

# HERMENEUTICS

## BOOK ONE AND TWO COMBINED

### Table of Contents

#### Section

- 1 Precommitments of the Interpreter
- 2 The Bible: God's Amazing Book
- 3 Canonicity Definition and Development
- 4 The English Bible and Bible Translations
- 5 An Overview of the Hermeneutics Process
- 6 Observation: What do I see?
- 7 Interpretation: What does it mean?
- 8 The Exegetical Process: Observations and Methods of Gifted  
Expositors of Scripture
- 9 The Exegetical/Interpretive Process: Guidelines, Principles, and Aids
- 10 Correlation: How does it fit together?
- 11 The Main Idea of the Text (MIT) and The Main Idea of the  
Message (MIM)
- 12 Application
- 13 The Role of the Holy Spirit in Biblical Interpretation
- 14 Sermon Teaching Structure and Outlining



# **HERMENEUTICS**

## **BOOK TWO**

### **Table of Contents**

#### Section

15	Titus: A Test Case for Interpreting the Text
16	The History of Interpretation
17	Old Testament Narrative and Poetry
18	Proverbs and Prophecy
19	The Gospels and Parables
20	Acts, Epistles and Revelation
21	Doing Greek Word Studies
22	Theological Systems and Hermeneutics
23	The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics
24	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
25	Luther's Instructions for Studying as a Biblical Hermeneutical Method
26	Melanchthon as Interpreter of the New Testament
27	Resources for the Preaching/Teaching Ministry
28	Filing and Saving Your Work



## **SECTION 1**

### **Precommitments of the Interpreter of the Bible**



**“A PORTRAIT OF THE MINISTER OF GOD”  
(2 Timothy 2:1-7)**

- |             |  |              |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b><u>BE A TEACHER</u></b>                   | <b>2:1-2</b> |
|             | 1. Know where to stand.                      | 2:1          |
|             | 2. Know what to share.                       | 2:2          |
|             | 3. Know who to send.                         | 2:2          |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b><u>BE A SOLDIER</u></b>                   | <b>2:3-4</b> |
|             | 1. Participate in conflict.                  | 2:3          |
|             | 2. Please Christ.                            | 2:4          |
| <b>III.</b> | <b><u>BE A COMPETITOR</u></b>                | <b>2:5</b>   |
|             | 1. Get into the contest.                     |              |
|             | 2. Go for the crown.                         |              |
|             | 3. Engage with care.                         |              |
| <b>IV.</b>  | <b><u>BE A FARMER</u></b>                    | <b>2:6-7</b> |
|             | 1. Accept the requirement of hard work.      | 2:6          |
|             | 2. Anticipate the reward of heavenly wisdom. | 2:7          |

## **PRECOMMITMENTS OF AN INTERPRETER OF SCRIPTURE**

### **1. COMMITMENT TO A HIGH VIEW OF SCRIPTURE. (MATT. 5:17-18; 2 TIM. 3:16-17; 2 PET. 1:20-21)**

- a. What the Bible says, God says.
- b. What God says, we must say.

### **2. CONVICTION OF THE PROFITABILITY OF ALL SCRIPTURE. (2 TIM. 3:14-17)**

- a. No one area of the Bible is any more inspired than another (i.e., The words of Jesus are no more authoritative than the words of Paul. The epistles are no more inspired than the genealogies of the Old Testament.) - (There is equal inspiration, but degrees of importance.)
- b. All interpretation and teaching, therefore, must be lashed to the Scriptures, not rooted in something else.

### **3. CALLING TO RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD OF TRUTH. (2 TIM. 2:15)**

- a. If you cannot say, "this is what God says," you have nothing to say.
- b. The purpose of hermeneutics is to make clear the meaning of a passage.
  - 1. What the author is saying is what we are after.
  - 2. What difference it should make in the hearer's life is what we hope to show.
  - 3. Why God wants the hearer to know this is what will change lives.

### **4. COMMITMENT TO DO SOME CLEAR, HARD THINKING ABOUT WHAT SCRIPTURE MEANS AND, HOW IT APPLIES (James 1:22-25).**

- a. The interpreter must think hard and think well.
- b. He must be thorough and hard working.
- c. The interpreter must understand thinking, how thoughts work, the nature of thought itself, and how those who hear you teach will hear, understand and incorporate truth.

### **5. WILLINGNESS TO BE CONFINED TO THE INTENTION OF THE AUTHOR. (2 TIM. 4:1-5)**

- a. What he is saying is what the interpreter must say.
- b. If it is outside the author's intent, it is outside the intent of the Holy Spirit and therefore outside the realm of divine authority.

- c. Authorial intent constitutes the authority of God.

**EXAMPLE:**

Is it legitimate to teach or preach on the necessity of personal witnessing from John 4 (Jesus and the woman at the well)? What is the valid meaning of John 4? The divine author's meaning is the human author's meaning is the meaning the interpreter should adopt and proclaim.

Never just teach the event. The text always carries more intent than the event. The event itself is mute. The text gives us "interpretive events" not just events.

It is legitimate to say, "This is certainly not John's primary meaning, but it certainly reminds us that..." It is not necessarily true that just because Jesus did something that it is an example for us and that we should do it. When Jesus is stated as an example, we are also told what aspect of His character is to be imitated.

(Note: those who hear you teach will ultimately treat and interpret the Scriptures in the same fashion as you. There is an awesome responsibility here (Jam. 2:1).)

*"Scripture is the foundation of the Church: the Church is the guardian of Scripture, When the Church is in strong health, the light of Scripture shines bright; when the Church is sick, Scripture is corroded by neglect; and thus it happens, that the outward form of Scripture and that of the Church, usually seem to exhibit simultaneously either health or else sickness; and as a rule the way in which Scripture is being treated is in exact correspondence with the condition of the church."*

-Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Quoting John Albert Bengel)

*"The Church and the Scripture stand or fall together. Either the Church will be nourished and strengthened by the bold proclamation of her Biblical texts or her health will be severely impaired." "Should the ministry of the [word] fail, one might just as well conclude that all the supporting ministries of Christian education, counseling, community involvement, yes, even missionary and society outreach, will likewise soon dwindle, if not collapse."*

-Walter Kaiser (pgs 7-8)

## **12 PERSONAL THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS FOR THE STUDENT OF SCRIPTURE**

1. I must do more than quote a Scripture and then depart from it; indepth study and understanding of the text is absolutely necessary.
2. The best way to teach biblical knowledge is to interpret correctly and apply personally what I have learned.
3. Both *kerygma* (preaching) and *didache* (teaching) are essential in gospel proclamation; Scripture and especially the New Testament does not maintain a clear distinction between the two.
4. Preaching and teaching God's Word is the primary responsibility of the pastor, but it is the responsibility also of every believer.
5. When biblical instruction is neglected, the people's morals become unclear and/or readily decline.
6. Throughout history God has used the dual elements of preaching and teaching to reform the church.
7. The content of Scripture must not be sacrificed for eloquence in delivery, though one can and should complement the other.
8. Since Bible study is waning, the laity must be trained how to study the Bible on their own as they imitate expository methods used by the their preachers and teachers.
9. Faithful teaching equips and inspires people to work and witness.
10. Faithful teaching demands a high view of Scripture (verbal, plenary in its inspiration).
11. Faithful teaching encourages people to bring their Bibles to church; it encourages them to read passages to be taught beforehand and to study them afterwards as well.
12. Through faithful and comprehensive teaching, important problems will be handled in a systematic fashion; sharp and uncomfortable truths are more readily accepted when addressed from the Bible in the natural course of study.

## **THE BIBLE**

This book contains: The mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved and practice it to be holy.

It contains light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter.

Here, Heaven is opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the Judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward faithful labor, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

***'Tis the Book that has for the  
ages Lifted man from sin and  
shame; That great message  
on its pages, Will forever be  
the same.'***

Never compare the Bible with other books. Comparisons are dangerous. Books speak from earth; the Bible speaks from Heaven. Never think or say that the Bible contains the Word of God or that it becomes the Word of God. It IS the Word of God. Supernatural in origin, eternal in duration, inexpressible in value, infinite in scope, divine in authorship, regenerative in power, infallible in authority, universal in interest, personal in application, inspired in totality. Read it through. Write it down. Pray it in. Work it out. Pass it on. It is the Word of God.

***"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." 2 Tim 3:16-17***

***"Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in Heaven." Psalm 119:89***

***"Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:11***



## **SECTION 3**

### **CANONICITY**

#### **Definition and Development**

## I. DEFINITION OF CANONICITY

- A. Root meaning – from Greek κανων, meaning rod, ruler, standard for measure.
- B. Theological – rule, standard, norm – normative writings (cf. Gal. 6:16).

## II. DESCRIPTION OF CANONICITY

- A. Sacred books – Deut. 31:24-36 (cf. II Tim 3:15, 16).
- B. Prophetic writings – Zech. 7:12; Luke 24:27 (cf. II Peter 1:20-21).
- C. Apostolic writings – Eph. 2:20 (cf. Acts 2:42); Eph. 3:5.

## III. DETERMINATION OF CANONICITY

- A. Inadequate views:

- 1. Age of the writing determines canonicity.

**Reply:** (a) Many ancient books are not in the canon (Wars of the Lord – Numbers 21:14); (b) Many new books were placed in the canon immediately (Deut. 31:24; Dan. 9:2).

- 2. Language determines canonicity (e.g., Hebrew).

**Reply:** (a) Not all of the OT is in Hebrew (Dan. 2:4b – 7:28; Ezra 4:8 – 6:18; 7:12 – 26 are in Aramaic); (b) Not all Hebrew books are in the canon (e.g., Jasher [Joshua 10], The Apocrypha).

- 3. Agreement with Torah determines canonicity.

**Reply:** (a) This is a test for exclusion not inclusion; (b) Not even all the things that Jesus said and did are included in Scripture (cf. John 21:25).

- 4. Religious value determines canonicity.

**Reply:** (a) Not all inspiring books are inspired; (b) Confuses cause (inspired) and result (inspiring).

- 5. Christian usage determines canonicity.

**Reply:** (a) Also confuses cause (divine inspiration) and result (usage); (b) Then *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Imitation of Christ* should be in the canon too.

NOTE: Common mistake of inadequate views: they confuse determination (by God) and recognition (by men).

- B. Adequate View: Inspiration determines canonicity.
  - 1. God determines canonicity; man discovers it.
  - 2. Books receive canonicity from God and recognition from the people of God.

#### IV. **DISCOVERY OF CANONICITY (5 important questions)**

- A. Was it written by a prophet? An apostle? An association of an apostle? (Heb. 1:1; II Pet. 1:20-21).
- B. Were the writers confirmed by an act of God? (John 3:2; Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:3).
- C. Does it tell the truth about God? (Deut. 18:22; Gal. 1:8).
- D. Does it have the power of God? (Heb. 4:12).
- E. Was it accepted by the people of God? (Dan. 9:2; I Thess. 2:13; II Pet. 3:15).

#### V. **DEVELOPMENT OF CANON**

- A. Progressive development of the OT canon.
  - 1. Moses wrote (Deut. 31:24).
  - 2. Joshua added (Josh. 24:26).
  - 3. Samuel added his writings (I Sam. 10:25).
  - 4. Prophets were collected (Dan. 9:2; Zech. 7:12).  
(Note: Later prophets often quote earlier ones).
  - 5. The OT Canon was the Bible affirmed by Jesus (Luke 24:27, 44). The Jewish canon was Jesus' canon. This is a crucial point.
- B. Progressive Development of the NT canon.
  - 1. NT refers to OT law and prophets (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27).
  - 2. Paul quotes Luke as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18).
  - 3. Paul's letters circulated among the churches (Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27).
  - 4. Peter had at least some of Paul's letters and called them "Scripture" (II Peter 3:16).
- C. Conclusion.
  - 1. Inspired books were circulated and collected into the growing canon as they were written.
  - 2. Later disputes concerning some books should not be confused with the original acceptance.

3. Continual disputes concerning a few books actually strengthens their eventual acceptance (eg. 2 Peter).
- D. The *Antilegomena* books (lit. “to speak against”) – NT books rejected by some and why.
1. Hebrews – anonymity, Jewishness.
  2. James – veracity, Jewishness, apparent conflict with Paul.
  3. II Peter – genuineness.
  4. II John – awareness, circulation.
  5. III John – awareness, circulation.
  6. Jude – awareness, apocryphal citations.
  7. Revelation – authenticity, difficult genre/interpretation.

## VI. THE PERFECTION (COMPLETION) OF NEW TESTAMENT CANON

- A. In “former days” God spoke through the prophets (Heb. 1:1).
- B. But in the “last days” God spoke through His Son (Heb. 1:1).
1. Christ and the Apostles initiated the “last days” (Heb. 1:1; I John 2:18).
  2. Christ is God’s last word in the last days (Heb. 1:2f).
    - a. Christ fulfilled “all things” (Matt. 5:17-18).
    - b. Christ promised “all truth” to His apostles (John 14:26; 16:13).
  3. Christ’s 12 Apostles are the only official channel of His eyewitness teaching (Luke 1:1-2; John 15:27; Acts 1:21, 22; Heb. 2:3-4).
  4. The eyewitness Apostles lived only in the first century (John 15:27; Acts 1:21-22).
  5. The 27 books of the New Testament are the only apostolically confirmed literature extant about Christ.
    - a. Many books were written by eyewitness apostles (Matthew; John; I & II Peter; I, II, III John; Revelation).
    - b. Paul’s letters were confirmed by Apostles teaching (Acts 15; Gal. 2; II Pet. 3:15-16).
    - c. Hebrews was confirmed by the Apostles (Heb. 2:3-4).
    - d. Mark was a disciple and secretary of Peter (I Peter 5:13).
    - e. Luke (Luke, Acts) was an associate of Paul (Acts 16f; Col. 4:16)
    - f. James and Jude were associates of the Apostles [and half brothers of Jesus Christ] (Acts 15; Jude 1; James 1:1).
  6. Therefore, the 27 books of the New Testament are God’s last words in these last days (ie., the canon is closed).

