cover up their evil doings by it.

Searching out the use of the color "blue" as used in the Scriptures is certainly worth the effort.

An example of how "blue" may be used homiletically in one's sermonizing is given in this abbreviated outline:

"THE RIBBON OF BLUE"

Numbers 15:31-41

Introduction:

Today, if we want to remember something, we are told to tie a string around our finger to remind us of it. God told the children of Israel, after a man had been stoned for disobeying God's command, to put upon the fringe of their garments "a ribbon of blue." The color blue

was to remind the people that they were to obey the message from heaven instead of being self willed.

- I. The Blue ribbon was to remind the people to Remember the Commandments. (vs. 40a)**
- II. The Blue ribbon was to remind the people to Do all the Commandments. (vs. 40b)**
- III. The Blue ribbon was to remind the people to Be Holy unto the Lord. (vs. 40c)**

Conclusion:

Today may we be reminded every time we see the color blue to realize that we receive our instruction from the heavenly Book—the Bible. May we remember His Word, may we do His Word, and may we be Holy unto the Lord.

GREEN

Green is a soothing color; it is a pastoral color, a color that is often associated with the shepherd and his sheep resting in green pastures. The color green appears 41 times:

Genesis 1:30; 9:3; 30:37

Exodus 10:15

Leviticus 2:14; 23:14

Deut. 12:2

Judges 16:7,8

I Kings 14:23

II Kings 16:4; 17:10; 19:26

II Chron. 28:4

Esther 1:6

Job 8:16; 15:32; 39:8

Psalm 23:2; 37:2,35; 52:8
Song of Solomon 1:16; 2:13
Isaiah 15:6; 37:27; 57:5
Jeremiah 2:20; 3:6,13; 11:16; 17:2,8
Ezekiel 6: 13; 17:24, 20:47
Hosea 14:8
Mark 6:39
Luke 23 :31
Revelation 8:7; 9:4

Once again colors can be used as a mnemonic tool. Homilectically green can be used to signify freshness, vigor, or prosperity. Again, notice the abbreviated outline which makes use of the color green

“THE 5000 SATISFIED”

Mark 6:34-44

Introduction:

When Jesus saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion. He likened them as unto sheep without a shepherd. Jesus taught them and fed them, and in doing so, He satisfied them. May we notice how He satisfied them.

I. Jesus Speaks to the 5,000. (vs. 39a)

For the multitude to receive the benefits that were available unto them, they had to be obedient to Jesus. Refreshment and satisfaction comes to the obedient.

II. Jesus Soothes the 5,000. (vs. 39b)

Notice that the multitude was commanded to sit upon the green grass. The color green

symbolizes the freshness or refreshment. For this large number of people to be refreshed, they were required to obediently sit upon the green grass. In Psalm 52:8, David says, "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever." David, here, is expressing a happy and joyful spirit, full of life and of vigor. It is as though a revival has come to his soul.

III. Jesus Satisfies the 5,000. (vs. 42)

Satisfaction came to the multitude as the Scriptures tell us they were filled.

Conclusion:

For one to find refreshment in the Lord, he must obey the Lord, sit in the presence of the Lord, and be filled of the Lord.

In the illustrations that have been given, the colors were used not as the main course of the meal but simply to add flavoring to the meal. There are other colors mentioned in the Scriptures, but these are the more common ones.

2. PLACES IN THE BIBLE

The names of places often carry significance when studying the Bible. Abraham built an altar in Bethel (house of God), and during a time of famine he went down into Egypt (type of the world). While in Egypt, Abraham built no altars. There was no fellowship with God; instead, he sinned against God by offering his wife, as his sister, to Pharaoh. After God chastened him, he came out of Egypt and went back to Bethel (house of God).

A tremendous application can be made from this Scripture (Genesis 12:1-13:4), showing what happens when man leaves the house of God. Note the following outline on Genesis 13, taken from this author's book, entitled *GENESIS—GENERAL STUDY OUTLINE SERIES*:

Comments about Chapter 13:

Many profound truths and lessons may be derived from a careful study of this portion of Scripture when contrasting Abram and his nephew Lot. Abram pictures in type the Spiritual man, while Lot pictures the carnal man.

Our previous study indicated Abram to be anything but a spiritual man. Yet God patiently and providentially ruled in his life, allowing him opportunity to be restored. Notice how Abram returns to the Altar, the place of worship. One's worship is an essential ingredient to being Spirit-filled.

I. NOTICE ONE'S RE-ENTERING THE WILL OF GOD. (vs. 1-4)

Abram had just suffered a serious bout with the flesh while in Egypt. Abram, after learning from his wrongful doings, began to re-enter the will of God by returning to Bethel. In Egypt there was no altar mentioned; apparently, there was no communion of fellowship while Abram was in Egypt. Bethel means "House of God."

A. There was a desire to forsake Egypt. (vs. 1-2)

The Lord would not allow Abram to feel at ease in Egypt's land (a type of the world). With the circumstances being as they were, Abram had a desire to leave Egypt.

1. The desire providentially came after a great

lesson. (vs. 1-2)

Even while Abram was in the university of adversity learning his hard lesson, the Lord was providentially watching over him.

2. The desire possibly came after a great longing. (vs. 1-2)

The most miserable person is not necessarily the sinner in the world, but the believer who is out of God's will in the world. The sinner is at home in the world, whereas the believer sings "this world is not my home; I'm just passing through. . ." Abram was miserable because he plainly was in the wrong place while he was in Egypt.

- B. There was a desire to fellowship with the Eternal. (vs. 3-4)

The world separates one from, and hinders one in his fellowship with the Lord. Abram indicated a desire to fellowship as he built an altar. There were no altars and no worshiping in Egypt.

1. Demonstrated by Abram's return to Bethel. (vs. 4a)
2. Demonstrated by Abram's regaining of his bearings. (vs. 4b)

II. NOTICE ONE'S REJECTING THE WILL OF GOD. (vs. 5-13)

It was not God's will for Lot to settle in the world; it never is God's will for anyone to settle in the world.

- A. It was apparent in the confusion over the land. (vs. 5-9)

1. There was a strife between their herdsman. (vs. 5-7)

Prosperity had affected the relationship of Abram's and Lot's herdsmen according to verse 6. Greed and jealousy could have contributed to their squabbling.

2. There was a solution before the herdsmen. (vs. 8-9)

Abram gave Lot a choice, but Lot did not give the choice to God. Anytime one moves independently of the Lord, he is moving out of the will of the Lord. The Lord wants us to be dependent, not independent.

- B. It was obvious by the choice of Lot. (vs. 10-13)

Wrong decisions characterize a person out of God's will.

1. Lot chose by sight. (vs. 10-11)

The flesh is not capable of making 20/20 choices. The flesh is not only dull of hearing, but dull of seeing as well.

2. Lot's choosing brought sorrows. (vs. 12-13)

It is apparent when one pitches his tent (and his affections) towards the world, that sorrows will follow.

III. NOTICE ONE'S REJOICING IN THE WILL OF GOD. (vs. 14-18)

- A. Abram found the place of communication. (vs. 14-17)

1. It came after complete obedience. (vs. 14)

One of the key ingredients to being in the will of God is obedience.

2. It came affording considerable opportunities. (vs. 15-17)

Opportunities abound when one obediently

finds himself in God's will.

B. Abram found the place of communion. (*vs. 18*)

Again Abram is seen to be worshipping, expressing gratitude and admiration to a generous and Holy God.

1. Fellowship with the Lord brings soul prosperity. (*vs. 18a*)
2. Fellowship with the Lord brings soul peace. (*vs. 18b*)

Concluding Remarks:

May we be confronted with a real challenge, as result of this study, to make our decisions according to God's will only!

This outline makes use of the symbolic meaning of places.

Another interesting sermon can be preached concerning the six cities of refuge by determining the meaning of the places mentioned in Numbers 35 and also in Joshua 20:1-6. Note how the six names picture the Lord Jesus Christ Who is a refuge to the sinners.

1. Kadesh—"sanctuary" or "righteousness"—Just as the person who was fleeing for refuge from his avengers came to this city, one who is guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ may also flee to Jesus Christ, Who is a sanctuary of righteousness.
2. Shechem—"shoulder"—The shoulder is the place that undergirds the heavy load. The ox pushed against the yoke with his massive shoulders. The high priest bore upon his shoulders the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on the day of atonement. The wandering sheep rests upon the shoulder of a loving shepherd.

The Lord Jesus Christ is a “shoulder” to bear your burdens, whatever they might be.

3. Hebron—“fellowship” or “alliance”—In Christ Jesus one can find fellowship that is not available anywhere else. What greater joy than to be in fellowship with the Lord.
4. Beza—“fortress”—There is no strength like the Lord’s; there is no protection like His protection. He is a defense against the stoutest of the enemy.
5. Ramoth—“high places” or “exaltation”—Philippians 2:5-11 reminds us that Christ made himself of no reputation that he might be made obedient unto the death of the cross. But, “God also hath highly exalted him” that we might be lifted up into His presence (Eph. 2, 3).
6. Golan—“joy”—There is no joy like His joy; He is our exceeding joy. The Bible tells us that “In His presence is fulness of joy.”

The places mentioned were situated on each side of the Jordan River (3 on each side) for the purpose of providing refuge to the person who was guilty of involuntary manslaughter. There were times when a man would accidentally take someone’s life and not have any witnesses to prove his innocence. He could flee to one of these cities and be protected against the blood avenger. With the Lord Jesus Christ being our refuge, we may flee to Him and escape the vicious prowl of the devil. Salvation is of the Lord!

Another example of how places may be used symbolically in one’s preaching is found in II Kings 2: 1-11. Five places are mentioned in this section, and one can notice that these places convey a truth

concerning the life of the believer. This portion of Scripture records Elijah's last day upon the earth and the places that Elijah would go to before being taken up into heaven by a whirlwind.

GILGAL—vs. 1

The first place was Gilgal. The actual meaning of Gilgal is "circle," for it was at Gilgal that the memorial stones were placed in a circle to remind the people of Israel and their children that the Lord had brought forth their deliverance. It was the Lord Who caused the Red Sea and the Jordan River to part so that they could walk upon dry ground. This deliverance at Gilgal pictures salvation.

With Elijah going first to Gilgal, it was as though he was leaving a message that says, "Everything really begins at the time of salvation."

BETHEL—vs. 2

Bethel, as we have already mentioned, means "house of God." Bethel to Abram was a place of altars and a place of worship. Perhaps Elijah is suggesting that, after one is converted or has salvation, he should begin worshiping the Lord. Bethel was the second place visited by Elijah.

JERICHO—vs. 4

Jericho was the third place that Elijah went. The actual meaning of Jericho is "place of fragrance." Yet, the historical significance of Jericho hints clearly of what the believer should be doing following worship. Remember that the taking of Jericho involved faith and obedience in order to have God's presence and power. The nation of Israel was required to march around the walls of Jericho for six days and on the seventh day

march seven times and blow the trumpets. As they obediently responded in faith, God's powerful presence was manifested in bringing the walls of Jericho down. If in service one expects great things to happen, he must exercise an obedient faith. Elijah must have been saying, "Salvation first, worship second, and service next."

JORDAN—vs. 6

The next place that Elijah went is Jordan (river of judgment). This river pictures judgment and death. The nation of Israel came to this river and was able to cross over on dry land. It was as though they had entered into what could have meant certain death; yet God brought them safely through, thus picturing the resurrection. Elijah could have been saying, "After salvation there is worship; after worship there is service, and after service man must die." For the believer there is a death; but, praise God, it doesn't end there. One day the body is going to be resurrected to eternal glory.

HEAVEN

The final place Elijah went on that last day was heaven. Heaven was the fifth place mentioned, and in Bible numerology the number five is the number associated with grace. It is God's grace that allows the believer not just to die, but to die and go to Heaven.

Elijah had just gone to Jordan, which speaks of death; but he did not stay there; instead, he went to heaven.