## Which Books Belong In The Bible

by: Norman L. Geisler

The books agreed upon by all Christians	39 Old Testament Books 27 New Testament Books
<p>The books disputed by some Christians</p> <p><i>These books are not accepted by Protestants. Catholics accept 11 of these which are the ones starred (*) or 12 if you count Baruch and the letters to Jeremiah separately.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Book of Wisdom *</li> <li>2. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) *</li> <li>3. Tobit *</li> <li>4. Judith *</li> <li>5. I Maccabees *</li> <li>6. II Maccabees *</li> <li>7. Esther: additions of 10:4-16 &amp; 16:24*</li> <li>8. Daniel: addition of Prayer of Azariah (Dan. 3:24-90 in Catholic Bibles. This is not to be confused with Dan. 3: 24-30 in Jewish and Protestant Bibles).*</li> <li>9. Daniel: addition of Susanna (Dan. 13 In Catholic Bibles).*</li> <li>10. Daniel: addition of Bel and the Dragon (Dan. 14 in Catholic Bibles).*</li> <li>11. Baruch 1-6 – (Baruch 1 – 5; Letter to Jeremiah in Baruch 6, considered No. 15 by some).*</li> <li>12. Prayer of Mannasseh.</li> <li>13. I Esdras (called III Esdras by Catholics).</li> <li>14. II Esdras (called IV Esdras by Catholics).</li> </ol>

At the time of Christ, the OT canon included the 39 OT books as they are found in today's Protestant Bible though they were in a different order (cf. Luke 24). It was not until 1546, at the Council of Trent, that the Catholic Church decreed that the 11 (12 if the Letter of Jeremiah is counted separately) books, listed above with (\*), should be included in the canon.

# THE BOOKS OF THE APOCRYPHA

I ESDRAS
II ESDRAS
TOBIT
JUDITH
ADDITIONS TO ESTHER

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON
ECCLESIASTICUS
BARUCH
THE EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH
THE SONG OF THE THREE HOLY CHILDREN

THE HISTORY OF SUSANNA
BEL AND THE DRAGON
THE PRAYER OF MANASSEH
I AND II MACCABEES
III AND IV MACCABEES

The word APOCRYPHA means hidden, or secret.

**ORIGIN.** The term Apocrypha is generally applied to a collection of books, from eleven to sixteen in number, which appeared in the interim between the Old and New Testaments.

They have come down to us in more or less close connection with the canonical books of the Bible.

They have had a strange history. Ecclesiastical opinion in different periods has differed widely as to the value of the literature.

The Jews of the Dispersion in Egypt placed high value upon these books, and included them in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint (LXX), but they were rejected from the Hebrew canon by the Jews of Palestine.

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH** in the Council of Trent, 1546 A.D., declared eleven of the books to be canonical, and they appear in the modern Catholic edition of the Scriptures.

## THE VIEW OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH

It is commonly agreed that some of these books contain material of

literary merit and historical value. But their canonicity has been rejected, and they have been omitted from the modern editions of the Protestant Bibles, for the following reasons:

1. They are never quoted by Jesus, and it is doubtful if they were ever alluded to by the apostles.
2. Most of the early Fathers regarded them as uninspired.
3. They did not appear in the Ancient Hebrew canon.
4. The inferior quality of most of the writings as compared with the Canonical books stamps them as unworthy of a place in the sacred Scriptures.

## CHARACTER OF THE BOOKS

Authorities differ as to the classification of these books.

The Epistle of Jeremiah is often incorporated in the Book of Baruch, and III and IV Maccabees are often omitted.

**HISTORICAL;** - I and II Maccabees and I Esdras.

**TRADITIONAL;** - Additions to Esther, Susanna, Song of the Three Holy Children, Bel and the Dragon, Judith, and Tobit.

**PROPHETIC;** - Baruch and the Prayer of Manasseh.

**APOCALYPTIC;** - II Esdras and IV Esdras in the Latin Vulgate.

**INSTRUCTIVE;** - Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon (in style like the Proverbs).

## THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

<b>PROTESTANTISM</b>	<b>ROMAN CATHOLICISM</b>	<b>GREEK ORTHODOXY</b>
<b>OLD TESTAMENT</b> Pentateuch (Genesis-Deut) Prophets Early (Joshua-Kings) Latter Major (Isa, Jer, Ezek) Minor (The Twelve) Writings  <b>NEW TESTAMENT</b> Gospels Acts Paul (and Hebrews) Catholic Epistles (James-Jude) Revelation	<b>OLD TESTAMENT</b> Pentateuch (Genesis-Deut) Prophets Early (Joshua-Kings) Latter Major (Isa, Jer, Ezek) Minor (The Twelve) Writings <b>NEW TESTAMENT</b> Gospels Acts Paul (and Hebrews) Catholic Epistles (James-Jude) Revelation	<b>OLD TESTAMENT</b> Pentateuch (Genesis-Deut) Prophets Early (Joshua-Kings) Latter Major (Isa, Jer, Ezek) Minor (The Twelve) Writings  <b>NEW TESTAMENT</b> Gospels Acts Paul (and Hebrews) Catholic Epistles (James-Jude) Revelation
	<b>APOCRYPHA</b> Tobit Judith Additions to Esther Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) Baruch Letter of Jeremiah Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah; Song of the Three Jews; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon” 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees	<b>APOCRYPHA</b> Tobit Judith Additions to Esther Wisdom of Solomon Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) Baruch Letter of Jeremiah Additions to Daniel (Prayer of Azariah; Song of the Three Jews; Susanna; Bel and the Dragon” 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees
		1 Esdras Prayer of Manasseh 3 Maccabees 4 Maccabees Psalm 151

*Selected List of Early Christian Noncanonical Gospels,  
Apocalypses, and Other Writings*

*Works formerly appearing in some New Testament lists:*

The Epistle of Barnabas (attributed to Paul's Jewish-Christian mentor)  
 The Didache (supposedly a summary of the twelve Apostles' teachings on the opposing ways leading to life or death)  
 1 Clement (letter by the third bishop of Rome to the Corinthians)  
 Apocalypse of Peter (visions of heaven and hell Ascribed to Peter)  
 The Shepard of Hermas (a mystical apocalyptic work)  
*Gospels allegedly containing some of Jesus' teachings or other historical information about him:*

The Gospel of Thomas (a compilation of 114 sayings of Jesus found in the Nag Hammadi library)

The Gospel of Peter (a primitive account of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection ascribed to Peter)

The Secret Gospel of Mark (two excerpts from an early edition of Mark preserved in a letter from Clement of Alexandria)  
 The Egerton Papyrus 2 (fragment of an unknown Gospel)  
 The Apocryphon of James (a private dialogue between Jesus and two disciples, Peter and James)

*Other Gospels, most surviving only in fragmentary form:*

The Protoevangelium of James  
 The Dialogue of the Savior  
 The Gospel of the Egyptians  
 The Gospel of the Hebrews  
 The Gospel of the Nazareans  
 The Gospel of the Ebionites  
 The Infancy Gospel of Thomas  
 Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840

*Miscellaneous works:*

The Acts of Pilate  
 The Acts of John

The Epistula Apostolorum  
 2 Clement  
 The Epistle to Diognetus

*Other important early Christian writings:*

The Epistles of Ignatius:  
     To the Ephesians  
     To the Magnesians  
     To the Trallians  
     To the Romans  
     To the Philadelphians  
     To the Smyrnaeans  
     To Polycarp  
 The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians  
 The Martyrdom of Polycarp



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CANONICITY</b> <b>Discovery of Old Testament</b> (An expanded analysis)</p>
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**I. PRINCIPLE(S) OF DISCOVERY**

- A. Was it written by a man of God?
- B. Was he confirmed by an act of God?
- C. Did it tell the truth about God?
- D. Did it have the power of God?
- E. Was it received and collected by the people of God?

**II. PROBLEM OF DISCOVERY OF OT**

- A. *Homologoumena* – Books always accepted by all (all OT books except the OT “antilegomena”).
- B. *Antilegomena* – Books later disputed by some (with an evangelical/orthodox response).

- 1. Song of Solomon – thought to be *sensual* (speaks of sex in marriage).
- 2. Ecclesiastes – thought to be *skeptical* (3:20,21 views life without God).
- 3. Esther – thought to be *unspiritual*; absence of God’s name (God is providentially and sovereignly present).
- 4. Ezekiel – thought to be *anti-mosaical* (a millennial period, fulfillment eschatologically of the Mosaic covenant).
- 5. Proverbs – thought to be *illogical* (26:4-5; value judgments and general principles for life’s various situations).

- C. *Pseudepigrapha* – Books rejected by all.

- 1. Legendary
  - a. The Book of Jubilee
  - b. The Letter of Aristeas
  - c. The Book of Adam and Eve
  - d. The Martyrdom of Isaiah
- 2. Apocalyptic
  - a. I Enoch
  - b. The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
  - c. The Sibylline Oracles
  - d. The Assumption of Moses
  - e. II Enoch, or the Book of Secrets of Enoch
  - f. II Baruch or The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch
- 3. Didactical
  - a. III Maccabees

- b. IV Maccabees
  - c. Pirke Aboth
  - d. The Story of Ahikar
- 4. Poetical
  - a. The Psalms of Solomon
  - b. Psalm 151
- 5. Historical
  - a. The Fragment of Zadokite Work

D. The Apocrypha (“doubtful,” “hidden”)

\*Reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as canonical:

- a. Judaism has never accepted it as inspired.
- b. Great Jewish leaders of old rejected it (Philo, Josephus, the Jamnia scholars).
- c. Jesus and apostles did not accept it.
- d. Most early church fathers rejected it.
- e. Great Roman Catholic biblical scholar, Jerome, rejected it.
- f. Augustine accepted it [for wrong reasons] and misinfluenced others.
- g. Roman Catholic acceptance of it in 1546 was:
  - (1) By wrong group (church rather than Jews).
  - (2) At wrong time (1600+ years later).
  - (3) For wrong reasons (Christian usage rather than propheticity).
- h. Apocrypha does not claim inspiration but even disclaims it (I Mac. 9:27).
- i. Apocrypha has no predictive prophecy or additional Messianic truth.
- j. Apocrypha has unbiblical teaching (prayers for the dead, II Mac. 12:45 [46]).

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CANONICITY</b> <b>Discovery of New Testament</b> (An expanded analysis)</p>
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**I. THE PROMISE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON**

- A. Jesus promised “all truth” to the Apostles (John 14:26; 16:13).
- B. The Apostles claimed this promise (Acts 1:1; 2:42; Eph. 2:20).
- C. The Apostolic Church recognized their authority (Acts 8, 15).

**II. THE PROGRESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON**

- A. Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or associates (Luke 1:1).
- B. Epistles quote gospels as Scripture (I Tim. 5:18).
- C. Apostle Peter accepted Paul’s epistles as Scripture (II Peter 3:15-16).
- D. First century church read and circulated books (Col. 4:16; I Thess. 5:27; I Tim. 4:13; Revelation 1:4).
- E. Last book of the New Testament was written before the end of the first century.
- F. Every New Testament book quoted as Scripture in the second century (except 3 John).
- G. Some books were later doubted by some in the second and third centuries: problems were basically 1) historical, 2) heretical, 3) geographical distribution, and 4) competition and confusion of pseudepigraphal writings.
- H. All books were accepted by virtually all by the fourth century (A.D. 397, Carthage).

**III. THE PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON**

- A. *Homologoumena* – Books accepted by all (20).
  - 1. All but seven “disputed” books (the antilegomena).
  - 2. Philemon, I Peter, and I John were more omitted than disputed in rare instances.

B. New Testament *Pseudepigrapha* – Books rejected by all (mostly 2-4<sup>th</sup> century frauds and heresies).

C. New Testament *Apocrypha* – Books accepted by some:

1. *Barnabas, Hermes, Didache, Clement, Polycarp, Gospel of Hebrews etc;*

2. Their nature:

- a. Sub-apostolic, most second century.
- b. Rise of heresy (e.g., Baptismal regeneration, allegorization).
- c. There was only local and temporary acceptance of them.

#### Early Father's Quotations of The New Testament

WRITER	GOSPEL	ACTS	PAULINE EPISTLES	GENERAL EPISTLES	REVELA- TION	TOTAL
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3	330
Ireneaus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement of Alex.	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
GRAND TOTAL	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

## The New Testament As It Gained Acceptance by the Early Church

A.D. 100	A.D. 200	A.D. 250	A.D. 300	A.D. 400
<p>All portions of our New Testament were written by this time, but not yet collected and clearly defined as 'Scripture'. In some instances, however, a status of Scripture was being applied (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Peter 3:16). Early Christian writers (for example Polycarp and Ignatius) quote from the Gospels and Paul's letters, as well as from other Christian writings and oral sources.</p> <p>Paul's letters were collected in the latter part of the first century. Matthew, Mark and Luke were brought together by AD 150.</p>	<p><b>New Testament used In the church at Rome (the 'Muratorian Canon')</b></p> <p>Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters: Romans I &amp; II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians I &amp; II Thess. I &amp; II Timothy Titus Philemon James I &amp; II John Revelation of John Revelation of Peter Wisdom of Solomon</p> <p><b>To be used in private, but not public worship:</b></p> <p>The Shepherd of Hermas</p>	<p><b>New Testament used by Origen</b></p> <p>Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters: Romans I &amp; II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians I &amp; II Thess. I &amp; II Timothy Titus Philemon I Peter I John Revelation of John</p> <p><b>Disputed</b></p> <p>Hebrews James II Peter II &amp; III John Jude The Shepherd of Hermas Letter of Barnabas Teaching of Twelve Apostles (The Didache) Gospel of the Hebrews</p>	<p><b>New Testament used by Eusebius</b></p> <p>Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters: Romans I &amp; II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians I &amp; II Thess. I &amp; II Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James I Peter I John Revelation of John (authorship in doubt for some)</p> <p><b>Disputed but well known</b></p> <p>James II Peter II &amp; III John Jude</p>	<p><b>New Testament fixed for the West by the Council of Carthage (397)</b></p> <p>Four Gospels Acts Paul's letters: Romans I &amp; II Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians I &amp; II Thess. I &amp; II Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James I &amp; II Peter I, II, &amp; III John Jude Revelation</p> <p><b>To be excluded</b></p> <p>The Shepherd of Hermas Letter of Barnabas Gospel of the Hebrews Revelation of Peter Acts of Peter The Didache</p>

FORMING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON						
Other Books Being Written			e.g., Pseudepigraphal, Apocryphal Books			
		140 – “Canon of Marcion” the heretic The <u>Gospel</u> - shortened Luke The <u>Apostle</u> - 10 edited Pauline epistles (less 1 and 2 Timothy & Titus) - all OT references omitted		303 – EDICT OF DIOCLETIAN		
Christ	AD 100	AD 140	AD 170	AD 230	AD 315	AD 367
♥ THE GOSPEL According to Matthew According to Mark Etc. ♥ THE APOSTLE To Romans Etc. ♥ PLUS (Acts: Pivotal Book) ----- = 27 Books		<h1>PERIOD OF ANTILEGOMENA AND PROGRESSIVE DEFINING OF CANON</h1>				
	Church began to see necessity of defining the canon. 1. 4 Gospels not 1 2. 13 Paul’s Epistles not 10 3. Acts 4. Writings of some of the other Apostles	Muratorian Canon – 170 - response “Counter to Marcion” - Omits Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter	ORIGEN - Does not enumerate all 27 as authentic	EUSEBIUS - States some of 27 to be disputed by some Christians	ATHANASIUS - First know list of 27 (AD 367) Jerome & Augustine (both affirm the 27) 393 – Council of Hippo 397 – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cn of Carthage 419 – 4 <sup>th</sup> Cn of Carthage	

# CANONIZATION

## I. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES IN THE FORMATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

1. Practice of the early Christians in their worship (patterned after the synagogues). N.T. memoirs of the apostles were read along with the O.T. side by side (in history there was a continuous and growing acceptance and usage by a large number of churches over a long period of time).
2. Quotations from apostolic writings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century added support.
3. Presence of heresy caused them to see the need for a canon.
4. Persecution causes some writings to receive higher standing (which writings are you willing to die for?).
5. Method of book making (Codex allowed binding of several books). This aided in distribution and circulation of the N.T. books.

## II. INTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Rule of faith (core of doctrine from which one cannot depart).
2. The real or related (contact with an apostle) apostolic origin of a book.
3. Internal witness of Scripture by the Spirit.

## III. ATTEMPT TO CANONIZE OFFICIALLY

1. Made first apparently by Marcion about A.D. 140 (accepts part of Luke and ten Pauline letters).
2. A.D. 170 Muratorian fragment (Hebrews, James, III John, I & II Peter not included).
3. A.D. 367 Athanasius set forth a list expressing the canon as it now stands. Widely accepted; 393 and 397 reaffirmed under the leadership of Augustine (came into official being because of heresy; authoritative because of its apostolic origin; enduring because of the witness of the Holy Spirit).

# NEW TESTAMENT

## I. WHY THE NEW TESTAMENT WAS COLLECTED

- A. Authoritative words of Christ needed preserving.
- B. Need for a New Covenant Document to complement the Old Covenant.
- C. Apostles were dying and their testimony needed to be preserved.
- D. Troubles in churches required authoritative instruction.
- E. Persecution necessitated a collection of the books for which one would suffer.

## II. HOW THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS WERE COLLECTED

- A. Test of Canonicity
  - 1. Inspiration
  - 2. Apostolicity
  - 3. Doctrinal Purity
  - 4. Genuineness
  - 5. Catholicity
- B. Things That Slowed the Process
  - 1. Position of the Old Testament
  - 2. Slow Communication/Travel
  - 3. Lack of Church Sponsor for some books
  - 4. Weak Internal Evidence
- C. History of Process
  - 1. Apostles to A.D. 140 – Dissemination, collection, and regional recognition
  - 2. A.D. 140-180 – Developments toward a fixed canon
  - 3. A.D. 180-240 – Universal confirmation and consensus
  - 4. A.D. 350ff Official recognition and final agreement

“The Christian movement hasn’t seriously examined the question of canon since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It’s time for academic scholars to raise the issue.”

*Jesus Seminar Leader  
Robert Funk  
Head of the Westar Institute  
Sonoma, CA  
U.S. News & World Report  
November 8, 1993*



But since we have referred to the heretics as dead, and to us as having the divine scriptures unto salvation, and as I fear, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, lest some few of the simple may be led astray by deceit from simplicity and purity by the wiles of men, and finally may begin to read the so-called apocrypha, deceived by the likeness of the names to those of the true books... Since some have turned their hand to draw up for themselves the so-called apocrypha, and to mingle these with the inspired writ, concerning which we are informed fully, as those handed down to the fathers who were from the beginning directly seers and servants of the word, *it seemed good also to me*, urged by true brethren, and having learned from time gone by, *to set forth in order from the first the books that are canonized* and handed down and believed to be divine, so that each, if he has been deceived, may detect those who have misled him, and the one remaining pure may rejoice at being put in mind of it again...[the books are listed]. These are the wells of salvation, so that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the sayings of these. In these alone is the teaching of godliness heralded. Let no one add to these. Let nothing be taken away from these...

Athanasius' 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter  
Easter A.D. 367

## **SECTION 4**

The English Bible and Bible Translations

## **The English Bible**

Prior to the Norman conquest of England in 1066, sporadic attempts to translate portions of the Bible from Latin into Anglo-Saxon were carried out. These efforts did not cover large segments of the Bible and were not intended for the common person.

### ***Earliest Bible in England***

Latin Vulgate

Bible of the people- Painting, carvings, stain glass windows, etc.

### ***“Old English”***

CAEDMON – used poetry and songs to communicate biblical stories in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

ALDHELM (d. 709) – translated portions of the Psalms, Lord’s Prayer, and Decalogue.

VENERABLE BEDE (d. 735) – Known as the Father of English history and the greatest name in the history of the early English church. He translated portions of the Bible from the Latin into Old English. No traces of his work are known to exist. It is believed that he may have been translating the Gospel of John at the time of his death.

## **John Wycliffe – The Morning Star of the Reformation (1330-1384)**

The first complete Bible translated into English (Middle English) was the Wycliffe Bible of 1382. John Wycliffe, assisted by *Nicholas of Hereford* and *John Purvey*, utilized the Latin Vulgate as the basis for their work.

Wycliffe intended his work for the common man. The Wycliffe Bible may be seen as a major impetus to later translators who shared his conviction that the Bible should be in the vernacular of the common man. The Wycliffe Bible was condemned as heretical and copies were confiscated and burned. In 1428 his body was exhumed and his bones burned. However, copies of his translation were produced and exerted much influence despite official persecution.

**The sixteenth century:** represents the most active period in the history of English translations until recently. Three significant events precipitated this remarkable era.

- A renaissance of classical learning, particularly in Greek: When Constantinople fell in 1453 Greek scholars migrated to the West and brought ancient manuscripts with them, giving impetus to the study of the Greek NT.
- Gutenberg’ printing press: The moveable type printing press that allowed the printing of both Greek and Hebrew texts.
- The Protestant Reformation (1517): When Tyndale came to Cambridge Luther was preparing to nail his 95 theses to the Wittenberg church door. The Reformation is tied closely to the many attempts to give people the Bible in the vernacular. One of the fundamental principles of the Reformation was that the Bible must be in the common language of the people.

## **William Tyndale - The Father of the English Bible (1484-1536)**

Tyndale went to Oxford at an early age and received the Master of Arts in 1515. After lecturing at Oxford for a year he moved to Cambridge, where he took up the study of Greek and was introduced to protestant sympathies.

Despite strong ecclesiastical opposition, he published the first printed English NT (1525/26). He also translated portions of the OT. The translations were based on Hebrew and Greek. Another edition was printed at Antwerp. In 1535 Tyndale was kidnapped from Antwerp and imprisoned in Brussels by the emperor, Charles V. In August 1536 he was convicted of heresy and condemned to death. He was strangled, tied to a stake, and burned. It is reported that his final words were a prayer: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." What He did not know was that shortly before his death Henry VIII granted permission for an English Bible to circulate among the people – a Bible that was largely the work of Tyndale.

Several factors concerning his work are important:

- Tyndale believed deeply that the Bible must be given to the common man in the common language.
- His work was based on the original languages of the Bible, thus representing a significant difference from Wycliffe's work.
- Tyndale was so capable at the task of translation that subsequent English translators depended heavily on his work for both content and style. Several later "translations" were merely revisions of his work. It is estimated that 9/10 of the KJV of 1611 is Tyndale, and where the Authorized Version departed from Tyndale, later revisers often returned to it.
- Tyndale included marginal notes, many of which contained caustic remarks concerning the religious establishment. These marginal notes often contributed to the resistance of religious and civil authorities toward his work.

Differences between Wycliffe and Tyndale's work:

- Wycliffe's Bible is a translation of Jerome's Latin Vulgate; Tyndale's went back to the Hebrew and Greek.
- Wycliffe's Bible was still hand-copied manuscript Bible; Tyndale's was printed.
- Wycliffe translated into Middle English; Tyndale's belongs to the Modern Period.

### **The Coverdale Bible (1535)**

Miles Coverdale (1488-1569), Augustinian friar, graduate of Cambridge, and an acquaintance of Tyndale, produced the first complete English Bible of the sixteenth century. After coming under the influence of the reformation he left his order. It was while he was on the continent that he worked with Tyndale for a time.

He dedicated the work to Henry VIII. The dedication denounces the pope, who is compared to Caiphas. He completed the translation of the Old Testament by utilizing other versions (Latin and German) because he did not know Hebrew. The New Testament is little more than a revision of Tyndale's work. What was new in Coverdale's Bible was that he was the first to remove the Apocryphal books from their position among the Old Testament books as they are in the LXX and Latin Vulgate, and place them between the Testaments. He included a note advising the reader that they are not found in the Hebrew Bible and are not the same authority as the canonical books.

Although Coverdale was not the scholar Tyndale was, he gave most of his life to giving the English a Bible in their own tongue.

### **The Matthew Bible (1537)**

**John Rogers (1500-1555)**, a close associate of Tyndale, was responsible for this work. The Matthew Bible was the first English Bible to be licensed by King Henry VIII. Roger's work was essentially the completion of Tyndale's work. Tyndale had never completed the OT, and it was left to John Rogers, a disciple of

Tyndale. Rogers took the pen name Thomas Matthew. When England reverted to Roman Catholicism under “Bloody Mary,” Rogers was the first to be burned at the stake in 1555.

The Matthew Bible and the second edition of Coverdale’s Bible were the first English Bibles to be licensed by King Henry VIII.

### **The Great Bible (1539)**

The Great Bible received its name because of its size (161.2 by 11 inches). It was more of a revision of the Matthew Bible than a new translation. English authorities, including Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell, and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer encouraged that a copy of this Bible be secured and displayed in every church. So popular did the reading of these Bibles become that the king had to issue a proclamation forbidding the reading of the English Bible aloud during divine services. To this day the Book of Common Prayer has the Psalms from the Great Bible. Upon Cromwell’s execution in 1640, stringent laws were enacted which controlled access to the Bible in English. Under Mary Tudor (“Bloody Mary” many reformers were martyred.

### **The Geneva Bible (1560)**

#### Political Changes

The final years of Henry VIII were turbulent:

- Parliament in 1543 made it a crime for unlicensed people to read or expound the Bible publicly and even forbid the private reading of the Bible by those belonging to the lower classes.
- Henry VII himself went further in 1546, making it illegal to “receive, have, take, or keep, Tyndale’s or Coverdale’s NT.” Bibles were again burned in London. Actually these decrees were absurd, for as long as the Great Bible was the officially accepted Bible; the readers had essentially the literary products of Tyndale and Coverdale.
- With Henry’s death in 1547 and the accession of Edward VI, the trend was reversed, and during his reign all previous translations were frequently reprinted.
- On the accession of Mary in 1553, Edward’s Reformation policies were reversed. John Rogers and Thomas Cranmer were executed and Coverdale sought asylum on the Continent. Mary, however, did not outlaw the Great Bible, and when Elizabeth I reversed Mary’s pro-Roman policies, it was still the standard English version.

#### An English Bible from Geneva

Also known as “*Shakespeare’s Bible*,” this version was produced in Geneva by scholars associated with the Reformation of John Calvin and Theodore Beza. The Geneva Bible was superior to other versions because of the solid linguistic background of its translators. This Bible became exceedingly popular among English speaking people. The Apocrypha appears as an appendix to the OT, with a note saying that they may be read for the advancement and furtherance of knowledge and for instruction in godly manners, but they are not to be expounded as Scripture.

The marginal notes are clearly Calvinistic in doctrine, yet they are not as polemical as Tyndale’s marginal notes against Rome. The Geneva Bible is divided into verses. Words that have no equivalent in the original text are printed in italics – a practice continued by the translators of the 1611 Authorized Version. The Bible was printed in Geneva in Roman rather than Gothic type making it easier to read. It immediately became the most popular Bible in England. It was the Bible of John Knox and Scotland. The Geneva Bible was the Bible of Shakespeare, the Puritans, the Bible of the Pilgrim Fathers. It is also known as the Elizabethan Bible. Next to Tyndale, the Geneva Bible had the greatest influence on the Authorized Version.

### **Bishop’s Bible (1560)**

The popularity of the Geneva Bible (and its Calvinistic notes) caused the English authorities to desire a new translation, which would replace both the Geneva Bible and the Great Bible. The result was the Bishop's Bible, but this version failed to capture the people's imagination.

### **The King James Version (1611)**

In 1603 Elizabeth I died and the crown of England passed to James I, who had already been king of Scotland for thirty-six years as James VI. At the Hampton Court conference action was taken that a new translation of the whole Bible be undertaken based on the Hebrew and Greek. The Bible was to have no marginal notes (with the exception of the explanation of Hebrew or Greek words) and was to be read in all churches of England. The Bishops' Bible was to be used as the basis for the revision/translation, but it was to be examined in the light of the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT. All the available English versions were consulted, as well as other language translations and the Latin versions. The translators/revisers were given free room and board, but did their work gratis.