As one can see, the Word of God abounds with nuggets and treasures that may be unearthed by the diligent student. The places that have been named are only examples of the significance of places mentioned

in the Bible. To this list the student of the Word may add many, many more as he adds flavor to the messages that he preaches.

3. PLANTS IN THE BIBLE

Plants are mentioned many times in the Scriptures. An interesting study concerning plants is found in the Song of Solomon, chapter 4, verses 12-15. Nine plants are mentioned, and nine is the number associated with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. C.L. Roach in his book, *WHAT DO THEY MEAN?*, (pages 27-29) gives an interesting study of these nine plants. Note the following information on each of these plants:

1. *The Pomegranate* pictures the cross of Christ. Some believe the forbidden fruit that was eaten was the pomegranate. I do not know that it was, and neither does anyone else but God knows. It could have been this fruit. None of the other fruits in the garden pleased the owner more than this one. They were found in the worship of Israel. Her Priest wore garments with hems adorned with pomegranates. The temple pillars also had pomegranates on them. Attention is called to the picture of Calvary in the pomegranate. It bears the color green, picturing everlasting life in Christ; the color white, denoting the purity of Christ; and red, picturing the redemptive work of Christ. The pomegranate also has seeds that resemble the cross when sliced. No wonder this fruit is mentioned first in God's garden. What could be more pleasing to Him than the accomplishments of Calvary by His

Son?

2. *The Camphire* or Henna Flowers (Song of Solomon 4:13) pictures the resurrection of Christ and His saints. The camphire is a white flower that grows in clusters, having a very fragrant odor while in full bloom. Note that the pomegranate pictured the death of Christ, whereas the camphire pictures the resurrection of Christ.
3. *Spikenard* (Song of Solomon 4:13) denotes gratitude or thanksgiving. Spikenard was used in abundance in the preparation for His burial. A whole year's wages, over 300 pence, was the cost of this anointing. Our Lord did not rebuke Mary for this; but rather He said, "She had done all she could" (Mark 14:6-8). She truly had thanksgiving in her heart. Thanksgiving is always a sweet odor and very well pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. *Saffron* (Song of Solomon 4:14) a beautiful yellow flower that pictures the child of God manifesting the life of Christ in the world. The color yellow is symbolic of gold or deity. Our life is to manifest the Christ Who dwells within.
5. *Calamus* (Song of Solomon 4:14) is a sweet cane. Its ingredients were used in the Holy anointing oil (Exodus 30:23). Its fragrance will scent the air with a sweet smell while it is growing. This pictures our presence in the world.
6. *Cinnamon* (Song of Solomon 4:14) pictures the life of the Christian the world never sees, the inner or secret life. John Gill tells us this cinnamon is the middle most bark of the tree. When the rough, outer bark is removed, the inner layer gives a pleasing aroma. The world

may not see it, but there is innermost joy and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. *Frankincense* (Song of Solomon 4:14) pictures the trials or problems of the believer. If the Bible teaches anything that is neglected today, it is this subject. The believer must know what it is to “follow in His steps.” To get frankincense, a tree is cut; and from the wounded tree comes drops of frankincense. I believe we see the tears of wounded Christians throughout the ages. But rest assured, all such tears are kept (Psalm 56:8). Why are they kept? Read I Peter 1:6-7 and I Peter 4:12. The tears, brought by trials now, will be wiped away forever by the Son of God Himself (Revelation 21:1). “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).
8. *Myrrh* (Song of Solomon 4:14) Paul Labots offers much insight concerning this plant. The following is taken from his fine book *THE ROMANCE OF THE AGES*. Myrrh typifies humility. Jesus was given myrrh at His birth, when He humbled Himself to become a man. He was given myrrh at the cross, when He became our sin bearer, and finally at His burial. Myrrh comes from a shrub in the east. When the leaves are bruised, they form droplets which solidify and ripen, changing from a pale yellow to a deep red. They are small and of rare value. Myrrh is of no use until the beads are crushed. The Lord Jesus Christ was “wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).
9. *Aloes* (Song of Solomon 4:14) pictures death and

burial in the Scriptures. Nicodemus used aloes in the burial of Jesus. I think the teaching here is clear. After the believer is humbled by the probing and the fiery trials of this life, he learns to die to self. This is the hardest task in the life of any child of God.

4. NAMES IN THE BIBLE

Sometimes while studying the Word of God, one finds no apparent clue to the historical setting or the geographical location, nor to the physical and spiritual conditions that existed. In situations such as this, clues may yet or still be found by determining the meaning of the names that are given.

Names carry a meaning in the Scriptures. Daniel, for example, means “God is my Judge.” Joshua means, as does Jesus in the New Testament, “Jehovah is salvation.” A most interesting name is Lazarus, which means “God, a help.” Lazarus was the beggar which was laid at the gate, full of sores and in a hungry, pitiful condition; yet he was saved. When he died, he was taken by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The Bible says the rich man died, “and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off” (cf. Luke 16:19-31). Perhaps when Lazarus was born, his mother knew that the world would never have much to offer him. She wanted to instill in him a message of encouragement, a message of comfort. She did this by naming her son Lazarus. Every time he found himself in a state of despairing pity, someone would call his name and remind him that “God is a help.” When it came time for Lazarus to die, God proved Himself to be an eternal help as He commissioned the angels to take Lazarus to Paradise.

Truly, God was a help to Lazarus as implied by his name.

In the following, I will offer two homiletical outlines to illustrate how names can be further used in sermonizing. The first is a study of names as found in Genesis 4:16-25 from my book, *GENESIS—GENERAL STUDY OUTLINE SERIES*, mentioned earlier:

I. THE SORDID APOSTASY OF CAIN. (vs. 16-24)

A. Cain deliberately left the presence of God. (vs. 16)

1. Cain would not repent of his sin. (vs. 16; cf. vs. 7-8) Cain, just as many men have after him, fled from the presence of God rather than repent. Romans, chapter 1 shows the awful, awesome penalty of rejecting God's grace by not repenting.
2. Cain could not recover from his sin. (vs. 16; cf. 11-14) To willfully leave the presence of God is a critically dangerous sin; it can be eternally fatal. Again, Romans, chapter one shows clearly the terrible effects of rejecting God (Rom. 1:24,26,28). It shows the conditions upon which God will give up on man.

B. Cain deliberately left the place of God (vs. 17-24)

1. Note Cain's building of a city. (vs. 17)
 - a. Perhaps Cain built the city to counterfeit paradise. (vs. 17)

Everything that man had and could have had was lost when man sinned. With paradise lost, man religiously attempts by his own skills and ingenuity to recover paradise. Yet, history tells us that man's very best will crumble and decay in just a few short years.

b. Perhaps Cain built the city to counterfeit permanency. (vs. 17)

Cain thought that he could defy and ignore God's curse, that he could cease to be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth by building a city. Yet, even as he walked midst the still walls, his restless spirit told him he was still just a fugitive and a vagabond.

2. Note Cain's begetting of children. (vs. 17-24)

a. Children whose names demonstrated the foul strength of sin. (vs. 17-18)

The following list of names, derived from our text, shows the anti-God spirit that prevailed in the wicked city that Cain had founded:

1. Enoch—name means “wandering” and “commencement”

2. Irad—name means “wild, animal”

3. Mehujael—name means “blot out that Jehovah is God”

4. Methuselah—name means “they died inquiring”

5. Lamech—name means “powerful conqueror”

b. Children demonstrating the false soothing of sin. (vs. 19-22)

1. Jabal—Father of marketing. (vs. 17-20)

2. Jubal—Father of music. (vs. 21)

3. Tubal—Cain—Father of metallurgy. (vs. 22)

There are those who equate cultural success, financial

success, and industrial success to having the favor of God. Then there are those who succeed and think that they have no need for God. Such a delusion is fatal.

c. Children demonstrating the succession of sin. (vs. 23)

Multiple wives and murders continue to magnify the wicked way of Cain in these verses.

II. THE SOVEREIGN APPOINTMENT OF SETH. (vs. 25-5:32)

The Lord's plan and purpose is never doomed to failure. He rules in the affairs of men, allowing man the opportunity to freely choose and walk as he will. Man may sinfully hinder what the Lord would be willing to do, yet man cannot destroy God's over-all purposes. God intended for his Son to be born into the human family by providing Seth as a substitute for Abel, thus continuing the Godly line.

A. This appointment renewed the Godly line.
(vs. 25-26)

1. A substitute was given. (vs. 25)

The name Seth means "the appointed one or sprout." Prophetically, Seth reminds us of the description of the Lord Jesus as found in Isaiah 53:2 as being a "root out of a dry ground." Seth typically reminds the student of Christ as the sinner's substitute.

2. A Saviour was guaranteed. (vs. 26)

This appointment of Seth allowed God to graciously provide for the lineage to continue, thus permitting the Messiah to be born of woman in "due time."

- B. This appointment revealed the Grace line. (5:1-32)
- By using the hermeneutical principal (the study of names) to gain valuable insight concerning the men of the lineage of Cain, we now may reveal the grace line by examining the lineage of Seth.
1. Adam—"Of the ground or red man from the clay"
Sin originated in the person of Adam (Romans 5:12) and passed on to all men. Adam pictures all men apart from the grace of God as being "of the ground." Man can by God's grace be redeemed from the miry clay and placed upon "The Rock!"
 2. Seth—"Sprout or substitution"
With the death of Abel it appeared that all hope of a continuing Godly lineage was gone, yet God's plans are not thwarted by anything or anyone. God so graciously raised up a sprout of new life out of the dry, barren soil of humanity. This "sprout" was in the person of "Seth" just as Jesus Christ was indeed the sprout of hope that sinful man needed in a dry and thirsty land.
 3. Enos—"Mortal"
The next son mentioned represents the state of all men physically. All men must identify with the reality that "The wages of sin is death. . ." (Romans 6:23). This son Enos, "mortal," also represents Jesus Christ as He Himself identifies with the human family by His incarnation (Phil. 2:7-8).
 4. Cainan—This name gives a hint concerning

the story of Redemption. Cainan means “to purchase back or acquire.” The word “redemption” carries a similar meaning. When a soul is redeemed, he is purchased out of the slave market of sin, turned loose, and never subject to being sold back into the slave market of sin.

5. Mahalaleel—The name means “God is splendor or praising God.” Men who have been redeemed understand the privilege of praise.
6. Jared—The name means “descending”
This name pictures the work of the Holy Spirit empowering the church. The Holy Spirit descended upon the church at Pentecost, signifying a new age (The Church Age).

Note—These next four names have meanings that signify chronologically the ending of the church age through the millennium.

7. Enoch—This name means “translated.” This name indicates prophetically what will happen to the saints at the end of the church age. (cf. I Cor. 15:52, I Thess. 4:16,17). The saints will be caught up and changed (translated).
8. Methuselah—His name means “when he dies, judgment shall come.” Methuselah lived to the age of 969 years. When he died, the flood came, bringing judgment to the world. Likewise, after the rapture of the church, tribulation will come.
9. Lamech—“Powerful Conqueror”

At the end of the tribulation the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear with great power and glory (cf. Rev. 19:11-16). He will be the powerful conqueror.

10. Noah—"Rest or comfort"

After the tribulation the Bible then speaks of a millennial rest of 1000 years. Noah enjoyed rest in the Ark while the earth was under judgment.

The second is an outline taken from Exodus 31:1-6.

Introduction:

The clear instructions needed for the making of the tabernacle, its furniture, and the priest's dresses were given to Moses. Now God takes the responsibility of selecting His workers to do His work. In this important lesson seven names are mentioned. Perhaps these seven names give us a clue as to the characteristics that God desires in His ministers or servants.

ONE—Bezaleel—means "in the shadow of God"

(ex. Song—"Under His Wings")

- a. The security of the shadow.
- b. The solace of the shadow.
- c. The sacredness of the shadow.

TWO—Uri—"Light of Jehovah"

- a. The light reveals the path.
- b. The light also reveals the problems.

THREE—Hur—means:

- a. To be free born
- b. To be noble
- c. To be white

FOUR—Judah—means “Praise”

- a. Praise glorifies the worship.
- b. Praise gladdens the work.

FIVE—Aholiab—means “Tent of my Father” (Tent in the Scriptures speaks of separation.)

- a. Speaks of a temporary place.
- b. Speaks of a traveling person.

SIX—Ahisamach—means “Made up of two words that mean brotherly support.”

- a. Reminds us that we cannot stand alone.
- b. Reminds us that we should not stand aloof.

SEVEN—Dan—means “to Judge”

- a. The servant’s sins have been judged.
- b. The servant’s works will be judged.
- c. The servant’s activities should be self-judged.

Hopefully, from these few examples, one may gain an understanding of how names maybe used in the preparation and the delivery of their sermon. The New Testament also abounds with interesting names, names that are worthy of study. Consider, for example, the name Paul. Paul’s Jewish name was Saul, and his Roman or Gentile name was Paul. Beginning in Acts 13:9, he began to use Paul as he ministered in mostly a Gentile environment. Paul means, “little,” while Saul means “respected.” Paul said that he was the “least of the Apostles” when, in actuality, he was the greatest. As great as he was, his name reminded him of how little he was in comparison to the Lord Jesus Christ. To apply the meanings of Paul’s name homiletically, consider doing an exposition of I Corinthians 1:17 thru 2:5. In this section Paul is emphasizing the smallness

and weakness of man as contrasted to the powerfulness and greatness of God.

5. OBJECTS AND THINGS IN THE BIBLE

C.L. Roach, evangelist and author, made an interesting statement concerning the meaning of things in the Scriptures; he said:

Shortly after being saved I began to notice the way certain things would appear in the Scriptures. I soon realized that everything has a meaning in the Bible. As I studied a few, I soon realized there was no end to this type of study.

This diligent Bible student agrees with him regarding his statement. God has indelibly placed His signature on the things that He created. He is the owner; He is the Lord!

GATES

Nehemiah, upon hearing that the gates and the walls of Jerusalem were down, became prayerfully burdened, wanting them restored. The order in which the gates were mentioned and what the gates symbolized are worthy of consideration.

1. The Sheep Gate—(Nehemiah 3:1) “Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.” This is the first gate mentioned, likewise, all begins at this gate. The sheep were brought in through this gate to be sacrificed. The Lord Jesus often used this gate (John 5:2).

Perhaps He was a walking parable, acting out the truth that He was the “Lamb of God” soon to be sacrificed upon the cross. This gate pictures salvation through the sacrificial shedding of Jesus’ blood.

2. The Fish Gate—(Nehemiah 3:3) “But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.” This was the gate most commonly used by the fisherman coming in from the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. After Jesus met and called some of His disciples who were fishermen, the fish became a symbol of witnessing. Jesus said to his followers, “I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).
3. The Old Gate—(Nehemiah 3:6) “Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.” This gate must have been the gate that had endured much time and became known as “the old gate.” It is the gate that symbolizes the embracing of “Old Time Religion” based on the Old Book, the Bible, that is forever up to date.
4. The Valley Gate—(Nehemiah 3:13) “The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.” The gate nearest the valley was called the valley gate. The “valley” has long symbolized the place of discouragement and despair. All

will have to go through the valley; but, is it not wonderful knowing that Christ is the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys (Song of Solomon 2:1)? As we go through the valley, we may rest in knowing that our Lord is with us.

5. The Dung Gate—(Nehemiah 3:14) “But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Bethhaccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.” The gate was for the purpose of sanitation. The garbage, the filth, and the trash were disposed of through this gate. There needs to be a similar “gate” in each of our lives for removing trash and filth (Eph. 5:1-5).
6. The Gate of the Fountain—(Nehemiah 3:15) “But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallum the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king’s garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.” Still water in the Scriptures symbolize the Word of God (Eph. 5:26). Moving waters are a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God. This gate teaches that the believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).
7. The Water Gate—(Nehemiah 3:26) “Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out.” This was the seventh gate. The number seven is associated with completion or perfection in Biblical numerology. This seventh gate was the only gate that needed

no repairs. It was the gate that was used to bring in the water. Water, as mentioned previously, is a symbol of the Word of God. The lesson here is that the Word of God is all right just as it is. It needs no repairs! If you have the King James Version 1611, you have the Word of God.

8. The Horse Gate—(Nehemiah 3:28) “From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.” During the time of battle and of warfare this gate would be the exit and entrance for the soldier. The horse was the symbol of war, and this gate symbolized the going forth unto battle. Each believer should fight the fight of faith, enduring hardness as good soldiers of the faith (II Timothy 2:3-4).
9. The East Gate—(Nehemiah 3:29) “After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah the keeper of the east gate.” The east gate was the first gate opened in the morning as it faced the rising sun. Those who endured a dark night would anticipate the opening of this gate with much excitement. This gate should serve as a reminder to look for that ray of hope that signals His coming. The believer should be gathered at this gate, looking for His coming to end the darkness of this world.
10. The Gate Miphkad—(Nehemiah 3:31) “After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith’s son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner.” Miphkad means

“review” or “registry.” Strangers would register at this gate upon arriving in Jerusalem. This gate was also the gate that King David would have his army return through so they could pass in review. This gate is a type of the judgment seat of Christ. One day, when the battle is over, we shall pass King Jesus in review!

Again, with permission, I wish to borrow from C.L. Roach’s book, *WHAT DO THEY MEAN?*, (pages 37-41) and give a condensed study of six gates that he has listed in more detail.

I. Notice first of all the Gate of Paradise—(Genesis 3:23-24), “Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Although no actual gate is mentioned, it is implied that there must have been an exit and also an entrance that was guarded by the Cherubims and a flaming sword, lest the human family partake of the tree of life and live eternally in a sinfully decaying state. This gate of Paradise was a gate that could never be entered again. When one dies in a lost condition, he can never pass through the gate that enters back into the realm of life for a second chance. It is too late! May this gate remind us of this truth.

II. The Gates of Praise—Psalms 100 speaks of a gate that is to be entered into with thanksgiving and then leads into the courts to be entered with praise. The millennial blessings that are spoken of in this thanksgiving psalm are certainly causes for shouting.

The tribulation has ended and King Jesus has set up His kingdom. The Psalmist is inviting all people to make a joyful noise unto the Lord because a good, merciful, and truthful King is now seated upon the throne. This gate should be the gate that every believer enters with praises unto the Lord.

III. The Gate of Pressure—(Matthew 7:13-14) “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

The word “narrow” carries the thought of pressure or being compressed. A person who is placed in a “strait” jacket is restricted in his movement. The straitness of this gate, as the strait jacket, speaks of a restricted way. That way is Jesus. All who take up a cross to follow the Lord Jesus will certainly enter these gates. From the first one who chooses to follow Him unto those of this present hour, each knows the meaning of the pressure and persecution that comes with His cross.

Why does God allow such pressures? Perhaps it is to tender us that we might be pliable in His hands. Then, it may be to toughen us that we may be able to handle the stresses of life. Pressures come for the purpose of teaching us His way in this life. A fourth reason could be to tame us that we might be under His complete control throughout this life. Again, each believer will be called upon to enter the Gate of Pressure.

IV. Gate of the Perishing—(Matthew 7:13-14) This is the place of the sinner, now. The gate previously mentioned in this Scripture was the gate of pressure;

this gate is the Gate of Perishing. The gate of pressure was narrow, where the believer is now. The gate of perishing is where the unsaved are now; it is called the Broadway. Broadway is a word that denotes pleasure. The thought behind this word “broadway” goes back around 700 years before the birth of Christ.

C.L. Roach says, “In Baal-Beck, a historical city of Lebanon, was a temple erected to the gods of that land. Three places of heathen worship were found inside. The worship of Jupiter Baal, or Seus, the god of athletics, Bacchus, the god of wine, and Venus who was the god of love or of sex.” I think, if we stop and consider the world today, we still see the masses entering these gates. It appears that everything is geared to the promotion of sports, strong drink, and sex.

Notice why this gate pictures the place of the sinner now. The gate to this temple was 160 feet wide. No one was restricted from entering the temple. (There was, and still is, plenty of room to rush after the gods of this world.) There were 19 steps leading up to this gate. Number 19 is the number of “faith” in the Scriptures. What a subtle counterfeit Satan has offered, leading to these three counterfeit gods: 1. The god of sports, 2. The god of spirits, 3. The god of sex. The multitudes rush madly into the Broadway of destruction, while only a few hear the voice of God and enter into the strait gate.

V. The Gate of Perdition—(Matthew 16:18) The text here speaks of the gates of hell. This gate leads to and shuts in the sinner for eternity.

Hell is a real place, where real people will be shut up for ever and ever. Hell will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). Revelation 20:15 says, “whosoever

was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

VI. The Gates of Pearl—(Revelation 21:21) The most beautiful is the gate of pearl. There are twelve gates of pearl mentioned in our text. The gate is a symbol of heaven. Heaven is also a real place. It is mentioned as a prepared place (vs. 1-3); as a perfect place (vs. 4-7); as a protected place (vs. 8-10); as a precious place (vs. 11-22); and as a praising place (vs. 23-27). Only those who enter the gates of pearl shall enjoy the many delights of heaven.

The above examples offer suggestions of how the gates may enter into the “Strategy of Preaching.” These are only suggestions upon which one may expand.

FOOTSTOOL

The use of the word “footstool” will demonstrate how a word that is not commonly used may be utilized in one’s sermonizing to stir interest and to teach rich and precious truth. This word appears in the Scripture 16 times. It literally means a foot stool (a place where the foot or feet rest).

In the Bible, when the word is not used as a practical object for the resting of the feet, it is most commonly used to symbolically represent one who is in a lower position. It also is used to represent forced humility .

James 2:3 says, “And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:” This verse gives an example of the proud treating a poor person as being an inferior person. Some of the dearest people I know are poor. James was saying to the proud that

they were putting another human being below their feet. He gives a strong indictment against pride and partiality in this Scripture.

The above was an example of the way one man forces another into a humble position. Now, notice how the Lord will put his enemies into a position of forced humility: (Hebrews 10:13) "From henceforth expecting till his enemies to be made his footstool." Certainly, the Lord is highly to be exalted. His name is above every name!

It was said that, when an enemy soldier was defeated, he would bow his head to the ground, signifying his complete and total defeat. Then the victor would place his foot on the defeated one's head, thus making his enemy his footstool. Christ, the Victor, will one day humble His enemy in similar manner. Praise be unto God!

Another Scriptural example of the way the "footstool" is used is found in Psalm 99:5:

Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

This hymn of God's kingship (Ps. 99) has three stanzas as outlined in *THE RYRIE STUDY BIBLE*, page 867:

The declaration of the majesty of God (vv. 1-3), the description of the rule of God (vv. 4-5), and the dealings with Israel of the God who is holy (vv. 6-9). The Psalm views God's reign over Israel in Old Testament times, as well as the future-millennial reign of Christ.

The Psalmist calls for honor to be given to the Lord Who is King and for worship to be given by His subjects in humility at His footstool.

From our studies we can clearly see that the footstool is a symbol of humility. May we not have to be forced into a position of humility, but voluntarily humble ourselves in worship in His presence.

In your preaching strategy, consider the way that you may preach a message on Pride and Humility by using the footstool as the symbol of humility.

MOUNTAINS

When was the last time you either heard or preached a message on mountains? The word “mountain” in its different forms appears several hundred times in the Word of God. It is a commonly used word. Generally speaking, the mountain symbolizes refuge or a place of safety. An example of this usage is found in Genesis 19:17:

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed.

When the Lord was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the angel told Lot to escape to the mountains.

Another way that the mountain is considered symbolically is as it appears in Psalm 90:2:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting,

thou art God.