The AV quickly replaced the bishops Bible as the official version for public services. However, it had a more difficult time displacing the Geneva Bible. Eventually (about half a century) the AV won out over all others because of its superior merit and its freedom from sectarian notations.

#### *Noteworthy Factors:*

1. This was a translation rather than a revision. The translators used the available textual evidence from all sources available to them.
2. The text underlying the New Testament is basically the Syrian (Byzantine).
3. Marginal notes of a sectarian nature were eliminated.
4. Acceptance of the King James Version initially was resisted vigorously.
5. By the mid seventeenth century the innate superiority and beauty of language of the KJV assured it would be the favored translation among English speaking people until the twentieth century.

### ***Douay Version***

The Douay Version was a result of the Catholic counter- reformation. The council of Trent in 1546 decided that the Latin Vulgate was to be regarded as the authoritative text. Originally published in 1609-1610, the present Douay Version is the 1749 revision. The OT was produced in Douay, France, and the NT in Rheims, France (Rheims NT). It is based upon the Latin Vulgate and not the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

#### *Modern Translations:*

**The Revised Version (1881-1885)** - Developments in textual critical theory, new manuscripts, and a sentiment that the King James language needed to be updated led to the production of the Revised Version, essentially a British Protestant effort. This version was based on the textual critical theories of Westcott and Hort.

### **The American Standard Version (1901)**

**Revised Standard Version (RSV; 1946 NT; 1952 whole Bible)** – was intended to update the KJV and the ASV for mainline churches of the National Council of Churches. It was intended to reflect ecumenical scholarship.

#### **Selected translations of the 1960s and 1970s:**

**New American Standard (1960, 1995)** – intended as an update of the ASB. The NASB seeks to be a literal translation that facilitate Bible study and hold to a high view of Scripture. It is one of the most accurate translations of the original languages and good for Bible study. Its strengths means in one sense is its greatest weakness. Its faithfulness to the syntax of the original languages means that it is rather wooden at times in its translation. The original edition was on an eleventh grade reading level, while the newer edition is on a 9.3 reading level. (Formal Equivalence)

**New English Bible (NT: 1961; whole Bible: 1970)** – a translation intended to provide British churches with a new translation in contemporary idiom for worship and Bible study. The British style of English would be a weakness of an American English reader. The translation is quite free especially in the OT in making textual changes. The estimated reading level according to the publisher is tenth grade.

**Today's English Version (NT—Good News for Modern Man: 1966; whole Bible: 1976)** – A modern English translation that is beneficial for those with English as a second language. It is written in the popular English of the 60's. (Dynamic equivalence; 6.2)

#### **The Jerusalem Bible: 1966**

**New International Version (NT: 1973; whole Bible: 1978)** – The NIV is an evangelical/conservative translation. The translation team represented a wide range of evangelical churches. (Dynamic equivalence; 6.1)

**New Revised Standard Version (1989)** – The NRSV is an update of the RSV incorporating the latest scholarship. It is a gender-neutral translation. It does not emend the text as often as the RSV does, while maintaining something of the majestic language for worship. The gender emphasis makes the reading difficult and reflects a theological emphasis unacceptable to many evangelicals. Formal equivalence/literary English; 8.1)

**The Message (NT 1993; OT being gradually released)** – This translation is an attempt to put the Bible into the language of modern conversation. The style of language is rough, earthy, and common of everyday life. It is a good translation to catch the attention of the Biblically illiterate. Its strengths are its greatest weaknesses. Its simplicity tends to water down significant doctrinal emphases. (Paraphrase; 7.0)

**The New Living Translation (1996)** – A scholarly revision of the Living Bible based upon the original languages. It retains the dynamic readability of the living Bible but is based on the work of strong evangelical scholarship. Its limited vocabulary and simple sentence structure makes it enjoyable for reading large sections of scripture, but weak for serious Bible study. (Dynamic Equivalence; 4.0 reading level)

#### **Translation Theories:**

1. Formal equivalence – Remain as close as possible to the Hebrew and Greek syntax, word order, grammar, and vocabulary.
2. Dynamic Equivalence – Attempts to focus on modern, conversational language with sentence or paragraph, not word, as the basic unit.

# It's All Greek to Me: Clearing Up The Confusion About Bible Translations<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In the 60's and early 70's the KJV was virtually the only Bible that anyone owned, however, in the past 30-40 years there has been a proliferation in the translations options available to people.

KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT, LB, NCV, The Message, TNIV, ESV, HCSB

This assortment of translations raises some important questions. Why are there so many different translations? What are the key differences between them? And finally, which translations are best for you?

## **I. Why are there so many translations?**

The Bible was not originally written in English.

- The OT was written in Hebrew and a few passages in the related language Aramaic.
- The NT was written exclusively in Greek, although in a form that differs significantly from the modern language.

For us to read the Bible in English, it has to be translated. Someone has to read it in the original language and spend some time considering how to express it in English. This process is not as simple as it sounds and this is one of the reasons why we have so many different translations.

**First**, scholars differ on how translation should be done. **Second**, the English language changes over time, leading to updates of previous versions or entirely new ones.

### **1. Different versions reflect different theories of translation.**

Many wonder why we cannot have a very literal translation that does not interpret the text. The answer is that if we were to follow the Hebrew or Greek exactly, most passage would be utterly confusing and possibly unintelligible.

- Jn 1.18: (NIV) "No one has seen God, but God the one and only, who is at the father's side, has made him known."
- Literal-interlinear translation: "God no one has seen ever: only begotten God the being into the bosom of the father that one explained."

While one might be able to make sense of this verse, it is difficult to understand and terrible English. All translations must make a number of changes and interpretative decisions to render Scripture in intelligible English

- (1) English word order must be given priority. English is locked into subject-verb-object order, whereas a Greek writer can move these elements around anywhere in the sentence. So "Go no one has seen ever" becomes "No one has ever seen God."
- (2) Many expressions must be interpreted and expressed in a different grammatical form in English. For example, a participle may need to be expressed with a finite verb and made into a relative clause, so that "the being" becomes "who is."
- (3) Words not in the Greek text, but are implied, must be added: "that one explained [him]."

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold, Clinton. *Discipleship Journal* (132:2002)



- (4) Certain words need to be interpreted: “Only begotten” (KJV, NASB) is one possible way to translate *monogenes*; a better interpretation might be unique (ESV, NRSV), or “one and only” (NIV).
- (5) Certain words may need an English translation that is closer to what the term actually meant than to the precise term itself. Although the Greek term *kolpos* indicates a person’s chest or bosom, translating it with one of these terms might confuse the English reader. Thus the NIV and ESV translate it as the “Father’s side,” and the NLT uses “near to the father’s heart.”

A lot of work is involved in getting a Greek sentence into a form of English that makes sense.

A root issue is this: Should the translation place priority on the exact form of the original text or on clarity of the English expression. If the emphasis is placed on following as closely as possible the wording of the original languages, readability suffers. If the translation stresses readability, literalness is sacrificed and much more interpretation takes place. These differences of philosophy have led to a variety of different translations.

## **2. Different versions reflect differences in the English language.**

English has changed a great deal since the KJV was first published. In addition to the passing of the *thees* and *thous*, many other expressions are no longer used or they now have different meanings.

- Mk. 2.3; sick of the palsy
- Ps. 139.13: thou has possessed my reins
- Heb. 8.13; decayeth and waxeth old
- Ro. 13.3: not in chambering and wantonness
- Is. 32.7: the instruments of the churl are evil
- Gen 26.8: Isaac was sporting with his wife
- Job 41.18: by his neesings a light doth shine
- Jas. 2.3: ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing
- Acts 19.9: when divers were hardened and believed not

Our language has changed considerably. Some of the changes are passing fads; others are here to stay. The biggest shift in the past 30 years is the diminishing use of he, him, and man in a generic sense to indicate both male and females. This change has led to one of the largest controversies to face Bible translators in many years.

- Some translation committees believe that new versions need to reflect gender-neutral terminology.
- Others resist this move, believing that this change represents a capitulation to feminist interests and more importantly, unduly alters the meaning of many passages.

## **II. What are the key differences between translations?**

### **1. Translation philosophies**

Translation philosophies cause significant differences among various Bible translations. These philosophies represent two different poles on a spectrum.

- One end of the spectrum gives priority to exactness to the original form,
- while the other end emphasizes clarity and readability in English.

Formal Equivalence – these translations attempt a word-for-word translation. The goal is to be as accurate as possible to the form of the text in the original language.

Dynamic (functional) equivalence: this philosophy is basically a thought for thought translation. Advocates of this view are seeking to be as accurate as possible, but their focus is on meaning, rather than the precise form of the original.

(NOTE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES CHART)

(NOTE THE CHART COMPARING VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS HANDLING OF ROMANS 3.23)

Paraphrase: A paraphrase is a rewording of an existing English translation rather than a fresh translation from the original languages.

**Issues that a translation committee must consider:**

**1. Audience: To whom is the translation addressed?**

There are different ways to look at this question. The first is in terms of age. Is the translation for adults or children? **Overhead**: 1 John 2.2

The age will determine the complexity of sentence structure. **Overhead**: Ephesians 1.3-14

Is the translation for believers or unbelievers? **Overhead**: Romans 11.26; Luke 2.7

**2. Will the translation focus on words or meaning?**

This is the debate between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Another way to state this is will the translators focus on translating words or meaning.

Problems with Formal Equivalence:

- (1) **All translation to some degree involves interpretation.** For example, a rather literal translation of John 2.4 is, "Jesus says to her, 'What to me and to you.'" **Overhead**: John 2.4; Ro. 16.1; John 5.6; 1 Cor. 6.19-10 (see Mounce's discussion of the term *malakos*, which is a term that refers to the passive member in a homosexual relationship.)
- (2) **A second difficulty is that a word-for-word translation can distort the meaning of a verse.** For example the term *polis* in reference to Nazareth can conjure up the wrong idea in someone's mind. Nazareth was more like a village than what we think of as a city.

## Problems with Dynamic Equivalence

- (1) **A failure to deal adequately at times with dependent clauses.** A dependent clause is one that cannot stand on its own; it is not a complete sentence. Usually we put our main thought in an independent clause and secondary thoughts in an independent clause. (See Mounce for two examples)
- (2) A second problem with this method is a tendency to over interpret the text for the reader. **Overhead**; James 3.1;

- (3) A third weakness is that in the attempt to make the Bible understandable it updates the Bible to the point that the ancient nature of the text, which gives it a sense of awe and longevity is sacrificed.
- (4) A fourth weakness with the dynamic equivalence is that it allows English style more sway than does formal equivalence. (*See Mounce example of 1 Tim. 2.1-6 in NIV and TNIV p. 29*).

## Other issues that cause a difference between formal and dynamic equivalence

3. *How will the translators deal with ambiguity in the text?* 2 Cor. 5.14; Ro. 9.5; Acts 1.48;
4. *Will the translation make explicit what is only implicit in the text?*
5. *Will the translation “fill out the story?”*
6. *How will the translation committee deal with possible misunderstandings in the translation?*
7. *How will the translators handle “sensitive” issues or euphemisms?*
8. *How will the committee’s theological assumptions affect the translation*
9. *How will the committee handle the inclusive language debate?*

Examples where a freer translation is helpful: Overhead – Isaiah 5.10; Matt. 18.24-28

### 2. Manuscript Base

Another difference between versions is the manuscript base for the translation. The KJV of 1611 (as well as the NKV) was based on Erasmus’ edition of the Greek text, which was itself based on about six Greek manuscripts. These were part of a grouping of manuscripts known as the Byzantine form of the text.

However, many new manuscripts have been discovered since the publication of the KJV. All other modern versions make use of an extensive manuscript collection of more than 5000 Greek manuscripts and 10,000 Latin manuscripts, as well as numerous manuscripts in ancient versions (such as Coptic, Syriac, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, and others).

Although the majority of differences between these two manuscript bases are exceedingly minor and do not result in variations in the meaning of the text, there are some that are important. One such example is *Jn. 1.18*:

***KJV***: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

***NASB***: No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

While it would be going to far afield right now to go into the details of textual criticism now and the complex reasons why the revisers of the KJV and the creators of the NKJV did not expand there textual basis; it is important to note here that these Bibles are based on a different collection of manuscripts from other English versions.

### ***III. Which are the best translations for you?***

- 1. Personal Bible Reading**
- 2. Careful Bible Study**
- 3. Public Scripture Reading**
- 4. All-around Bibles**

# WHAT ARE TRANSLATIONS

Introduction – Communication is not as easy as it appears.

- What about communicating in the same language in the same country?
- What about communicating in the same language but in a different country?
- What about speaking in a different language but living in the same century?
- What happens when you get all the way down the progression and you have different languages from different countries separated by centuries, which is the position we are in with the Bible.

For example, Acts 20.37 says in a word for word translation: “They fell on his neck.” What does that mean? They were embracing and kissing him, but how do you get that from that translation?

*THE POINT IS THAT COMMUNICATION IS NOT SIMPLE. IF THERE IS MISCOMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE, LIVING IN THE SAME CULTURE, LOOKING DIRECTLY AT EACH OTHER AND BEING ABLE TO SEE BODY LANGUAGE AND ALL THE OTHER CLUES WE USE IN COMMUNICATION, THEN HOW MUCH MORE DIFFICULT IT IS TO UNDERSTAND COMMUNICATION COMING FROM TWO THOUSAND YEARS AG, THROUGH DIFFERENT A LANGUAGE, STEMMING FROM AS DIFFERENT CULTURE.*

The reason this is so important is that it is the meaning conveyed by the words of scripture that is so crucial to us, but to get to that meaning we have to go through words and grammar. And because many of you do not know Greek and Hebrew you must rely on the translators’ understanding of the words and grammar as they attempt to convey the passage’s meaning. But why are the translations so different if they are working with the same words and grammar?

Key questions that each translation committee must answer:

1. Audience: To whom am I writing? Who is my audience?

- To whom am I writing? Age, Are they believers? Is the translation for public or private reading?

2. Words or Meaning – Am I going to translate words or meaning?

- Caveat – the meaning of the word literal
- Two approaches – “Formal equivalence” and “Dynamic equivalence”
- Problems with formal equivalence: (1) It is interpretive. (2) Word for word translations can lose or distort meaning.
- Problems with dynamic equivalence: (1) They generally do not view the structure of the language as having much connection with meaning, therefore they often exercise great freedom in translating. (2)

3. Ambiguity – What am I going to do with ambiguity?

4. Move implicit to explicit – Will the translation make explicit what is only implicit in the Greek or Hebrew text?
5. Fill out the story – Will a translation “fill out the story?”
6. Possible Misunderstanding – How will the translation committee deal with possible misunderstandings in their translation?
7. Sensitivity and Euphemism – How do the translators handle “sensitive” issues?
8. Theological biases – How do a committee’s theological assumptions affect the translation?
9. Inclusive language – What will the translators handle inclusive language?

### **An Examination of Bible Translations**

**King James Version** – its strength is that it continues to be the best example of the power of classic English language; easy to memorize; poetic feel. Its obvious weakness is its obsolete vocabulary and complex sentence structure, which make it difficult for modern readers, especially those without a church background. Its translation theory is formal equivalence (remain as close to the Hebrew and Greek syntax, word order, grammar, and vocabulary as possible). Publisher reading level is 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Ryken: Three reasons for its decline in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: (1) its language is now outdated; (2) the translators knowledge of ancient languages was less reliable than modern knowledge is; (3) and the translation uses a text that most scholars no longer consider the most reliable (Textus receptus).*

### **Modern Translations:**

**The Revised Version (1881-1885)** - Developments in textual critical theory, new manuscripts, and a sentiment that the King James language needed to be updated led to the production of the Revised Version, essentially a British Protestant effort. This version was based on the textual critical theories of Westcott and Hort. The translators were allowed to introduce only those readings that would render the Authorized Version closer to the original languages and would not modernize the English unduly. The American translation teams were not satisfied with the strict guidelines but were prohibited from making more drastic changes.

Important contributions: (1) arrangement of the content of the paragraphs, (2) improved consistency in lacing words not in the original in italics, (3) printing OT poetry in indented poetic lines (instead of as prose), (3) inclusion of marginal notes that alert the reader to variations in wording of ancient manuscripts.

**The American Standard Version (1901)** – Americans were given a role in the (English) Revised Version; however, many of their suggestions were not accepted. The American committee remained intact after the publication of the Revised Version, and when the English copyright ran out they produced a version of their own. It was a more thorough revision of the Authorized Version than its British counterpart.

**Revised Standard Version (RSV; 1946 NT; 1952 whole Bible)** – was intended to update the KJV and the ASV for mainline churches of the National Council of Churches. It was intended to reflect ecumenical scholarship. Its theological basis can be seen in its translation of Isaiah 7.14 and its readiness to emend the standard Hebrew text without basis. (Formal equivalence – 10.4)

The translation was criticized for perceived doctrinal liberalness. Most of the criticism was aimed at the translation rather than the translators. One minister burned the version with a blowtorch in the pulpit, remarking that like the devil it was hard to burn. He then sent the ashes to the chairman of the RSV committee. That, of course, is better than burning the translators, which they did in the days of Tyndale. Pamphlets appeared entitled, “The Bible of the Antichrist.” However, one woman began reading it and enjoyed it so much that she admitted she loved it “almost as much as the Bible.” Robert Mounce, a significant evangelical scholar in a review for *Eternity* (1974) referred to the RSV as the best translation in the English language for general use.

**New American Standard (1960, 1995)** – intended as an update of the ASB. The NASB is the work of 58 evangelical scholars and seeks to be a literal translation that facilitate Bible study and uphold to a high view of Scripture. It is one of the most accurate translations of the original languages and good for Bible study. Its strengths in one sense is its greatest weakness. Its faithfulness to the syntax of the original languages means that it is rather wooden at times in its translation making it awkward to read. The original edition was on an eleventh grade reading level, while the newer edition is on a 9.3 reading level. (Formal Equivalence)

Ryken: The NASB was the translation of choice for evangelicals until the NIV. One significant weakness was that it printed each verse as an individual unit resulting in a fragmented text, more recent editions are available in paragraph style.

**New English Bible (NT: 1961; whole Bible: 1970)** – a translation intended to provide British churches with a new translation in contemporary idiom for worship and Bible study. The British style of English would be a weakness for an American English reader. The translation is quite free especially in the OT in making textual changes. The estimated reading level according to the publisher is tenth grade.

**Today's English Version (NT—Good News for Modern Man: 1966; whole Bible: 1976)** – A modern English translation that is beneficial for those with English as a second language. It is written in the popular English of the 60's. During its first six years of existence approximately thirty-five million copies were sold worldwide and by the publication of the OT fifty million copies had been sold. (Dynamic equivalence; 6.2)

Ryken: The TEV is important because it is the first thoroughgoing outgrowth of Eugene Nida's dynamic theory of translation. In 1995 it adopted gender inclusive language and avoidance of theological terms like atonement, redemption, and righteousness.

Elimination of some technical terms:

Antichrist	enemy of Christ (1 John 2.18,22)
Elders/bishops	church leaders (Phil. 1.14; 1 Tim. 3.2)
Caesar	Emperor or Roman Emperor (Lk. 2.1; 3.1)
Deacons	Church helper (Phil. 1.1; 1 Tim. 3.8)
Centurion	Army Officer (Matt. 27.54)
Repent	Turn away from your sins (Matt. 3.2)
Justify	"put right with God" (Rom. 2.13; 5.11)

Figures of speech and Semitisms are difficult to translate into modern speech but according to DE theory they do not need to be since they are a part of the Greek and Hebrew language.

The finger of God	God's power (Lk. 11.20)
Cut to the heart	deeply troubled (Acts 2.37)
Father of glory	glorious Father (Eph. 1.17)
The Preacher	the philosopher (Ecc. 1.1)

Other adaptations due to translational philosophy: Because more weight is put on meaning than form, questions are often simplified into statements: "Don not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5.46) becomes "Even the tax collectors do that." Another example, ""For what can a man give in return for his life?" (Mk. 8.37 "becomes "There is nothing he can give to regain his life."

**The Jerusalem Bible: 1966** – The JB was the first complete Catholic Bible translated into English from the original languages. Prior to the JB all Catholic translations were based on the Latin Vulgate. J. R. Tolkien, of Lord of the Rings fame, was one of the notable translators. The translation is over two thousand pages long due to the significant numbers of footnotes (some of which would be offensive to Protestants). The Apocrypha is found in the same place they stand in the Septuagint and Vulgate. The translation is of such a high quality that many Protestants profitably use it.

**Living Bible (1971)** – A paraphrase (based on the ASV) intended originally by the author as an aid in helping his children understand the Bible. His translation was so popular that he established his own publishing company, which he called Tyndale House after William Tyndale. The LB was the best selling book in the U.S. in 1972.



**New International Version (NT: 1973; whole Bible: 1978)** – The NIV is an evangelical/conservative translation. The translation team represented a wide range of evangelical churches. Several significant commentary series are based on this translation. (Dynamic equivalence; 6.1)

**New Revised Standard Version (1989)** – The NRSV is an update of the RSV incorporating the latest scholarship. It is a gender-neutral translation. It does not emend the text as often as the RSV does, while maintaining something of the majestic language for worship. The gender emphasis makes the reading difficult and reflects a theological emphasis unacceptable to many evangelicals. (Formal equivalence/literary English; 8.1)

**The Message (NT 1993; OT being gradually released)** – This translation/paraphrase is an attempt to put the Bible into the language of modern conversation. Eugene Peterson, professor emeritus of spiritual theology at Regent College, Vancouver, is doing the translation work. The style of language is rough, earthy, and common of everyday life. It is a good translation to catch the attention of the Biblically illiterate. Its strengths are its greatest weaknesses. Its simplicity tends to water down significant doctrinal emphases. (Paraphrase; 7.0) The Christian Book sellers association reported that it ranked sixth among the best selling Bibles in 1999.

Matt. 6.9-13: “Our Father in heaven/Reveal who you are/Set the world right/Do what’s best – as above, so below/Keep us alive with three square meals/Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others/Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil/You’re in charge/You can do anything you want/You’re ablaze in beauty/Yes. Yes. Yes.

**The New Living Translation (1996)** – A scholarly revision of the Living Bible based upon the original languages. It retains the dynamic readability of the Living Bible but is based on the work of strong evangelical scholarship. Its limited vocabulary and simple sentence structure makes it enjoyable for reading large sections of scripture, but weak for serious Bible study. (Dynamic Equivalence; 4.0 reading level)

Two major differences with the LB are: (1) it is not a paraphrase but follows a Dynamic Equivalent approach to Translation. (2) The NLT is translated from the original languages and thus vastly improves its accuracy over the LB.

## **An Example of the Difficulties in Translation**

### **1 Cor. 7.36**

*KJV* – “if a man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin. . .”

*NASB* – “If a man think he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter. . .”

*NIV* – “If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engage to . . .”

*NEB* – “If a man has a partner in celibacy and feels that he is not behaving properly toward her . . .”

#### **Translation principles:**

This has to do with how far one is willing to go in order to bridge the gap between two languages – one ancient and the other modern. For example, should lamp be translated flashlight or torch in cultures where these serve the same purpose a lamp once did? Or should one translate it lamp and let the reader bridge the gap himself? Should “holy kiss” be translated “the handshake of Christian love” in a culture where public kissing is offensive?

**1. The problem – Language is a part of culture and no two cultures are the same.**

- Ask for an example of trying to translate an idea from one language to another language.

## 2. Qualities of a Good Translation

### *2.1 – Should be based on the best Hebrew and Greek manuscripts*

A translation is no better than its Greek and Hebrew manuscripts.

In 1516, Erasmus Greek NT was based on 4 Greek manuscripts. 2 dated from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and 2 were later than that. He had no Greek manuscript of the last six verse of Revelation, so he took the Latin Vulgate and translated back into Greek. His edition became known as the Textus Receptus. Since that time over 5000 Greek manuscripts or portions of manuscripts have been discovered.

**1 John 5.7** – KJV/NIV – Every modern translation omits it. Only four Greek manuscripts in the world have this material. One from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, however, it is not in the text but in the margin. One manuscript from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but it is not in the text but in the margin. One manuscript from the 14/15<sup>th</sup> century has it, but only in the margin. Erasmus said he would include it if he had one manuscript that has it in the body of the text. One was produced but is to be dated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The doctrine of the trinity does not stand or fall on this text. If it is removed the doctrine of the trinity is not weakened at all. The early church hammered out the doctrine of the trinity between the second - fourth centuries.

**Mk. 1.2:**

KJV – “As it is written in the prophets . . .”

NIV – “It is written

**1 Sam. 8.16** – (Fee p. 32)

KJV – “your goodliest young men and your donkeys.

NIV – “the best of your cattle and donkeys”

The text of the NIV (“your cattle”) comes from the LXX, the usually reliable Greek translation of the OT made in Egypt around 250-150 B.C. The KJV follows the medieval Hebrew text, reading “young men,” a rather unlikely term to be used to parallel “donkeys.” The origin of the miscopy in the Hebrew text, which the KJV followed, is easy to understand. The word for “your young men” in Hebrew is bhrykm, while “your cattle was bqrykm. The incorrect copying of a single letter by a scribe resulted in the change of meaning.

### *2.2 – Should be based on the latest knowledge of language and culture*

- Mt. 1.18-20 – the concept of “bethroal”

### *2.3 – Should be accurate (accurate may not mean readable)*

When the KJV was translated they knew nothing of Hebrew poetry.

### *2.4 – Should be understandable (understandable may not mean accurate)*

The Living Bible is an example of a translation that is almost always understandable but at times is not accurate.

### *2.5 – Should be contemporary (rapid changes in English language require constant revision)*

- See examples in Wegner

### *2.6 – Should be dignified (not using crude language simply for shock effect)*

- 1 Sam 21 in an early edition of the Living Bible has Saul called an SOB. Clarence Jordan in the Cotton patch version translates Ro. 6.1,15 as “Hell no!”

### *2.8 – Should avoid theological bias*

- Jerusalem Bible in Mt. 1.25 stretches the idea beyond reasonable grounds.

## Three Major Approaches to Bible Translation

***Literal Translation*** – An attempt to reflect the sentence structure, verbal nuances, and idioms of the original language in order to assure accuracy in emphasis and style. This is the primary logic behind placing words in italics that are not a part of the original text but are needed to make sense in English. The attempt to translate by keeping as close as possible to the exact words and phrasing in the original language, yet still make sense in the receptor language. A literal translation will keep the historical distance intact at all points.

***Dynamic Equivalence*** – Another approach does not believe that it is crucial to carry over the style, structure, and idioms of the original biblical languages. Thus, there is an attempt to choose English idioms that most closely mirror the original intent of the Hebrew or Greek idioms. Such a translation keeps historical distance on all historical and most factual matters, but updates matters of language, grammar, and style.

***Paraphrase*** – The attempt to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern about using the exact words of the original. A paraphrase seeks to eliminate as much of the historical distance as possible.

<u>literal</u>		<u>dynamic equivalent</u>	<u>paraphrase</u>	
KJV	RSV	NIV	NLB	LB
NAS				

Translators can go to far in either direction: Clarence Jordan translates Paul’s letter to Rome as to Washington. On the other extreme the literal translation by Robert Young of 1 Cor. 5.1: “Whoredom is actually heard among you, and such whoredom as is not even named among the nations – as that one hath the wife of the father”

This is a major problem with a paraphrase. Examples from the Living Bible:

Some may find this acceptable but it obscures what the Bible said and the ancientness of the text.

- Flashlights (Ps. 119.105)
- Handshake (1 Peter 5.15)
- Pancakes (Gen. 18.6)

These seem to go to far:

- Translating charismata (“spiritual gifts”) as special abilities in 1 Cor. 12-14)
- 1 Peter 5.13 – he places Rome instead of cryptic reference to Babylon.

## **Choosing A Translation**

1. Choose a translation that uses modern English.

The whole purpose of making a translation is to move the message of the original language into a language you can understand.

2. Choose a translation that is based on the best Hebrew and Greek text.

The standard text for the OT is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)* and the latest standard text for the NT is reflected in the UBS Greek New testament or Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

3. Give preference to a translation that is done by a committee rather than an individual.
4. Select a translation that is suited for your purpose at that time.