An interesting study of the different ways that “mountain” is used is in conjunction with the name “Almighty God” which, in the Hebrew, is El Shaddai. Shaddai comes from a word that means “mountain” and pictures God in His majesty, power, and greatness.

When the Almighty God appeared to Abraham, it was as though the Lord was saying, “You can believe that I have the power to bring to pass those things that I covenanted to do, because I am greater than even the mountains.”

An example of the way the word “mountain” can be used homiletically is illustrated in the following outline from this author’s book, *GENESIS—GENERAL STUDY OUTLINE SERIES*. Its use will appear in section, I., A., 1. :

Comments about chapter 17:1-19—This chapter looks again at the Abrahamic covenant with the emphasis being on the sign of the covenant (see Romans 4:11). For reference and further study, the covenants are as follows:

1. Edonic—Gen. 1:28-30; 2:15-17
2. Adamic—Gen. 3:14-19
3. Noahic—Gen. 8:20; 9:17
4. Abrahamic—Gen. 12:1-3
5. Mosaic—Exodus 19:5-6
6. Davidic—II Sam. 7:8-19
7. Palestinian—Deut. 30:1-10
8. New Covenant—Heb. 8:8; cf. Jer. 31:31

I. THE MAKING OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT. (vs. 1-8)

This covenant was first given in Genesis 12:2-3, but additions and clarifications were given all along.

A. The Covenant Was Made By The Great One. (vs. 1-5)

The Lord proved the validity of the covenant in Genesis chapter 12 when he walked between the bloody, slain animals. The covenant was given unconditionally as well as powerfully, thus proving to Abraham that His Word was true.

1. His covenant was backed by His great power. (vs. 1-2)

Omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence blended its forces together in the Godhead to deliver and to protect this covenant. There are no weak links in the chain of God's Word! He is the Almighty God. Here the compound name of God is the "Almighty God" which in the Hebrew is El Shaddai. "Shaddai" comes from a word that means "mountain," which pictures God in majesty, power, and greatness.

2. His covenant was backed by His great purpose. (vs. 3-5)

At this point God changes Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham, which means "father of a great number." It is God's purpose to produce a great nation out of the loins of Abraham.

B. The Covenant Was Made By The Gracious One. (vs. 6-8)

All the wonderful things imaginable to the

mortal man were promised in the great covenant with Abraham.

1. God will make of Abraham a great people.
(vs. 6-7)

Abraham has no children now, but in time his posterity will be enumerable. It has been thirteen years since the birth of Ishmael, and will be one year before Isaac is born. But from the birth of Isaac there will come nations, kings, and fruitfulness. God promised it!

2. God will give Abraham a great possession.
(vs. 8)

The Scripture located in Genesis 15:18, along with this portion of Scripture, shows that Abraham will receive an everlasting possession. The land carried great significance as a part of the covenant.

II. THE MARK OF THE COVENANT. (vs. 9-14)

The distinguishing badge or mark of the covenant was the process of circumcision. Romans 4:11 verifies that God made it a sign of the Abrahamic covenant.

A. The Sign Is Circumcision. (vs. 9-14)

This section of Scripture is the first time that circumcision is mentioned in the Scriptures. Circumcision simply means that the foreskin is removed. This was preferably done on the eighth day after the male child's birth. In addition to this procedure being a part of the Abrahamic covenant, it also has proven to be a health benefit to the circumcised.

1. Circumcision was to be done perpetually.
(vs. 9-10)

2. Circumcision was to be done personally.
(vs. 11)

Just as the Hebrew male was required to be circumcised according to God's instructions, man also is to be circumcised spiritually, "in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:" (Col. 2:11)

B. The Sign Was Commanded (vs. 12-14)

1. The particulars were given for doing the circumcision. (vs. 12-14)
2. The punishment was given for denying the circumcision. (vs. 14)

III. THE MIRACLE OF THE COVENANT. (vs. 15-19)

It was an absolute miracle involving a woman that was well beyond the age of child bearing. Sarai would also see her name changed to Sarah. Sarai means "my princess," and Sarah means "princess."

A. It Was A Miracle That Had Promises. (vs. 15-18)

With all that God had done to provide Abraham with assurance he still found it difficult to believe that he would father a child by Sarah.

1. It promised happiness. (vs. 15-17)
2. It provided hope. (vs. 18)

Hope and happiness were key products of this renewed promise to Abraham. God, by having Abraham and Sarah wait so many years to have a child, had turned what would have been perceived as a natural phenomena into a truly spiritual miracle.

B. It Was A Miracle That Had Purpose. (vs. 19)

1. The miracle would fulfill God's promises.
(vs. 19a)

2. The miracle would fulfill God's purposes.
(vs. 19b)

Concluding Remarks:

A practical spiritual benefit of circumcision is that of a lasting reminder to Abraham's descendants of the promises that God had made.

The first time that the word "mountain" appears in the Scriptures, in its singular form, is Genesis 12:8:

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Haion on the east. and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

Here "mountain" is used in association with Abraham building an altar. This altar pictured fellowship with the Lord. The last time "mountain" appears in the Word is in Revelation 21:10-11.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem. descending out of heaven from God Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Here John is given from a "great and high mountain" a view of the new heavenly city which will be a place of eternal, everlasting fellowship.

"Mountain" is used, beginning in Genesis 19, with the giving of the Law. Moses went to the mountain that smoked and quaked greatly (Gen. 19:18) to receive the law. It was a fearful sight! This was the mountain that

symbolized the law of God.

Now, moving to the New Testament in Luke 23:33, we have a different mountain mentioned:

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

This is the mountain that symbolizes the Grace of God. The song “At Calvary” expresses this reality:

Years I spent in vanity and pride,
Caring not my Lord was crucified,
Knowing not it was for me He died
On Calvary.

By God’s Word at last my sin I learned;
Then I trembled at the law I’d spurned,
Till my guilty soul imploring turned
To Calvary.

Now I’ve giv’n to Jesus everything,
Now I gladly own Him as my King,
Now my raptured soul can only sing
Of Calvary.

Oh, the love that drew salvation’s plan!
Oh, the grace that bro’t it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!

STONES

The word “stone” is another common word found in the Scriptures. Yet many great truths can be derived from a careful study of the way the word “stone” is used in some of the different places. Rather than an

exhaustive study of the many ways the word “stone” appears, consider a few less common appearances for homiletical purposes.

The stone has been used to typify many different things. It has been, for example, a symbol of strength, of the church, of the believer, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of that which endures. In Genesis 11:3, we see the word “stone” contrasted with the word “brick.”

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

Brick here is a symbol of religiosity; it is inferior to stone. Homiletically, an example of the way stone is used to contrast brick appears in this author’s book, *GENESIS—GENERAL STUDY OUTLINE SERIES*. Note for usage, the section labeled “Comments about 11:1-9.”

Comments about 11:1-9: God, after blessing Noah and his sons, gave a command to them to “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” In this section of study, may it be noted that the descendants of Noah and his sons began to rebel against God’s instructions to replenish the earth. They, instead (vs. 4) wanted to remain in one location and very proudly make themselves a name. Yet the weakness of their humanistic scheme is noticeable in the materials they employed in building their city and tower. Clay was used instead of stone, and slime instead of mortar. Man’s very best is only clay and slime!

I. THE SYMPTOMS OF REBELLION. (vs. 1-4)

The most loathsome of all diseases has its symptoms. Cancer for example, is often marked by

weight loss, a sore that will not heal, fatigue, and hemorrhaging. Rebellion, the sin that is as witchcraft (I Sam. 15:23), has its ugly symptoms. The symptoms that mark the rebel is a self-willed, self-sufficient, and self-seeking person as indicated by the text.

A. The symptoms of rebellion as indicated by their self-willed spirit. (*vs. 1-3a*)

A self-willed, non-dependent spirit always marks or characterizes the rebel. It was God's will that these people disperse and populate the earth. Yet they dwelt in the land of Shinar instead. (*vs. 2*)

1. They disobeyed the Lord. (*vs. 1-2*)

The proud rebel, who is self-willed, will disobey authority. In the case of these people they disobeyed the Lord. (*ch. 9:1*)

2. They disregarded the Lord. (*vs. 3a*)

B. The symptoms of rebellion as indicated by their self-sufficient spirit. (*vs. 3b-4*)

The spirit of rebellion that had enveloped the inhabitants of the earth, had brought these people to a position of self-sufficiency. They discarded God's plan for their own; they discarded God's presence for their own prominence. They felt that if they stayed together they would have no need for God.

1. They became blinded by their predicament. (*vs. 3b-4a*)

Pride installs "blindness" on the eyes of the soul. God hates pride, a twin brother of rebellion.

2. They became bold in their performance. (*vs. 4a*)

C. The symptoms of rebellion as indicated by their self-seeking spirit. (*vs. 4b*)

The aggressive nature of the rebel causes him to

exalt himself. The tower of Babel would have been a rallying point and a symbol of their prominence.

1. They wanted to achieve prominence. (vs. 4b)

Note the use of “Let us” repeatedly. The “let us” showed that they were proudly focusing upon themselves rather than upon God.

2. They wanted to acquire power. (vs. 4b)

The world today is also characterized by proud, power-hungry people.

II. THE SORROWS OF REBELLION. (vs. 5-9)

Notice in verse five that “the Lord came ‘down’ to see the city and the tower.” The best that mankind could possibly achieve would be a downward path for the Lord. While they were looking up proudly at their tower and city, the Lord was looking down upon them. The Lord looked down upon a people that would soon be embraced by many sorrows.

- A. There were demonic imaginations to corrupt them. (vs. 5-6)

The mind is the battleground for many demonic activities. The Lord knew that these people would perpetually imagine or think of new things to exploit their rebellious ambitions.

1. The Devil invaded their minds. (vs. 5-6a)
2. The Devil influenced their manner. (vs. 6b)

Men do what the mind has them to do. If a man’s mind is controlled by Satan he will do what Satan beckons him to do.

- B. There was a Divine intervention to correct them. (vs. 7a)

Again reference is made to going down. In the

first use of the word “down” (vs. 5) it was a word that described man’s relative position to God. In this usage of the word “down” (vs. 7) it is in reference to God’s condescending for the purpose of chastisement and to bring about their correction.

1. God intervened because of His interest in them. (vs. 7a)

2. God intervened because of His intent for them. (vs. 7a)

C. There was a dialectic ignorance to confound them. (vs. 7b-9)

Proud men can speak proudly influencing many as they do. The Lord changed their language to break down their communications, thus destroying their unity.

1. He broke down the unifying agent. (vs. 7b)

2. He brought down their ungodly attempt. (vs. 8-9)

Concluding Remarks:

The name Babel means “to confuse.” When there is pride and rebellion, there is “Babel” or confusion.

In the example outline just given, the word “stone” was used only in the introduction. It was just enough to add flavor to the message. An entire message will not usually result from the typical or symbolical meaning of a word. C.L. Roach, in his book *WHAT DO THEY MEAN?*, does an entire study in sermonic form using the word stone. With his permission, I will reproduce his excellent study.

STONES OF THE BIBLE

Stone or stones are mentioned over 200 times in the Scripture. By no means do I intend to explain every meaning. I'm sure the reader would enjoy searching the Scriptures for others not mentioned here.

In this portion of "what do they mean" we will look very briefly at eight different stones and see their spiritual meaning. The question is asked "what meaneth these stones?" The answer to this question will be first of eight meanings.

First we find the stone meaning:

I. A sure testimony of God's Deliverance (Joshua 4:1-7)

Twelve stones were taken out of the Jordan and then twelve stones left in the Jordan to be covered by its waters. The first twelve picture God's deliverance from the place of death. (Jordan comes from two words: "Jor" meaning river and "dan" meaning judgment.) It was only as Christ rolled back the judgment from us on Calvary were we able to "pass from death unto life."