There are times when our choice will be determined by our purpose in reading. When reading devotionally we may choose a translation like The Message, or if we are reading rather large portions of the OT we may prefer the New Living Translation, or when preparing a sermon the NASB or the NIV.

## **Reading the Scripture**

1. Regularity of Habit
2. Flexibility of schedule
3. Variety in method
4. Meditatively in Spirit

Howard Hendricks (Living By the Book) Aspects of Good Bible reading.

1. Read Thoughtfully – put on your thinking cap when you read the Scriptures (Proverbs 2.4)
2. Read Repeatedly
3. Read patiently – work with one book for a period of time
4. Read Selectively – Ask specific questions from a text
5. Read Prayerfully – pray what you discover back to God
6. Read Imaginatively – read different translations and paraphrases; seek to read it as you would a novel
7. Read Meditatively – contemplate and think about something you find interesting (Joshua 1; Psalm 1)
8. Read Purposefully – search for the author's meaning as you read.

## **SECTION 5**

### **An Overview of the Hermeneutical Process**

# **SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERPRETING THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE**

(A Summation)

## **I. STUDY THE BOOK AS A WHOLE.**

1. Consider the questions of date, authorship, recipients, and purpose (general matters of introduction.)
2. Develop an outline of the entire book (study Bibles and commentaries will be helpful).
1. Examine the relationship of the passage under consideration in both its near and far context.

## **II. ESTABLISH THE BEST TEXTUAL BASE POSSIBLE:**

1. Use the original language if you can.
2. Compare various versions and translations.

## **III. INVESTIGATE THE TEXT LINGUISTICALLY (E.G. WORD BY WORD).**

1. Make a lexical (definitional) study of crucial words.
2. Research the passage for key words, phrases, and ideas.
3. Track the verbs!
4. Cross Reference.

## **IV. EXAMINE THE FORM OR FORMS OF THE MATERIAL IN THE PASSAGE.**

1. What is the literary type (history, poetry, prophetic, apocalyptic)?
2. What literary devices are used?
3. Is there any indication of the life situation from which the material came?

## **V. ANALYZE THE STRUCTURE OF THE PASSAGE.**

1. Determine if the material constitutes a literary unity.
2. Is there a logical sequence of ideas present?
3. Isolate the basic themes or emphases.
4. Outline the passage you are studying. Use the outline as the framework for your teaching.

# **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETATION**

1. The context rules when interpreting the text.
2. The text must be interpreted in light of all Scripture.
3. Scripture will never contradict itself.
4. Scripture should be interpreted literally (or naturally according to its genre).
5. Do not develop doctrine from obscure or difficult passages.
6. Discover the author's original intended meaning and honor that meaning.
7. Check your conclusions using reliable resources.

## “The Task of the Interpreter”

The interpreter must bridge the gap or horizon between the cultural elements that are present in the text of Scripture and those in our own times. One proposal to bridge this gap is called by some “ethnohermeneutics,” which recognizes three horizons in cross-cultural interpretation: 1) the culture of the Bible, 2) the culture of the interpreter, and 3) the culture of the receptor. Care must be exercised not to let the second and third horizons dictate the message of the first horizon.

The early church fathers used the terms “condescension,” “accommodation,” and “acculturation” to deal with cultural matters in the text. In their view, the cultural view, the cultural aspects of the Scriptures, were meant to make the truth more accessible and to assist us in applying the text to our own day.

When interpreting cultural aspects of Scripture, three options are available. We may (1) retain the theology taught along with the cultural-historical expression of that principle, or (2) retain the theology of a passage, but replace the expression of the behavior, or (3) replace both the principle and the practice. Five guidelines for doing this are: (1) observe the reason given in the text for a cultural element, (e.g. why is there a head-covering required in 1 Cor. 11:2-16?) (2) modify the cultural form but retain the content, (3) avoid all practices integral to pagan culture, (4) retain practices grounded in the nature of God, and (5) adjust when the circumstances alter the application of a law or principle. But above all, be hesitant and humble in all cases where we are uncertain.



# HOW TO STUDY AND TEACH THE BIBLE

What does God want  
my people to know?



**The Purpose**  
(Moving from  
the “Then” to the “Now”)



What does God want  
my people to do?

## “Bridge”

**The Study**  
(Working in the past)

**The Message**  
(Working in the present)

What was the main  
point then?

**The Main Idea  
of the Text  
(MIT)  
“Heart”**

**The Main Idea  
of the Message  
(MIM)  
“Heart”**

What is my main  
point today?

- Theme: What is the  
biblical author  
talking about?

- Theme: What am I  
talking about?

- Complement: What  
is the biblical author  
saying about what  
he is talking about?

- Complement: What  
am I saying about what  
I am talking about?

- Find the seams  
- Analyze the argument  
- Outline the text

**Structure  
the  
Scriptures  
“Skeleton”**

**Structure  
the  
Message  
“Skeleton”**

- Outline the Message  
- Complete Sentences  
- Present Tense  
Sentences  
- Tie all Points to the  
Text

**Study the  
Scriptures  
“Flesh”**

**Teach the  
Scriptures  
“Flesh”**

Observation  
Interpretation

Introduction  
Body  
1. Body  
2. Illustration  
3. Application  
Conclusion  
(Invitation)

## ANALYZING THE TEXT

Verse 1 (1/4 page to full page)

Verse 2 (1/4 page to full page)

Verse 3 (1/4 page to full page)

- 
1. Pray.
  2. Track the verbs and parse them.
  3. Look for key words needing definition.
  4. Look for repetition of phrases and words.
  5. Look for seams in the text which will inform the number of points and the nature of the teaching outline.
  6. Note the near and far context.
  7. Search for helpful and supporting Scripture.
  8. Write out any and all observations and applications you see in the text.
  9. Examine your study aids and write out any helpful insights (note the source for future reference when appropriate).
  10. Look for theological truth and avenues the text logically supports.
  11. Merge your exegesis into the outline structure of your teaching.

## **TITLE FOR THE TEXT**

- 
1. Pray
  2. Make it interesting, an "attention grabber."
  3. Relate it to the Main Idea of the Text (MIT) and the Main Idea of the Message (MIM).
  6. Create a title which can be fed by the main points of your message.
  7. Make it relevant.

## OUTLINING THE STUDY

- 
1. Pray.
  2. Let your exegesis drive and determine the outline.
  3. Have as many major points as the text naturally demands (locate the seams).
  4. Make sure major points and subpoints arise clearly and naturally out of the text. Be able to see your outline in the text.
  5. State your points in the present tense and complete sentences. Be clear, concise and true to the text.
  6. Make your points the application of the message. (Let them inform, instruct and inspire your people as to what they should do.)
  7. Make sure your major points connect with the title and the MIT and MIM.
  8. Make sure your subpoints connect with the major point they support.
  9. Do not overload your people with more than they can intellectually digest! (Teaching outlines are a great idea.)
  10. Cover and fill the skeleton of your outline with the meat and marrow of the exegesis.
  11. Write out your study merging all aspects of your preparation with a view of exalting our Lord and edifying your audience here and now.
  12. Practice reading your text repeatedly and out loud. Remember: it is a sin to read God's Word poorly.

## **SECTION 6**

**Observation: What do I see?**

## **OBSERVATION: WHAT DO I SEE?**

Becoming a diligent and trained student of Scripture is essential to the task of preaching and teaching. Unfortunately, even many pastors are stagnant when it comes to growing in their knowledge of the Bible.

### **REASONS WHY WE AREN'T “IN” THE BIBLE**

- Problem of *motivation*; we don't have the energy or see the necessity of why we should study.
- Problem of *priorities*; too busy, lack of time.
- Problem of *technique*; we don't know how.
- Problem of *preoccupation*; we just don't get around to it.

### **WHY STUDY THE BIBLE**

- A. Hebrews 5:11-14 - It is the means to develop spiritual maturity and Godly wisdom - the ability to see life from God's perspective and react and respond to it with His mind (Phil. 2:5)
- B. 1 Peter 2:2 - Scripture is the primary means of spiritual growth. Our aim as believers should be to be like Jesus (Rom. 8:28-30).

Howard Hendricks says, “There are three kinds of Bible students:

1. To the first it's like castor oil – bitter and hard to take.
2. To the second it's like shredded wheat – dry but nourishing.
3. To the third it's like peaches and cream – can't get enough.”

- C. 2 Timothy 2:15 - The Bible gives the only guidelines to follow for presenting ourselves to God in a manner approved by Him (Rom. 12:1-2)

The bottom line of Christian experience is how we answer three questions we should ask ourselves daily:

1. Is the Lord well pleased?
2. Is the work well done?
3. Is the Word well used?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that all Scripture is profitable for:

1. *Doctrine*, for teaching
2. *Rebuke*, for where you're out of bounds
3. *Correction*, for conforming to image of Christ
4. *Training* in righteous living

The overall purpose - so we may be thoroughly equipped for God's work (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

D. Study is a necessary means of being able to serve Christ.

We need to develop four basic skills in order to read the Bible and it means something in our lives! The skills are:

1. **Observation** – “What do I see?”
2. **Interpretation** – “What does it mean?”
3. **Correlation** – “How does it fit together (integrate)?”
4. **Application** – “How does it work? How can I translate it to my own experience?”

## **THE FIRST MAJOR STEP IN BIBLE STUDY IS OBSERVATION.**

### **I. DEVELOPING THE ABILITY TO SEE AND DETERMINING WHAT THE TEXT SAYS.**

Observation is taking a good hard look at what is in the text.

Why don't we get more out of God's Word?

1. We don't know how to read.
2. We don't know what to look for.

#### **A. Learn to read intelligently, intentionally, and interactively.**

Observation requires concentration. It is not a difficult procedure. It is not a complicated process. It can be mastered with practice and diligence.

### **RULES FOR READING THE BIBLE**

Learn to read better or faster.

- Learn to read as for the first time (the advantage of reading the text the original language).
- Learn to read as a love letter (personal).

**B. We need to read the Bible:**

- thoughtfully
- repeatedly
- often at one sitting
- start at the beginning
- patiently
- sometimes selectively

**C. When we read the Bible we need to ask these six questions:**

**WHO?**

- Who is the author of the book?
- To whom is the book written?
- Who are the characters in the book?
- Who is speaking?
- To whom is he speaking?
- Etc. Etc. Etc.

**WHAT?**

- What is the atmosphere of the book or passage? Friendly? Chastening? Loving?
- What is the author's general topic? What is he saying about his topic?
- What is the CONTEXT?
- What are the key words? What do they mean?
- What? What? What?

**WHEN?**

- When was the book written?
- When did this event happen in relation to other events?
- When was this prophecy fulfilled or has it been?
- “When” questions are important to ask especially in narrative literature such as the Gospels. This will help give you the “time” perspective.



## **WHERE?**

- Where was the book written?
- Where were the recipients of the book living?
- Can you locate the places mentioned on a map?
- Where else does this topic appear in Scripture?

## **WHY?**

- Why was the book written?
- Why does he include this material and not other things?
- Why does the author give so much space to that topic and so little to another?

## **HOW?**

- How many? How many times does the author use the same word in this book, chapter, passage, verse?
- How long?
- How much?
- How does he do this? Say this?
- How does this relate to the preceding statement? To the succeeding statement?

## **AS WE READ, WE ARE TO READ:**

<b>Prayerfully</b>	recall God's promises and claim them.
<b>Imaginatively</b>	identify with it.
<b>Reflectively</b>	meditatively; take time.
<b>Purposefully</b>	what's the purpose in light of...
<b>Acquisitively</b>	how can I hold on to it?
<b>Telescopically</b>	in light of the whole.

## II. LEARN WHAT TO LOOK FOR

To see the text is to observe what information God has put in a biblical passage. See the details and seek meaning from those details. Make all possible observations from a text.

### 1. Look for key terms.

(i.e., the verbs, significant concepts, repetition)

#### LOOK FOR:

things that are *emphasized*  
things that are *repeated*  
things that are *related* and how  
things that are *alike* (uses words like “as” or “like”)  
things that are *unlike/unusual* (contrasting words such as “but”)  
things that are *true to life*

### 2. Look for atmosphere.

Last words are lasting words. Last words usually flow from a deep concern.

### 3. Observe relationships

Some kinds of relationships you will observe are:

- a. **Grammatical relationships** - How are words put together in the text? Basic observations would include relationships between tenses (past, present, future), number (singular, plural), and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter).
- b. **Logical relationships** - How are thoughts put together in the text? How does the author build a case or argument for his point? **Chronological and/or geographical relationships** - What are the times and places that are involved in the text?
- c. **Psychological relationships** - Are there any psychological aspects to this text, which are stated or implied in the words?
- d. **Contextual relationships** - In what context does this text occur? You will need to take immediate and wider contexts into account.
  - The context of the Bible
  - The context of the book
  - The context of the text
- e. **Relationships in genre** - Relationships in genre have to do with the kind of biblical literature in which a passage is found. Here are some kinds of literature that are found in the Bible.
  - *Teaching* - didactic or discourse material like Jesus' sermons or the epistles.
  - *Narratives* - narration of historical events.
  - *Poetry* - Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and others.
  - *Parables* - primarily in the parables of Christ.
  - *Miracles* - primarily found in three periods of biblical history (Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, the Lord and the apostles).

- *Prophetic* - futuristic books like sections of Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation, and also the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament.
- *Apocalyptic* - prophetic imagery depicting endtime events.

#### **4. Seek meaning from the details of a passage.**

Seeking meaning deals with interpreting the observations, and seeing and seeking are most often and best done simultaneously. Interpretation is basically asking questions of your observations and answering them.

Seeking meaning from the Details

1. Asking Questions
2. Answering Questions
3. Analyzing Answers
4. Applying Answers

#### **A. ASKING QUESTIONS**

You must ask many good questions. Ask questions of the words. Ask questions of the relationships between the words.

*Seeing details*

Words

Relationships

*Seeking meaning*

Questions for words

Questions for relationships

1. Ask what the words mean today.
2. Ask what the words meant at the time they were written.
3. Ask how the Bible or the author used these words elsewhere and how other biblical authors used them (marginal references, concordances, key phrases, and repeated statements in your text are all important).