The stones taken out pictures our deliverance. The stones placed in the river bed covered, where no one can find them pictures our old life that died with Him in judgment. "For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:3)

II. Stone that pictures strength of grace (I Samuel 17:49)

Every reader of the Bible has read of David and the stone that slew Goliath. Simple but beautiful are

the pictures here. Goliath being the enemy, so much greater than we are, but as we, as David did, approach our enemies with confidence, we too will overcome them. The stones were five in number, God's number of grace. These were taken from a stream of running water. In the Scriptures, running water pictures the moving of the Holy Spirit. Here we simply see God's grace prevailing by the Power of the Holy Spirit in one who completely trusted God in the face of overwhelming odds that were against him.

III. Stones that picture the Saviour

I suppose that the stone pictures the Lord Jesus Christ more than any other person or thing in the Scriptures.

In some places the word "rock" is capitalized. This certainly has reference to the Lord. Read Deuteronomy 32:4-32.

Let us look at nine Scriptures and see the Saviour likened to a stone. See Him as:

1. A smitten stone—Exodus 17:1-6 and I Corinthians 10:4
2. A smitting stone—Daniel 2:34-45
3. A saving stone—Matthew 21:44
4. A spurned stone—Acts 4:11
5. A supplying stone—I Corinthians 10:4
(There are many mentionings of water from this rock in the Bible)
6. A selected stone—I Peter 2:4
7. A sure foundation stone—Matthew 16: 18
8. A stumbling stone to Jews—Romans 9:33

and I Peter 2:8

9. A sealing stone—I Peter 2:6 and
Ephesians 2:19-21

IV. Stones that picture the saints

In Matthew 3:9, John the Baptist mentions “stones” that God could use to raise up children to Abraham. They were lifeless stones, the Gentiles. In I Peter 2:5, we see how the lifeless stones become living stones building up a spiritual house.

V. Stones that picture security (Exodus 28:15)

The breast plate of the High Priest is described in great detail (Read Exodus 28:15-29). The colors, first, are very meaningful. In verse 15, gold is mentioned first, showing that deity is at work. Then the color blue, the heavenly color, purple, the color of royalty and then scarlet, the color of blood or humanity. All this pictures Jesus Christ our Lord. Our God came down from heaven to die on the cross that He might be King or Lord of our lives forever.

The twelve stones were placed over the heart of the High Priest and were held by chains of pure gold to the shoulders, the place of strength. They were tied with ribbons of blue, the heavenly color. “For ye are kept by the Power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” (I Peter 1:5)

VI. Stones that picture service (I Corinthians 3:9-11)

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a

wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth there on. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”

Six things are mentioned here that are used by some in their service for our Lord. Three will endure fire, three will perish. There is no other foundation on which the believer can build. No other material but these six. At the Bema seat every believer will see his service reviewed as all is tested by fire. The labors or service rendered for Christ with the wrong motive “what sort it is” will be destroyed as wood, hay, and stubble. The service rendered with a motive of love for the Saviour and love for the lost sinners will pass through the fire as precious stones, gold and silver. These that remain will bring reward.

Those perished will cause loss of reward, not salvation. (I Corinthians 3:12-15)

VII. Stones that picture sovereign demands (Exodus 24:12)

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written: that thou mayest teach them.”

The 10 commandments picture man’s total responsibility to God and man. Notice, the first four commandments picture the world’s responsibility to God. Four, being the world number. The fifth is for children showing their responsibility to their parents. The last five picture man’s responsibility to man. These are God’s righteous demands on man

that can only be met in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:3-4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Romans 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

Colossians 2:14, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Six times the Word of God reminds us there were Two Tables of Stone. The number of witness. Conscience, the Bible, the Holy Spirit all witness of these obligations on all mankind. Six is the number of man.

VIII. Stones that picture the sinner set free (Revelation 2:17)

The white stone has been said to be the stone of acquittal delivered to one who has judicially been set free. We have been set free from the "curse of the law." In ancient times of trials, men would drop either a white or black stone in a box. White if innocent, black if guilty. Possibly this is where the term jury box came from.

In Leviticus 14:34-57, instructions were given to the nation of Israel on the method of removing leprosy from the house. Leprosy would appear on the stones, vs. 42, and the stones would have to be removed. These stones were the building blocks necessary for the

house to stand. If a stone were removed, another was to be put in its place, lest the house fall.

A great spiritual application can be extracted from this study. Considering that leprosy is a type of sin, incurable and defiling (Leviticus 13), the leprosy on the stones can picture “sin in the homes.” Homiletically the minister may parallel these stones to sinful influences and sinful objects that would be detrimental to a healthy home. The stones that were leprous were removed and replaced with good stones so that the house would stand. The minister, by making use of this application, could exhort his people to remove the “stones of sin.” For instance, there may be stones of worldly music, stones of worldly reading materials, and stones of worldly amusements. These stones should be removed. When they are removed, they should be replaced with good stones—stones of Christian music, stones of Christian reading material, and stones of Christian amusements.

An additional study concerning stones is to preach a sermon on the way the word “stone” appears in a particular book of the Bible. In I Peter, “stone” appears four times. It appears as a living stone, I Peter 2:4; a chief cornerstone, I Peter 2:6; a building stone, I Peter 2:1; and a stumbling stone, I Peter 2:8. The Bible is inexhaustible in its materials and resources for the preacher. Certainly there are numerous ways in which the minister may apply truth, even as shown by this simple study of the stone.

TREES

Trees abound upon the earth. They have served man’s need from the beginning of creation until now. Houses, medicine, paper, chemicals, clothing, furni-

ture, food and a host of other products come from the tree. The Bible makes reference to the tree several hundred times. There are approximately 25 different trees mentioned in the Bible. Among the different trees mentioned, there is the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; there is the hazel tree, the chestnut tree, the olive tree, the almond tree, the apple tree, the teil tree, the shittah tree, the myrtle tree, and the fir tree; there is the pine tree, the box tree, the willow tree, the sycamine tree, and the sycamore tree. Considering the variety of trees and the number of times that the tree is mentioned, there should be an adequate supply of homiletical materials to construct a sermon.

From *GOLDEN NUGGETS, NO.7*, this interesting sermon by Allen Oubre employs the use of trees in his outline:

THE TREES

Text: Psalm 104:16—By: Allen Oubre, Freer Texas

I. UNDER THE DECISION TREE

In the garden of Eden we find the man and the woman and the forbidden tree. Adam and Eve must have looked at the tree for quite some time in wonderment. If Adam had known the suffering, the privation, the wars, man's inhumanity to man, the tears, the heart-aches, in the lives of his posterity, would he have eaten and decided against God?

II. UNDER THE REBELLION TREE

King David had a son named Absalom. Absalom killed his own brother. After receiving the forgiveness of his father, Absalom returned to

Jerusalem. Then one day he rose up in rebellion against his father David. When the battle was in progress Absalom fled on his mule, and his long hair caught in the branches of a great oak tree, and there he hung, helpless before his enemies.

III. UNDER THE JUNIPER TREE

Elijah the prophet had just experienced a great victory on Mount Carmel. He requested that he might die; and said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take a way my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

IV. UNDER THE SYCAMORE TREE

Zacchaeus climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus as he passed along the road. Imagine his surprise when the Lord stopped, looked up in the tree and said, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." Zacchaeus scurried down from there under the sycamore tree he stood face to face with the Saviour.

V. UNDER THE HANGING TREE

There was a man named Judas that was numbered with the twelve apostles. Yet in all this time Judas did not come to drink at the sweet waters of God's Salvation. It was not that Judas was not a smart man, for he was a man of normal intelligence. There is a time of reckoning coming, a time of judgment when we must give an account unto God. Under the hanging tree we see man's despair, man's corruption without redemption.

VI. UNDER THE OLIVE TREE

Jesus came that sorrowful evening to the garden of

olives. There He prostrated himself on the ground in deep prayer.

VII. UNDER THE CURSED TREE

“Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).

An attempt has been made to show how the typical or symbolical study of words can be helpful in one’s sermon preparation. With these examples given, I wish to list some possible words that could be used as starters in your preaching strategy.

They are as follows:

(see following page)

altars	fountain	lines	rocks
animals	gardens	loaf	rod
arrows	garments	Lord	root
ashes	gifts	man	salt
banners	girdles	manna	sand
battles	grapes	mantle	sea
birds	graves	marriage	serpent
bottles	hair	midnight	shepherd
bricks	hammer	minerals	shore
bridles	hand	money	shoulder
buildings	head	mother	sign
candle	heart	mount	sleep
candlestick	heat	mule	smoke
caves	Heaven	nail	snow
chariots	hedge	napkin	storms
cities	heel	neck	streams
clouds	heifer	nest	sun
cross	hill	net	suppers
crown cups	honey	night	sweat
darkness	honeycomb	nose	sword
desert	horn	numbers	tabernacle
dew doors	horse	offerings	table
dreams	house	oil	tears
ear	iron	pearl	vails
fat	Israel	perfume	valleys
feet	jewels	physician	vessels
feathers	keys	pillar	vines
fences	kiss	potter	vineyard
fields	lambs	poison	voice
fire	lamp	rags	watchman
fish	law	raiment	
floods	leaf	rain	
flowers	leper	rainbow	
foundations	light	rivers	

Part IV

Presenting The Material

Part IV

PREPARING THE MATERIAL

HERMENEUTIC TOOLS FOR PREACHING

As an addition to this handbook, I have included an example of an Expository Outline Series, which contains a scheme for preaching through an entire book of the Bible. The book that I have chosen is the book of Colossians. The theme is “The church.”

The following outlines will be void of notes, illustrations, and cross references that normally appear in one’s sermon outline. These skeletal outlines are intended to demonstrate how one might preach through a book of the Bible. The preacher would add “meat to his own skeleton.”

A. Sample Expository Outline Series

COLOSSIANS

Paul Presenting His Letter To The Church at Colosse

Text: Colossians 1:1-8

Introduction:

Paul demonstrates a pastoral love, and interest towards the Saints at Colosse. He demonstrates, by his example, a relationship that each pastor and people should desire.

I. The letter is directed to the saints. (vs. 1-3)

1. He personally communicated to them. (vs. 1-2)
2. He prayed constantly for them. (vs. 3)

II. The letter is descriptive of their state. (vs. 4-5)

1. Faith in the Saviour described them. (vs. 4)
2. Love for the saints described them. (vs. 4)
3. Hope of the saved described them. (vs. 5)

III. The letter is delighting in their salvation.

(vs. 6-8; cf. vs. 3:6-8)

1. Paul delights in the reality of their salvation. (vs. 6a)
2. Paul delights in the results of their salvation (brings forth fruit). (vs. 6b-8)

Conclusion:

Even though the church was experiencing difficulties because of Jewish legalism, mysticism, and Gnosticism, Paul still related to them with a strong love and desire for them to be pure.

Message number two:

Paul's Praying In His Letter For The Church At Colosse 1:9-14

Introduction:

Paul, by praying, shows some essential ingredients to prayer. Note that Paul's prayer was dedicated, it was directed, and it was definite.

I. Paul's praying was dedicated. (vs. 9a)

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you. . ."

II. Paul's praying was directed. (vs. 9b)

"Pray for you, and desire that ye . . ."

III. Paul's praying was definite. (vs. 9c-14)

1. Paul prayed that they might be in the will of the Lord. (vs. 9c)

2. Paul prayed that they might be in the walk of the Lord. (vs. 10-11)
3. Paul prayed that they might be in the worship of the Lord. (vs. 12-14)

Conclusion:

Paul had a strong desire that this church while in the midst of the evil influences that it was being subjected to, be in the will of the Lord, be in the walk of the Lord, and be in the worship of the Lord.

Message number three:

Paul's Praising In His Letter To The Church At Colosse.

1:15-29

Introduction:

A church that is void of praise is a dying church. Paul praises three things in this section. He praises the Creator, the cross, and the church.

I. Paul praises the work of the Creator. (vs. 15-19)

1. The character over the creation. (vs. 15)
2. The completeness of the creation. (vs. 16)
3. The control over the creation. (vs. 17a)
4. The cementing agent of the creation. (vs. 17b)
5. The church in the creation. (vs. 18a)
6. The crowning of the creation. (vs. 18b-19)

II. Paul praises the way of the cross. (vs. 20-22a)

1. The peace of the cross. (vs. 20-22a)
 - a. The blood was shed. (vs. 20-21)
 - b. The body was sacrificed. (vs. 22a)
2. The presentation of the cross. (vs. 22b)
 - a. To present one holy and unblamable. (vs. 22b)

- b. To present one holy and unprovable. (vs. 22b)
- 3. The preaching of the cross. (vs. 23)
 - a. Is necessary for one to be grounded. (vs. 23a)
 - b. Is necessary for one to receive the gospel. (vs. 23b)

III. Paul praises the witness of the church. (vs. 24-29)

- 1. The persecution of the church. (vs. 24)
 - a. Paul suffered for the believers of Christ. (vs. 24a)
 - b. Paul suffered for the body of Christ. (vs. 24b)
- 2. The period of the church. (vs. 25-26)
 - a. Was ministered to by Paul. (vs. 25)
 - b. Was manifested by Paul. (vs. 26)
- 3. The purpose of the church. (vs. 27-29)
 - a. To preach that men might be perfect in Christ Jesus. (vs. 27-28a)
 - b. To teach that men might be perfect in Christ Jesus. (vs. 28b-29)

Conclusion:

May we each be mindful of the many things that we should praise God for.

Message number four:

Paul's Pastoring Through His Letter To The Church At Colosse 2:1-8

Introduction:

Though Paul was not actually in the presence of those to whom he was writing, he did, however, exhibit a pastoral concern for the congregation that comprised

the church at Colosse. He also had a course for them to follow, and a caution for them to heed.

I. Paul's concern for the church. (vs. 1-3)

- A. His concern was certainly great. (vs. 1)
 - 1. He wanted them to know how much. (vs. 1a)
 - 2. He wanted them to know how many. (vs. 1b)
- B. His concern was certainly Godly. (vs. 2-3)
 - 1. He wanted them to be comforted totally in their hearts. (vs. 2a)
 - 2. He wanted them to be committed together in all holiness. (vs. 2b-3)

II. Paul's course for the church. (vs. 4-7)

- A. He wanted them to be watchful along the way. (vs. 4-5)
 - 1. Watching their mind. (vs. 4)
 - 2. Watching their manner. (vs. 5)
- B. He wanted them to be walking in the way. (vs. 6-7)
 - 1. Walking in Christ. (vs. 6)
 - 2. Walking on course. (vs. 7)

III. Paul's caution to the church. (vs. 8)

- A. He told them to beware of the wicked traditions. (vs. 8a)
 - 1. Their teachings would cause loss. (vs. 8a)
 - 2. Their teachings would consist of lies. (vs. 8a)
- B. He told them to beware of the worldly traps. (vs. 8b)

Note: These traps are erroneous religious traps made up of subtle, deceptive teachings. To avoid these "rudiments" of teaching, one must be very knowledgeable of real truth.

Conclusion:

Paul warns and encourages the church at Colosse. He

exhibits also a strong love for the people and He offers a great pattern for pastors to emulate.

Message Number five:

Paul's Preaching Through His Letter To The Church At Colosse

A Message of Encouragement

2:9-23

Introduction:

Much of the preaching being done today perpetrates discouragement. Preaching ought to offer encouragement to the discouraged. But so many times it does not! May we notice the encouragement that Paul gives to this people.

I. Paul's preaching was to encourage them. (vs. 9-15)

A. He showed them that they were complete spiritually. (vs. 9-10)

1. Because of God's positioning. (vs. 9)

2. Because of God's power. (vs. 10)

B. He showed them that they were circumcised spiritually. (vs. 11-13)

1. This provided for their identification. (vs. 11)

2. This provided for their Salvation. (vs. 12-13)

C. He showed them that they were conquerors spiritually. (vs. 14-15)

1. He made us conquerors through His great payment. (vs. 14)

2. He made us conquerors through His great power. (vs. 15)

II. Paul's preaching was to exhort them. (vs. 16-23)

A. To recognize the liberties in Christ. (vs. 16-17)

1. Recognize the obstacle to enjoyed liberties. (vs. 16)

2. Recognize the originator of every liberty. (vs. 17)

B. To retain the liberties in Christ. (vs. 18-19)

1. By resisting the luring tactics of men. (vs. 18a)

2. By refusing the lying tongue of men. (vs. 18b-19)

3. To not refuse the liberties in Christ. (vs. 20-23)

Note: the Apostle Paul was warning the church at Colosse not to be slaves to the ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men. He wanted them to claim the liberties that were theirs in Christ.

Conclusion: Paul encouraged them by preaching Jesus. He was even able to warn as he encouraged. There is great power in great preaching and great preaching comes from preaching Jesus.

Message number six:

Paul's Preaching Through His Letter To The Church At Colosse

A Message of Enlightenment

3:1-15

Introduction:

The Word of God is the only source for spiritual enlightenment. Paul is preaching that the saints at Colosse might be established in the faith, and then that they might be enlightened concerning their bodies, behavior, and their belief.

I. Paul's preaching was to establish them. (vs. 1-4)

A. He encouraged their activities to be directed towards things above. (vs. 1)

1. Because of the properness of it. (vs. 1a)
2. Because of the power of it. (vs. 1b)
- B. He encouraged their affections to be directed towards things above. (vs. 2-4)
 1. Because of the great relationship in Christ. (vs. 2-3)
 2. Because of the great revealing of Christ. (vs. 4)
- II. Paul's preaching was to enlighten them. (vs. 5-15)**
 - A. Concerning their bodies. (vs. 5-7)
 1. They were to die to fleshly ways. (vs. 5a)
 2. They were to deny the fleshly worship. (vs. 5b-7)
 - B. Concerning their behavior. (vs. 8-13)
 1. Their behavior was to be changed. (vs. 8-11)
 2. Their behavior was to be Christ-like. (vs. 12-13)
 - C. Concerning their belief. (vs. 14-15)
 1. Their belief provided for spiritual perfection (maturity). (vs. 14)
 2. Their belief provided for spiritual peace. (vs. 15)

Conclusion:

Paul, as he does quite often, builds his theology on the resurrection (vs. 1). A man that rejects the resurrection never will be enlightened in any other area.

Message number seven:

Paul's Preaching Through His Letter To The Church At Colosse

A Message of Edification

3:16-4:6

Introduction:

To be edified or "built up" in the faith requires that a

man be filled with the Spirit and obedient to the Word. In reality a person cannot be filled with the Spirit who is not obedient to the Word.

I. Edification requires a dependence upon Scripture. (vs. 3:16a)

A. To be rich in wisdom. (vs. 3:16a)

B. To be right in the Word. (vs. 3:16a)

II. Edification results in a delightfulness in singing. (vs. 3:16b-17)

A. This kind of singing causes the heart to be taught. (vs. 3:16b)

B. This kind of singing causes the heart to be tender. (vs. 3:16b)

C. This kind of singing causes the heart to be thankful. (vs. 3:17)

III. Edification results in direction by submitting. (vs. 3:18-21)

A. Submitting produces control. (vs. 3:18)

B. Submitting produces charity. (vs. 3:19)

C. Submitting produces chastening. (vs. 3:20-21)

IV. Edification results in a dutifulness in serving. (vs. 3:22-24)

A. Service ought to be done consistently as unto Christ. (vs. 22)

B. Service ought to be done conscientiously as unto Christ. (vs. 23)

C. Service ought to be done committedly as unto Christ. (vs. 24)

V. Edification results in a difference in speaking. (vs. 4:1-6)

A. Speak differently unto servants. (vs. 1-2)

B. Speak differently as servants. (vs. 3-6)

1. Speak of the grace of God. (vs. 3-5)

2. Speak with the grace of God. (vs. 6)

Note: The difference is a language that is different from the world.

Conclusion:

A person who is truly edified will witness forth that fact by his right relationships with his different relationships.

Message number eight:

Paul's Postscript In His Letter To The Church At Colosse 4:7-18

Introduction:

Last things are often of great importance. The last words that one speaks before death are often remembered the best. Paul's conclusion speaks volumes that are certainly worthy of one's consideration as he closes his letter.

I. Paul, in closing, expresses concern that the church be comforted. (vs. 7-8)

A. Comfort came with a person. (vs. 7)

1. By a beloved brother who was a faithful minister. (vs. 7a)

2. By a beloved brother who was a fellow servant. (vs. 7b)

B. Comfort came with a purpose. (vs. 8)

1. Paul demonstrated this attitude because of his concern. (vs. 8)

2. Paul demonstrated this action because of his concern. (vs. 8)

II. Paul, in closing, expresses concern that the church receive communication. (vs. 9-11)

A. Paul's communicating shows the ties he had with the Church. (vs. 9-10)

1. Paul showed a responsibility to the church. (vs. 9)
2. Paul showed a relationship among the churches. (vs. 10)

B. Paul's communicating shows his tenderness towards the church. (vs. 11)

1. He wanted them to be as complete as he. (cf. vs. 12, vs. 11)
2. He wanted them to be as comforted as he. (vs. 11)

III. Paul, in closing, expresses concern that the church be complete. (vs. 12-18)

A. As indicated by his writing. (vs. 12-16)

1. Paul witnessed that concern. (vs. 12-15)
2. Paul was also concerned. (vs. 16)

B. As indicated by his warning. (vs. 17-18)

1. His warning was intense because of his concern. (vs. 17)
2. His warning was indicative of his personal concern. (vs. 18)

Conclusion:

Paul wrote to warn; he wrote to exhort, to instruct, and he wrote to strengthen the church at Colosse. May we consider the importance of these last words of Paul.

B. Sample Sermons in Manuscript Form

The following sermons illustrate how one can preach a series of messages on a certain theme. The theme that I selected for your example is a series on

“Great Things.”

May they not only be for an example, but a blessing to you as you read them.

The Great Presence Of God

Text: Mark 4:35-5:1

And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. Mark 4:35

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. Mark 5:1

Though these two verses are separated from each other in the text, volumes may be written about their close connection. In the first passage Jesus said, “*Let us pass over unto the other side.*” As students of the Sacred Word we can lift these verses out of the text and place them side by side for comparison. The connecting link between these two verses is a storm-tossed sea with all of its force and fury lashing out against a fearful, faithless group of disciples who were traveling in a ship with Jesus.

It was while Jesus slept that this violent storm appeared, causing great fear to seize the hearts of those seasoned sailors. From this, one can see that storms may come quickly. Such a storm could come without warning at any time and once over, there was no guarantee of when another might arise.

Even the seasoned veteran of the sea was bound to face some storms. A great storm such as this could make the best of sailors feel rather small. As water swept into the ship, the sailors cried, “*Master, carest thou not that we perish?*” In response, Christ arose and rebuked the wind saying, “*peace be still.*” Immediately

what had before been a great storm became a great calm.

From these verses three important truths may be observed about the storms of life.

There Was A Reason For Calmness In The Midst Of The Storm

Perhaps the most significant reason for them to have remained calm was the Word of God. Christ expressly told the sailors, "*Let us pass over unto the other side.*" Had the omniscient Christ foreseen trouble He would not have misled the disciples with such a confident statement of hope. Even though a man may be currently in the midst of a storm, he may be assured that, by the Grace of God, he will reach the other side. Sometimes it seems that the storms are here to stay. William Dean Howells was heard asking Mark Twain as the two walked out of church into a flooding downpour, "Do you think it will stop?" Twain dryly responded, "It always has."

No matter what storm you might be facing, you may cling to the anchor of God's Word and thereby be able to ride out the tempest.