#### **SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

Background Questions

Fact Questions

Meaning Questions

Application Questions

## B. ANSWERING QUESTIONS

The plain, natural interpretation of Scripture (some call it “literal,” and others call it “grammatical-historical interpretation”) is what the expositor is after. Basically, it is interpreting Scripture on its own terms that is most important in understanding its meaning.

## C. ANALYZING ANSWERS

Robert Traina in *Methodical Bible Study* (p. 181) speaks of three dangers in interpreting Scripture:

1. Misinterpretation - assigning the wrong meaning to a passage.
2. Subinterpretation - the failure to ascertain the full meaning of a passage.
3. Superinterpretation - attributing more significance to a passage than is actually implicit in it.

You will analyze your answers with the following test:

***The Test of Authenticity*** - Can you make a good case that your interpretation is authentic?

***The Test of Unity*** – Is there unity of meaning between the terms, affirmations, and interpretation of the text? Is there a contradiction or discrepancy in my interpretation?

***The Test of Consistency*** – Is your interpretation consistent with the rest of the chapter, book, and the Bible? Can you explain an apparent difficulty?

***The Test of Simplicity*** – Is your interpretation simple or contrived? Plain or mystical? Easily stated and understood or heavily supported by allusions and concoctions or arguments?

***The Test of Honesty*** - Have you been careful not to read yours or others’ prejudgments and preconceptions into the text?

\*Since our interpretations are not infallible we must always leave open the possibility for change, as new evidence and/or questions are brought to bear on the interpretation.

## D. APPLYING ANSWERS

Preaching/Teaching has to do with transferring information that transforms people. What we preach and teach ought to change lives.

First we must and will apply Scripture in our own lives. Then we will show people how to integrate biblical truth into their lives.

Application may be *content* oriented, or it may be *conduct* oriented.

Often these two orientations in application are intermingled, simply because people will often do only what they know, believe and value.

To make proper application you must ask the following rigorous questions:

1. What is the application (present-day relevance) of the text?
2. What kind of application should you draw from the text?  
Content, conduct, or conduct based on content?
3. Is my application really based on this text? Does it have the authenticity of the text behind it?
4. What will convince my audience that this is the application from the text?
5. How can I be sure that the people will understand the application of the text? That is, we cannot take it for granted that they have gotten the application. Application is not automatic. Actually, people are not prone to apply truths to themselves. They would rather apply them to someone else!

Dispense with the applications that do not carry textual authority or have textual warranty, even if they are true.

Wayne McDill at SEBTS says 6 skills are essential in the process of observation:

1. Skill in observation depends heavily on ones motivation.
2. Skill in observation demands an eye for detail.
3. Skill in observation calls for healthy learners curiosity.
4. Skill in observation requires a willingness to postpone judgement.
5. Skill in observation demands a ruthless realism about the facts.
6. Skill in observation requires knowing what to look for.

Specifically, he says we must look for:

1. Main themes emphasized by the amount of discussion.
2. Supporting materials which clarifies main ideas.
3. Cause and effect relationship of ideas.
4. Questions and answers focusing attention.
5. Progression of thought toward a climax or conclusion.
6. Comparisons between ideas or persons.
7. Contrast of ideas, character, or behavior.
8. Conditional statement in the if...then pattern.
9. Correlative structure.
10. Reasons cited by the writer.
11. Purpose statements.
12. Results.
13. Significant words carrying the weight of meaning.
14. Verb tense apparent in the English translation.
15. Descriptions used by the writer.
16. Repetition of ideas, words or phrases.
17. Figurative language of various kinds.
18. Assertions carrying the writers convictions.
19. Commands or admonitions which apply theological truths.

McDill points out that the biblical world is a different world from our own, and those distances separate us or prevent us from getting inside the Bible world.

- A. **Historical Distances** - The Bible is the only record of what happened in some ancient civilizations.
- B. **Literary Distance** - These documents contain various forms of literature, some strange to us. [They were also written in a different language]
- C. **Theological Distance** - We must deal with the theological mystery of the religions of the ancient people who were the enemies, captors and neighbors of God's people.

Through careful and faithful observation of the whole counsel of God, these challenges can be overcome, and the Word of God made alive in a new and relevant way to those whom we minister the Word.

## **SECTION 7**

**Interpretation: What does it mean?**

# THE ART OF INTERPRETATION

(Determining What the Author Meant By What and How He Said It)

*“The aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the “plain meaning” of the text.... The most important ingredient one brings to that task is enlightened common senses.”*

-Gordon Fee

*“Many heresies or occasions for controversy through the ages could have been avoided if every interpretation of scripture had been subjected to the test of total scripture.”*

- James W. Cox, *Preaching* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 65.

*“In expounding the Word of God, there is a grave responsibility upon the preacher to convey the truth without distortion.”*-Charles Koller, p.64.

*“With eternities at stake, the hearers can not afford to be in error, nor can the spiritual teacher whom he trusts.”* (Ibid.)

*“Every man has a right to his opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts.”* (Ibid.)

*“The integrity of the pulpit demand accuracy, thoroughness, and a scrupulous regard for text and context.”* (Ibid., p. 65.)



**A Vocabulary for Interpreting the Bible**  
**(from Bob Stein's *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*)**

Meaning - that pattern of meaning the author willed to convey by the words (shareable symbols) he used.

Implications - those meanings in a text of which the author was unaware but, nevertheless, legitimately fall within the pattern of meaning he willed.

Significance - how a reader responds to the meaning of a text; the way meaning applies to the reader (meaning belongs to the author; significance belongs to the reader, p. 44)

Subject Matter – the content or “stuff” talked about in a text.

Understanding – the correct mental grasp of the author's meaning.

Interpretation – the verbal or written expression of a reader's understanding of the author's meaning.

Mental Acts – the experiences the author went through when writing the text.

Norms of Language - the range of meanings allowed by the words (verbal symbols) of a text (also called semantic domain).

Norms of Utterance - the specific meaning that the author has given to a word, phrase, sentence, and the like in a text.

Literary Genre – the literary (or discourse) form being used by the author and the rules governing that form.

Context - the willed meaning that an author gives to the literary materials surrounding his text.

Referential Language - language that primarily passes on information/facts. It is language that appeals to the “mind.”

Commissive Language - language that has as its main goal evoking decisions, conveying emotions, eliciting feelings, and arousing the emotions. It is language which appeals to the “heart.”

Proverb - a short pithy saying, frequently using metaphorical language, which expresses a general truth. Proverbs are not laws or even promises. They are general observations learned from a wise and careful look at life.

# THE PROCESS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation. It is a science because it follows certain rules. It is an art because it is a skill one develops with practice.

Hermeneutics is the study of methodological principles of interpretation which allows us to take what we see and determine what it means.

Three Truths to remember:

1. It takes time - to expose oneself to the brilliance of revealed truth.
2. There is more truth in the Bible than we can grasp in one or many readings. Infinite, eternal truth has this nature.
3. It takes practice and experience - skills to develop an understanding of the text with accuracy.

## A. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION – ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Content** - What is actually before you in the text. It is discovered by the results of your observational study. How to read and what to look for is the key (there is a huge difference between seeing and reading).
- **Clue** - The more time spent in observation, the less time you will spend in interpretation and the more accurate will be the results of your interpretation.
- **Context** - What goes before and after? (There is both a near and a far context).
- **Comparison** - Compare Scripture with Scripture.  
\*Remember the parts always take on meaning in the light of the whole.
- **Culture** - What was the social setting at that time? What was the historical situation? What was the *chronos*, language, customs, political environment?
- **Consultation** - Use resource tools (after you have done personal study). This includes dictionaries, atlases, concordance, commentaries, etc.; check your interpretation with other great women and men of God. If you are the only one to see the text a certain way, you are probably wrong.
- **Construction** - Build an exegetically and homiletically sound outline that arises clearly out of the text. Let the text determine the structure of your outline.

Remember: First comes God's Word, then secondary sources!

## **B. TEN INTERPRETIVE RULES**

Just as there must be the proper use of the proper tools, there must also be the observance of some simple rules if accurate interpretation is to take place. Remember that hermeneutics is both an art and a science; a science because there are rules and principles.

1. Work from the assumption that the Bible is authoritative.
2. Interpret difficult passages in the light of clear passages. Let the Bible interpret itself.
3. Interpret personal experience in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of personal experience.
4. Remember that Scripture has only ONE MEANING but many applications.
  - One Meaning (Sense)
  - Many Applications (Significance)
5. Interpret words and passages in harmony with their meaning in the time of the author.

### **INTERPRETATION IS BRIDGING THE GAPS**

- The Language Gap
  - The Historical Gap
  - The Cultural Gap
  - The Geographical Gap
  - The Literary Gap
  - The Theological Gap
6. Interpret Scripture in light of its PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.
  7. Remember you must understand the Bible grammatically before you can understand it theologically
  8. A doctrine cannot be considered biblical unless it includes all the Scriptures say about it. DO not practice “selective citation” or “proof-texting.”
  9. Distinguish between the PROVERBS and the PROMISES of God.
  10. When two doctrines taught in the Bible appear to be contradictory, accept both as Scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves in a higher unity.

CHARLES KOLLER SAYS 3 BASIC STEPS ARE INVOLVED IN THE ANALYSIS OF THE SCRIPTURAL PASSAGE:

1. The Preacher should determine the subject matter of the passage.
2. Divide the passage into sections and dissect the principal idea into sections.
3. Reread the passage as often as necessary to ascertain ideas that sustain and explain the principal idea or superior emphasis.

KOLLER THEN CAUTIONS PREACHERS TO MAINTAIN A WATCHFUL EYE FOR THE FOLLOWING 10 ITEMS:

1. Change of persons.
2. Progression related to time, place, and action.
3. Examples or instances.
4. Enunciation of ideas, principles, or teachings.
5. Parallelism of ideas.
6. Contrasting ideas.
7. Indications of cause and effect.
8. Division of the whole into units.
9. Repetition.
10. Transitional clauses or connective words.

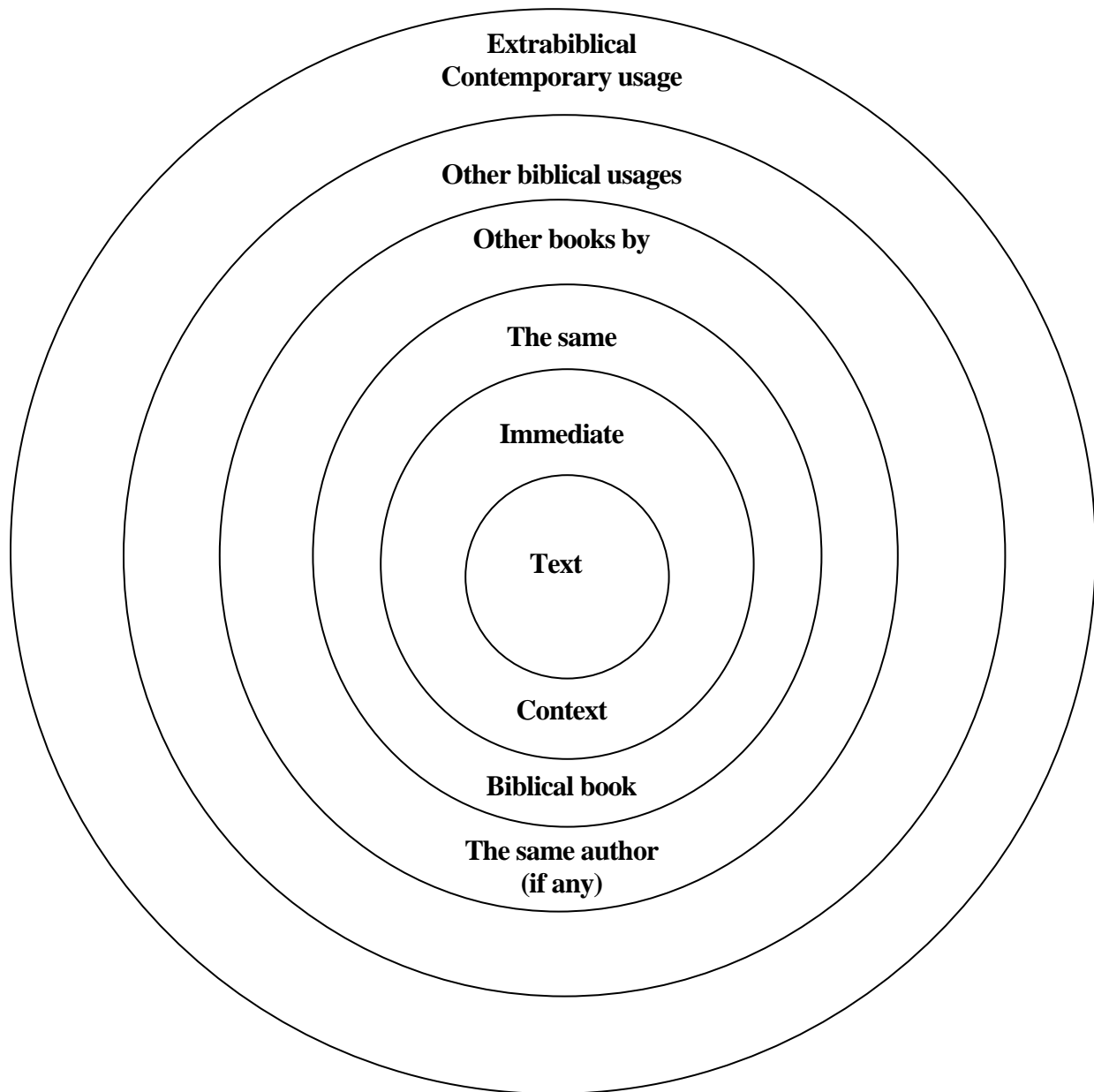
Once these steps have been followed, the preacher should proceed to formulate his analysis of the passage.

SIX STEPS ARE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS.

1. Limit the analysis to the contents of the passage.
2. Follow the sequence of the passage.
3. Relate the main points to particular verses in the passage.
4. Relate sub-points to particular verses in the passage.
5. Be concise.
6. Omit irrelevant material.