There Was A Rebuke For Cowardice In The Midst Of The Storm

A second aspect to consider is the rebuke for their cowardice in the storm. In verse 40 Christ asked, "*Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?*" Notice the contrast: "so fearful. . . no faith." The insufficiency in the disciples which caused them to be so fearful was their lack of faith. Hebrews 11 illustrates how men of old were able to triumph amidst the storms of life by their dependence upon faith. Thus were they able to face depression, doubts, discouragements, and

disasters of all kinds.

Regardless of the storm, just knowing that the Lord is immediately aware of the problem and standing by to assist is of great encouragement. Recently I was called to the hospital during the night to comfort a family who had just lost their son in an automobile accident. I felt so inadequate as I struggled to find words appropriate to the situation. One seldom feels prepared for such a tragedy. Yet the Lord impressed upon my heart the following words of comfort: "If you have the Lord Jesus Christ and lose everything, you still have everything. But if you have everything and do not have Christ, you have nothing." His presence makes the difference.

There Was A Realization For Correction After The Storm

When the believer goes through a storm, there is a lesson to be learned. It is imperative that one heed the message that comes forth from such an experience. There is never a tribulation in the Christian life except it be permitted by God. The disciples were to learn a great lesson and have their faith increased as a result.

Troubles may come into a person's life to show him his need for a sure foundation. In Matthew the story is told of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. When the storm came and the winds blew, the house fell "and great was the fall of it." The wise man however, built his house upon the rock. Again the same testing occurred as with the other house, yet this house stood firm! Only those who are founded on the rock called Jesus can have confidence to stand in the day of judgment.

Storms may also come to strengthen a person for

service. Abraham Lincoln suffered the storms of depression. He once said, "I am now the most miserable man living, whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not." Lincoln was wrong. He became one of the greatest presidents this nation has ever known.

May we learn the lesson from the storms of life, realizing that in each and every storm we have The Great Presence of God!

Above all else, may we learn that the same One Who can calm the angry waters by saying, "*Peace be still*" can also calm the heart of the poor lost sinner who is tossed by the angry waves of sin.

As Jesus was on the cross, the storms of Hell lashed out viciously against Him; yet He endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him knowing that His substitutionary death was the perfect will of the Father. Only this stormy encounter could provide forgiveness of sin and buy eternal life for otherwise condemned mankind. Today, this same Jesus can break the chains of sin in your life if you will but acknowledge Him as your personal Savior. If you do not now enjoy this wonderful and blessed salvation, why not accept his offer of everlasting life today.

The Great Providence Of God

Text: Acts 8:25-40

In the first several verses of the eighth chapter of Acts, we notice persecution being leveled against the church at Jerusalem. This persecution against Jerusalem was permitted by God as a dispersing tool to force the church to fulfill the requirements of the "Great Commission." As these early Christians scattered, they also preached. This preaching involved

the regions beyond Jerusalem.

*Therefore they that were scattered abroad
went everywhere preaching the word (vs. 4)*

In chapter eight of the book of Acts, we might note the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, a descendant of Ham. In chapter nine, notice the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a descendant of Shem. Finally, in chapter ten, note the conversion of Cornelius, a descendant of Shem. These three chapters illustrate the purpose and providence of God as He works in the conversion of these men.

The Willing Servant

A truly great illustration of God's providence, relative to salvation, is seen in the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch. Notice how God used the willing servant to minister to the wealthy sinner.

*And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip,
saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto
the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto
Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went:
and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of
great authority under Candace queen of the
Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her
treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to
worship. (vs. 26-27)*

One cannot help but see this willing servant's unplanned opportunity. Philip had not entered this journey into his itinerary planning to visit the Ethiopian Eunuch as his schedule permitted; no, this visit was an unplanned opportunity to do the work of God. Quite often in God's providence, great opportunities to witness arise that were not planned by

men. In this situation no definite plans have been made on our part, but great plans have been made on God's part. We need to be completely available to unplanned opportunities.

Philip also demonstrated an uncomplaining obedience. The Scripture says that "he arose and went." God uses non-complainers to do His work. Someone has wisely said, "all it takes to complain is a mouth." Philip did not complain, he only obeyed by going providentially to the very place that God wanted him to be, at the very time that God wanted him to arrive.

The Wealthy Sinner

The ministering of this willing servant was to be directed towards the Ethiopian Eunuch, who was nothing more than a wealthy sinner.

And he arose and went. and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. (vs. 27)

The wealthy sinner had rank, but no real power. He was in charge of Queen Candace's treasury. In addition the eunuch had religion, but no real peace. He was reading from the Prophet Isaiah with a hungry and thirsty soul, yet still unsatisfied. He had riches, but no real possessions. What this wealthy sinner needed more than anything else was the Lord Jesus Christ. He needed someone to preach Jesus to him.

The Wounded Saviour

Yes, the wounded Saviour, Who now is the resurrected Christ, is the center of the gospel and the crowning of God's grace. Philip, knowing this, opened

his mouth and began to preach unto him “Jesus.”

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (vs. 35-37)

The Ethiopian Eunuch was able to enjoy such a wonderful salvation, providentially made available to him, by simply repenting and accepting Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Salvation is wonderful because judgment is past and joy is provided.

And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. (vs. 39)

Certainly, it is wonderful to recognize God’s providence regarding salvation. Maybe this sermon has providentially made its way to a dear reader who needs salvation. Will you trust Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour today? If you do, then why not drop us a line so that we might rejoice with you.

The Great Peace Of God

Text: John 14:6

Men of this age, as each age since Adam, are a few days and full of troubles. Regardless of the standing that a man may possess, he can never claim immunity from the troubles and plagues of mortal life. Even the disciples who were in close contact with Christ were

troubled in heart as the Lord told them that one of their own would betray Him (John 13:21). To add to their troubles the disciples saw their master “troubled in spirit” and soon learned that He would leave them (John 13:33). The final blow to their troubled hearts was to hear that one of the twelve would deny the Lord openly (John 13:38). In the midst of these events, certainly the time was right for Jesus to say, “Let not your heart be troubled. . .” With these words, the Saviour introduces three great arguments against a troubled heart.

A Place For You

The first argument is found in verses 1 and 2 and gives assurance that there is a “place for you.”

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
John 14:1-2*

The Lord provides comfort to troubled hearts as He tells the disciples about a place called Heaven. As a place, Heaven has been called a country because of its large number of inhabitants; a kingdom because of its orderliness; and a paradise because of its many delights. Man must constantly adjust to meet the needs of his restlessness. He must enlarge his cities to accommodate the influx of people. The introduction of other nationalities into America has made it necessary to adapt public places to accommodate the language barrier. Signs in airports may read in three or four languages. The governments of the world are under constant struggle to maintain order and balance. Even with these mammoth efforts the world is filled with

unrest. Heaven, in contrast to this, is a perfectly prepared place infinitely well suited to accommodate the redeemed of all ages. What a comfort in knowing that the Lord had a desire to provide a dwelling place for a saved and eternal realm of people.

A Paraclete For you

A second argument is found in verses 16-18.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. John 14:16-18

To the believer who is surrounded by troubles on every hand, there is the blessed promise of a comforter. (Greek—paracletos or paraclete, also used in 14:26; 15:26; 15:7) The Greek word paraclete, translated as a comforter, refers to one who appears on behalf of another. It is the kind of word that would be used in a courtroom drama to describe a defendant who has rested his case, yet still lacks the evidence needed to persuade the jury of his innocence. Just at the moment when it appears that all hope has gone, someone in the courtroom arises and comes to the defendant's side saying, "I have additional information which will prove this man's innocence." Likewise when we find ourselves backed into the corner like a frightened fox, with nowhere to turn, the comforter or paraclete comes along side to aid us. In the darkest of troubles, what a comfort to know that there is a paraclete for you.

A Peace For You

The world is looking for peace. All too often it searches among the wrong people, the wrong places, and the wrong things. Satan has provided a host of so called solutions to satisfy the world's empty, vain search for peace.

Men will consume houses and lands in an effort to be at peace. When asked "how much do you want?" a rich man once replied, "Only a little more." But what shall a man give in exchange for God's peace for it cannot be purchased.

Some have sought peace through worldly pleasure. The temporary gratification of the flesh cannot compare to the lasting satisfaction which only God can give. Real peace is found only in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no greater argument against a troubled heart than having the peace of God. In the midst of chaos, there is a peace for you.

When we consider these three arguments against a troubled heart we find ourselves with no excuse for not having "the great peace of God." It is not an earthly peace, for its source is from above. It is not an explainable peace for it "passeth all understanding." This inexplicable, extraterrestrial peace is only available in God through Christ Jesus His Son. Do you rest in His peace today?

The Great Provocation To Love

Text: Matthew 5:43-48

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to

them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

INTRODUCTION:

The Master-Teacher so wonderfully provoked some and so clearly parted others as He taught on the law of love. He began the great discourse on love with these words, “Ye have heard that it hath been said. . .” Jesus introduced His opening argument with the preciseness and accuracy demanded by a trial judge who is attempting to separate “fact” from “heresey.” The statement “it hath been said” implied that what had been said was not what should have been said. In the case of our text, Jesus, as a perfect student of the law, proved that what was commonly said was not factual.

The Pharisee had committed two serious errors concerning the law of love. He had added that which did not belong, and he had taken away that which should have remained. The law declared that “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self” (cf. Luke 10:27). The phrase, “as thy self,” was omitted because no Pharisee could love anyone to the degree that he loved himself. The phrase, “and hate thine enemy,” was added because no Pharisee could honestly love his enemy.

The Great Exhortation Of Love

Knowing the extent that the law had been perverted and the lex talionis (law of retaliation) spirit that prevailed, the Perfect Lawgiver said, "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you. . ." One of the most unnatural responses to a cursing is certainly a blessing. Yet with great clarity and with great purpose Jesus paves the way for a clear manifestation of the law of love. He instructed them to bless the curser.

Jesus also said, "Do good to them that hate you. . ." Once again the natural inclination would be to poison, choke, or in some way abuse the person who hates you. Yet when Jesus said "do good," He was outlining the action necessary to remain within the boundaries of the law of love.

The third dagger of truth that penetrated the very heart of this perverted law was to "pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." The Pharisee, in his perversion of the law, had so influenced the converted Jew, that he probably thought these instructions were most unreasonable. Yet Jesus proceeded to attack this notion as He gave the great example of love.

The Great Example Of Love

The great example of love was expressed in the Father's allowing the sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good, and in allowing the rain to fall on the just as well as the unjust. Certainly this example does not fall into the category of a lex talionis spirit. The get-even or the retaliatory spirit would involve blackening the sun and not permitting it to shine on the enemy's land. The same spirit would incite God to withhold the

rain until the enemy's land was completely parched. Romans 2:4 tells us that the goodness of God leadeth men to repentance. Thank God that His benevolent grace showers upon us in spite of our wickedness.

The Great Explanation Of Love

Jesus, the perfect law giver, defined the spirit of love that should exist by asking the following question: "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?" By asking this question, Jesus proved that the law of love required more than a natural act of love; it required a supernatural act prompted by the Holy Spirit. This is the reason that Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect." To love your enemies, to bless them that curse you, and to pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, will require God's law working within you. Therefore, in order to keep the law of love, one must have the law of love ruling in his heart.

Consider what a difference there would be in our homes, businesses, and churches if we all obeyed the law of love as given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Great Prerequisite For Service

Text: Isaiah 6: 1-13

What is the stimulus that has stirred men through the ages to give themselves completely to a cause? What motivation incites men to march faithfully and courageously against insurmountable odds to reach their most lofty goals? Alas, what causes an individual to enter into spiritual service faithfully serving out the balance of his life without earthly praise? Perhaps a single answer which would similarly fit each of these

questions is “vision.”

A great prerequisite for service is indeed vision. Isaiah had a vision which transformed him into a truly willing servant. This vision, recorded in Isaiah 6, reveals three areas where a servant must have vision.

A Proper Vision Of Sovereignty

First a servant must have a proper vision of sovereignty.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. (vs. 1-4)

Certainly Isaiah recognized God’s sovereignty as he observed the Lord in His prominence. He saw the Lord in His lofty position, “high and lifted up.” It is only when the Lord becomes an exalted Being clothed in His majesty that a person will dedicate himself completely to service. The man who serves a little God will do a little service as a little servant.

Isaiah, in his vision, also saw the Lord in His holiness and in His piety. The heavenly vision must have been an awesome sight to a mere mortal man. Yet the true servant of God must have a proper vision of the Lord’s piety before he can adequately serve Him. A man will never perform a holy service until he recognizes the fact that he serves a holy God.

In verse four “the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried,” demonstrating the tremendous power of the Sovereign One. One of the greatest comforts to an individual who serves God is in knowing that he serves a powerful God, a God Who can powerfully protect him from the powerful enemy, Satan.

A Proper Vision Of Self

A servant must also have a proper vision of self as shown in the following verses.

Then said I, woe is me! I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. (vs. 5-7)

Isaiah, after seeing the holiness of God in all His sovereignty became painfully aware that he was nothing apart from the grace of God. Paul, the servant of the New Testament, experienced this feeling of woe as he said, “for I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle. . .” I Cor. 15:10. Until a person has a realistic view of himself, he will never be able to adequately serve.

Along with woefulness a person must recognize his wickedness apart from God’s amazing grace. Thank God for His amazing grace!

A Proper Vision for Service

Man also has the inability to serve God apart from

his strengthening grace. Isaiah, once the Lord cleansed him and strengthened him, became available to service as illustrated by the third prerequisite for service, a proper vision for service. Like Isaiah, one must recognize the great call that is involved in service. The Lord asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." When a man knows that he has been called to service, as Isaiah was, it will be virtually impossible to stop him.

Perhaps the element that made the call so great was the great cause. Notice the following verses:

And he said, Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and convert to be healed. (vs. 9-10)

The great cause involved telling the people that they might be converted and healed. Just as Isaiah had a great cause, the believer today has a great cause; that sinners might be converted to Christ.

With any great call and great cause there is usually a great cost involved. Legend has it that Isaiah was put inside a hollow tree and sawed asunder at the command of Manasseh (read Hebrews 11:32-40; Romans 8:35-39).

May we be challenged from this study to surrender completely to His service that we might please Him.

The Great Peril Of The Last Days

Text: II Timothy 3

It is easy to recognize that the “last days,” as mentioned in II Timothy 3 are upon us. The “perilous times” spoken of have arrived. Truly we are living in the last days. The truth of this thought is given in verse 1:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

May we study briefly this third chapter and notice three particulars about the last days.

The Pattern Of The Last Days

The pattern of the last days is given to us in the first nine verses, beginning with a time of lawlessness. It appears that men become law breakers when they become selfish. Therefore, the self centered man is most likely to be a law-breaking man. The man who pulls a gun, forcing another to give him money, is a selfish man. This man wants only to care for himself. If a man is selfish enough, he will break the law to keep himself satisfied. Please note the following descriptive words used to describe the selfishness that exists in these last days:

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy. Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good. (vs. 2-3)

These same descriptive words used to describe the selfish man also describe the general period of

lawlessness that exists in these last days. This period of lawlessness is a time when there will be much looseness of living. For example, men will be loose in their sexuality, causing them to burn in their lust one toward another.

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (Romans 1:27)

This is also a period of time when men become loose with their tongue. They boast; they blaspheme; they falsely accuse; they lie; and on and on the list could continue.

Another distinguishing mark or pattern of the last days is lustfulness. This is a time when men will be led away with many lusts.

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. (vs. 6)

Men lust after women, wealth, and worldly pleasures. Many in these last days will let the “pleasures of sin for a season” rob them of an eternity in Heaven. What a terrible tragedy this is.

The Persecution Of The Last Days

The general pattern of the last days is made transparently clear in the first nine verses. Then, beginning in verse ten, we are made aware of the persecution that comes to the Godly in Christ.

Paul reveals the persecution that he experienced

giving us a Biblical example of true persecution. He then made a weighty statement by saying that all Godly will suffer persecution.

*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ
Jesus shall suffer persecution. (vs. 12)*

In the closing moments of these last days the persecution will become more and more intense. The intensity of the persecution leveled against the Godly will be proportioned to their godliness.

The wicked intent of the persecutors (as they wax worse and worse) will be to bring about great deception. Apostasy will follow this as an outgrowth of this deception.

Perhaps you are wondering, how may believers be equipped for these last days? To answer this question consider. . .

The Preparation For The Last Days

The preparation for the last days requires that men be settled. This settling will come only from the Rock-of-Gibraltar of your faith, the Word of God. In these last days increasing numbers of the so-called fundamentalists are tampering with the Word and turning to different translations of the Bible. There is, therefore, less settling and more shifting. Give me the authorized, 1611, King James Version, that I might be settled in these last days.

*But continue thou in the things which thou
hast learned and hast been assured of
knowing of whom thou hast learned them.
(vs. 14)*

Above all, for a man to be prepared for these last

days, he needs to be saved. The Holy Scriptures can bring a peaceful and settled heart to a man that is saved. There is absolutely no real peace apart from salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (vs. 15)

To be saved is wonderful; to be settled is also wonderful. But there needs to be sureness in preparation for these last days. We are living in a great period of indecisiveness, a time when men do not seem to be sure. Instability is a common occurrence. Yet, according to the Scriptures, the believer can be sure in these last days.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (vs. 16-17)

In God's Word we have the only perfect manual for the direction of our lives. We can be prepared in these last days as we face persecution by recognizing the pattern that exists. May we be challenged to live a life "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" in these perilous times.

The Great Problem Of Fornication

Text: Proverbs 6:20-35 Text Verses: 23, 25

There is no way to measure the sorrow, the suffering, the shattered dreams, and the sadness that results from the evil, terrible and wicked sin of

fornication. The sexual sin called fornication is indeed a great problem. When this sin is committed against the marriage partner, it is properly labeled as adultery. This sin had been committed by the rich and the poor, by the small and the great. The Scriptures show that even the greatest men have fallen to this horrible sin. David, who had the greatest heart, fell to this sin; Solomon, who had the greatest mind, fell to this sin. Samson, who had the greatest body, fell to this sin. Proverbs 7:26 reminds us that, “many strong men have been slain by her.”

Notice three different aspects concerning fornication:

Note the Possibility Of Fornication

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother; Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman. (vs. 20-24a)

Many who have committed adultery, after they have fornicated, admit that there was a time when they believed, “It could never happen to me!” Yet the Scripture warns that the possibility is always there. Along with the warning of the possibility, there is also a way to avoid the fornication. Obedience to the Scriptures will “lead,” “keep” and “talk with thee” (vs. 22), thus guarding against fornication. From the Scriptures let us observe the second aspect of this problem:

Note The Protection Against Fornication

From the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. (vs. 24b-25)

Since fornication is a real possibility the Scripture provides four warnings one should be aware of as protection against adultery or fornication. First, man should avoid succumbing to *her flattering tongue* (vs. 24; and 7:21). The tongue can be a piercing spear or a soothing fountain. The tongue can be used to inspire a nation to battle the enemy, or it can be used to foam out profanity of the worst kind. The words of a harlot, or the strange woman, like a great spider, can spin a web around its victim thus forcing him into the trap.

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. (7:21)

Often a man does not receive the encouragement and words that should be appropriately given by his wife to sustain him and strengthen his ego. If the wife does not, Satan has someone out there who will. Satan will use the same “flattering tongue” by a strange woman, which should have been used by the wife, to bring a man into a sexual trap. We as men must be aware of and avoid succumbing to the flattering tongue.

The second thing that one should avoid succumbing to is the strange woman’s *fleshly beauty* (vs. 25a). It is not uncommon for a woman who, prior to her marriage, took great care for the way she looked, to become negligent after marriage. A wife, in modesty, should keep herself as attractive as possible for her

own husband. If she does not, she opens the door to another who will. The wife, realizing that the husband has a natural tendency to be attracted to the beauty of a woman, should maintain her own beauty, especially her inward beauty. She should not consider herself in a contest with other beautiful women of the world, but rather desire to be her “beautiful best” for her own mate.

In contrast, even if a man’s wife makes no attempt to keep herself attractive, the husband still has no right to be turned aside by the beauty of another. With the exploitation of the human body by Hollywood and the advertising industry, there are many temptations which could contribute to a man yielding. As men, we must, by all means, avoid succumbing to her fleshly beauty.

Another safeguard given in the text concerns the eyes. Avoid succumbing to her *fooling eyes* (vs. 25b). With the eyes one can communicate volumes. I had a school teacher who could say more with the sternness of her eyes than most could say with a multitude of speaking.

Recently I walked in to a store to purchase a snack. The young lady behind the counter, who I had never seen before, smiled and winked. An attractive woman such as this could, with those fooling eyes, easily lay a snare for some potential victim. The victim could have been me. I hurriedly made my purchase and left those “fooling eyes” behind. As men we are warned to beware of the fooling eyes.

The fourth safeguard given is the avoidance of her *fondling touch* (vs. 29). There is no way to calculate the power of touch. A mother can, with her touch, calm a frightened child. A companion can touch as though to say, “I am with you.” Yet, outside of marriage, the

touch can be dynamite. I recall years ago working on a job which required working in close confinement. A young lady who worked there would sometimes casually walk by and bump me. There was power in that touch which I soon recognized and avoided. This taught me the valuable lesson that I should always beware of the powerful touch.

When a man succumbs to the flattering tongue, the fleshly beauty, the fooling eyes, and the fondling touch, he is destined for great problems. Our text clearly shows that such a man faces *defilement* in verses 26-29.

For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent. (vs. 26-29)

He faces being *despised* in verses 30-31.

Men do not despise a thief if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house. (vs. 30-31)

He faces *destruction* in verse 32.

But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. (vs. 32)

And at last he faces *dishonor* in verses 33-35.

A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For

jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content though thou givest many gifts.
(vs. 33-35)

Note, in particular, the loss incurred by the man when he fornicates. The Scriptures declare that “by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread. . .” (vs. 26).

When I observe this verse, I think of many lost treasures. A man loses the “treasure of a good name” (Proverbs 22:1). A good name is not acquired over night, but may be lost in a single night. Another treasure is the “treasure of a peaceful mind” (Psalms 51:3). I have seen men with a strong mind and a healthy emotional state crumble after committing adultery. Like David, they would say, “My sin is ever before me.” The perpetual, haunting effect of this sin would take its awful toll, stealing away the treasure of a peaceful mind.

Then there is “the treasure of a healthy body” (Proverbs 7:26-27; 10:27). There are many sexual diseases such as venereal diseases, syphilis, and AIDS which can result from fornication. There is currently a campaign going on to educate people regarding “safe sex.” Outside of the marriage there is no such thing as “safe” sex! The physiological and mental problems will eventually rob a man of “the treasure of a healthy body” (Proverbs 7:26-27, 10:27).

One treasure so often lost is “the treasure of a happy home.” I have heard wives say, “It would have been easier to have heard that he died in a wreck loving me, than for him to do this not knowing if he loved me.” The little children, the wife, and the home

in general are often destroyed when this terrible sin takes place. The home is certainly a treasure to be guarded.

Another sacred treasure of the Christian that is lost is “the treasure of a full ministry” (Proverbs 2:14). Preachers, in a moment of passion have lost their ministry. The loss of this great treasure is an awesome price to pay for a passing pleasure.

When these and other treasures are lost, the only things that remain are “the crumbs.” He is brought to a “piece of bread.”

If each crumb were labeled, the first would be called the “crumb of sorrow,” the next, the “crumb of suffering” and another the “crumb of shattered dreams.” There would finally be the “crumb of the sober reality of what has happened.”

The picture is vividly clear. This terrible sin reduces a man to a piece of bread. . .to a crumb. May we be stirred by this warning found in Proverbs lest we loose *our* most precious treasures.

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