After intensive investigation, Koller suggests that preachers allow the acquired information “to incubate in their hearts.”

# THE PREACHER/TEACHER AND PREPARATION: INVESTIGATION



## **THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION**

1. Determine the book's occasion
2. Study the key words
3. Cross reference
4. Identify figures of speech
5. Identify literary devices
6. Identify the type of literature
7. Study the composition

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETATION**

1. The context rules when interpreting the text.
2. The text must be interpreted in light of all Scripture.
3. Scripture will never contradict itself.
4. Scripture should be interpreted literally.
5. Do not develop doctrine from obscure or difficult passages.
6. Discover the author's original intended meaning.
7. Check your conclusions using reliable resources.

## Analyzing The Text

Verse 1 (1/4 page to a full page)

Verse 2 (1/4 page to a full page)

Verse 3 (1/4 page to a full page)

- 
1. Pray.
  2. Track the verbs and parse them.
  3. Look for key words needing definition.
  4. Look for repetition of phrases and words.
  5. Look for seams in the text which will inform the number of points and the nature of the sermon outline.
  6. Note the near and far context.
  7. Search for helpful and supporting Scripture.
  8. Write out any and all observations and applications you see in the text.
  9. Examine your study aids and write out any helpful insights (note the source for future reference and appropriate).
  10. Look for exegetical truth and avenues the text logically supports.
  11. Merge your exegesis into the outline structure of your sermon.

## Appendix 1

### A STUDY METHOD FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

John MacArthur, Jr.

(*Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 209-222)

Careful and diligent Bible study is the key to effective expository preaching. Because the Bible is God's Holy Word, it must be treated with respect, not expounded flippantly or carelessly. An effective method of sermon preparation is based on general rules for Bible study.

### THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE STUDY

#### 1. Observation: Answers the question: What does the passage say?

Includes a broad awareness of the terms, structure, and literary forms of the passage.

##### 3 Be's

- Be careful
- Be systematic
- Be persistent

#### 2. Interpretation: Answers the question: What does the passage mean?

- It is concerned with bridging the gap between the Bible writers and the present day.
- The Language gap - understand the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- The Cultural gap - understand the culture of the time.
- The Geographical gap - essential in understanding a passage like 1 Thess. 1:8.
- The Historical gap - often the key to interpretation.

#### 3. Application - Answers the question: How does the passage relate to me?

- Are there examples to follow?
- Are there commands to obey?
- Are there errors to avoid?
- Are there sins to forsake?
- Are there promises to claim?
- Are there new thoughts about God?
- Are there principles to live by?
- Meditation - focusing the mind on one subject, involving reason, imagination, and emotions – is an important final step in the process.



*Excellent Bible study skills are the foundation upon which good expository sermons are built. The expository preacher is, by definition, a skilled Bible student. He interprets Scripture accurately, applies its truth in his own life, and then proclaims them to his congregation.*

### STUDYING FOR THE EXPOSITORY SERMON

1. Read the Book - become familiar with the theme, understand the context, put together a general outline and identify key verses.
2. Read the Passage - familiarize yourself with the passage, try to memorize it.
3. Find the Main Point - the 'big idea' or 'the proposition.' It is often connected with the main verb.
4. Write it out in a complete sentence.
5. Organize the Passage - Look for the subordinate points (support the main clause). This is the first step in outlining the passage.
6. Analyze the Structure - Work through the passage in detail in the original language. Use study tools. Diagram the passage. At this point consult good commentaries.
7. Put Together an Exegetical Outline - The final step in the process is to put together a preliminary outline. This is not alliterated. This outline is drawn from the passage.
8. Add Illustrations - Search for the best Bible illustrations, then add other illustrations - if necessary.

(Write Introduction and Conclusion)

### THREE KEY WORDS

1. **Inductive** - We approach the text to find out what it means.
2. **Exegetical** - Follow proper exegetical and hermeneutical principles and practice.
3. **Expositional** - Opens up the Word and exposes the less obvious meanings and applications it contains.

## Appendix 2

### FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative (meaning) – “the representation of one concept in terms of another because the nature of the two things compared allows such an analogy.” -(B. Mickelsen, p. 179)

#### A. Short Figures of Speech

1. **Simile** (resemblance - an explicitly stated comparison using the words “like” or “as”).
  - a. 1 Peter 1:24
  - b. Luke 10:3
2. **Metaphor** (representation) - a comparison by direct assertion or description.
  - a. Isaiah 40:6
  - b. Luke 8:21
1. **Metonymy** (“change of name”) - the substitution of one word for another.
  - a. The cause for the effect: Luke 16:29
  - b. The effect for the cause: Isaiah 22:22
2. **Synecdoche** (transfer) - the substitution of related ideas one for another.
  - a. The part for the whole: Psalm 87:2
  - b. The whole for the part: Luke 2:1
3. **Personification** - ascribing of personal characteristics to animals or objects.
  - a. Isaiah 55:12
  - b. Psalm 114
4. **Apostrophe** - a direct address to a thing as if it were a person.
  - a. Judges 5:3,4
  - b. Zechariah 13:7
7. **Ellipsis** - the omission of a word or phrase necessary for the complete thought.
  - a. Acts 18:6
  - b. Romans 8:3
8. **Hyperbole** - a conscious exaggeration by the author for heightened effect.
  - a. John 21:25
  - b. Deuteronomy 1:28
9. **Litotes** - an understatement or negative to express an affirmation.
  - a. Acts 1:5
  - b. 1 Thess. 2:14,15
10. **Irony** - using language in an opposite or different meaning than stated for the purpose of ridicule.
  - a. I Kings 18:27
  - b. Job 12:2

11. **Paradox** - a statement of truth in what appears a contradiction of ideas.
  - a. Matt. 13:12
  - b. Mark 8:35
12. **Anthropomorphism** - ascribing human characteristics to God.
  - a. Psalm 19:1
  - b. Psalm 59:1
13. **Anthropopathism** - ascribing human emotions to God.
  - a. Psalm 95:10
  - b. Zechariah 8:1
14. **Euphemism** - the substitution of a less direct or offensive word for one more graphic.
  - a. Judges 3:24
  - b. Acts 1:25
15. **Rhetorical Question** - a question asked which does not expect a verbal response but one which forces the responder to consider the implications mentally.
  - a. Jeremiah 32:37
  - b. Romans 8:31-34

## B. DISTINGUISHING THE FIGURATIVE AND THE LITERAL

1. Always use the literal sense unless there is some good reason for departure.  
Ex. Rev. 7:1-8
2. Use the figurative sense when the passage is stated to be figurative.  
Ex. Zech. 12:6
3. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves an impossibility.  
Ex. Jer. 1:18; Rev. 1:16
4. Use the figurative sense if the literal commands immoral action.  
Ex. John 6:53
5. Use the figurative sense if the expression fits into one of the classes of the figures of speech.  
Ex. Zech. 12:2
6. Use the figurative sense if the literal is contrary to the context and scope of the passage.  
Ex. Zech. 13:1; Matt. 5:42; Rev. 20:1 (chain)
7. Use the figurative sense if the literal is contrary to the general character and style of the book.
8. Use the figurative sense if the literal is contrary to the plan and purpose of the author.
9. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves a contradiction with a parallel passage.
10. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves a contradiction of doctrine.

### C. SUMMARY PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1. Determine if a figure of speech is used.
2. Determine the image and referent.
3. State the purpose for the figure.
4. Don't assume a figure always means the same thing.
5. Place limits of control by the use of logic and language.

### D. SAMPLE PROCEDURE

<b>FIGURE</b>	<b>IMAGE</b>	<b>REFERENT</b>	<b>POINT OF COMPARISON</b>
Simile (Psalm 1:3)	Tree	Believer	Growth, Fruitfulness, Stability

The devotional method of studying the Bible is rooted in a strong desire to apply the Bible to one's everyday life. It correctly believes that the Words of Scripture are clear enough to be understood in their basic message, but it does not demand that all Scripture be equally clear and perspicuous. The reader is dependent on the Holy Spirit for the work of illuminating those Scriptures use in a devotional study. Especially included in the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit are the issues of application, the ministry of encouragement and the task of convicting of sin as readers are exposed to the Scriptures.

Central to the devotional method is the act of meditating on the Word of God. Meditation does not have as its goal self-abnegation, as it usually does in oriental religions and some of the contemporary cults. Instead, biblical meditation seeks to establish communion with and the worship of the living God by involving the entirety of one's person - body, soul, and mind. It uses the Scriptures as the place where meditation is centered.

**Rules for Recognizing Hyperbole (or Exaggeration) in Scripture**  
**(from Bob Stein's *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*)**

It is probably a hyperbole if:

1. The statement is literally impossible.
2. The statement conflicts with what the speaker says elsewhere.
3. The statement conflicts with the actions of the speaker elsewhere.
4. The statement conflicts with the teachings of the Old Testament.
5. The statement conflicts with the teachings of the New Testament.
6. The statement is interpreted by another biblical author in a non-literal way.
7. The statement has not been fulfilled.
8. The statement would not achieve its desired goal.
9. The statement uses the literary form prone to exaggeration.
10. The statement uses universal language.

## **TYPOLGY**

### 1. The vocabulary of typology in the New Testament

- a. Type (Gk. *-tupos*, 14x)
- b. Antitype (Gk. *-antitupos*, 2x)
- c. Example (Gk. *-hupodeigma*, 6x)
- d. Shadow (Gk. *-skia*, 7x)
- e. Figure (Gk. *-parabole*)

### 2. The definition of a type (as distinguished from an illustration)

A type is a person, event, or things, which while having a historical reality in the Old Testament was designed by God to prefigure (foreshadow) in a preparatory way a real person, event, or thing so designated in the New Testament that it corresponds to and fulfills the type.

An illustration is a person, event or thing having historical reality, that pictures (is analogous to) some corresponding spiritual truth in a natural and unforced way and is not explicitly designated in the New Testament as a type.

### 3. Designated types in the New Testament

	Type	Antitype	Scripture
<b>P E R S O N S</b>	1. Melchizedek	Christ's perpetual priesthood	Hebrews 7:3, 15-17
	2. Aaron	Christ's priestly ministry	Hebrews 5:4-5
	3. Adam	Christ (2 <sup>nd</sup> Adam)	Romans 5:12ff
<b>Event</b>	4. Passover	Death of Christ	1 Corinthians 5:7
<b>T H I N G S</b>	5. Tabernacle	Way of access to God through Christ	Hebrews 8:5, 9:23, 24
	6. Veil	Access to God through Christ	Hebrews 10:20
	7. Sacrifices	Christ is our sacrifice	Hebrews 9:8-9
	8. Sabbath	Spiritual rest in the finished work of Christ	Colossians 2:17 Hebrews 4:3, 9, 11

4. Principles for the interpretation of types
  - a. Identify the literal meaning of the item in its historical context.
  - b. Look for the major area of resemblance between the type and the antitype.
  - c. Ascertain the purpose and function of both the type and the antitype in their respective contexts.
  - d. Recognize the points of difference and contrast between the type and the antitype.
  - e. Guard against overpressing the analogy in seeking what is farfetched and vague (allegorization).
  - f. Distinguish between types and illustrations.
  - g. Avoid using types to prove doctrine.
  - h. Recognize that types look back from the N.T. advantage as a way of bringing into sharper focus the person and work of Christ.

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF PSALMS

Psalms of Zion	48, 84
Royal Psalms	2, 8, 72, 110
Hymns to God	19, 24
Wisdom Psalms	1, 127-128
Penitential Psalms	6, 32
Imprecatory Psalms	58, 137
Praise Psalms	106, 111-113
Lament Psalms	13, 142



## **CLUES FOR INTERPRETING NARRATIVE**

### **CONTEXT**

Any individual narrative should be interpreted in light of the whole account, i.e., Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted in light of Mark 1:1-16:8.

### **AUTHORIAL/EDITORIAL/NARRATOR COMMENTS**

The author or narrator gives clues to his reader of how to interpret a text.

Examples:

- (1) Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted by such editorial comments as: Mark 1:1, 34; 3:11-12.
- (2) 1 Kings 15:5-6; 22:43; 2 Kings 14:3-4; 2 Chronicles 33:2-8
- (3) 1 Kings 12:15, 15:29; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 1:17; 23:16; 24:2

### **THEMATIC STATEMENTS**

The author or narrator sometimes provides a thematic statement which reveals the theme of his work: Cf. Acts. 1:8 with 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31. (How do Peter and Paul fit into this?)

### **REPETITION**

Cf. Judges 3:7-9; 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25

## Appendix 3

### PARABLE

A parable has been called an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word ‘parable’ is derived from the Greek *parabolē*, meaning “to throw alongside or “putting things side by side.” Mark Bailey defines a parable as “a figurative narrative that is true to life and is designed to convey through analogy some specific spiritual truths usually relative to God’s Kingdom program.”

A parable therefore, is a form of teaching which presents the listener with interesting illustrations from which can be drawn moral and spiritual truths; often it is designed to inculcate a single truth or answer a single question. The parable was an appropriate form of communication for bringing to men the message of the kingdom of God, since its function is to jolt them into seeing things in a new way. D.A. Carson has written, “[P]arables...in Jesus’ hands were often meant to shock and ‘interpret’ the hearer to himself, as much as to be interpreted by the hearer...” They are means of enlightenment and persuasion, intended to bring the hearers to the point of decision.

It is impossible always to draw a clear-cut distinction between parable and allegory in the stories told by Jesus; some of his stories were clearly intended to illustrate several lessons, as in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). The parables must be understood in their original historical settings within the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

Parables are distinguished from other literary figures in that they are narrative in form but figurative in meaning. Parables use both similes and metaphors to make their analogies. Jesus utilized parables to motivate hearers to make proper spiritual decisions. To Jesus’ original audiences the parables both revealed and concealed new truths regarding God’s kingdom. Those who rightly responded were called disciples and to them it was granted to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. The same truth was concealed from those who, because of hardened hearts, were unreceptive to the message of Jesus.

The exposition of the parables for today must be based on as careful an understanding of what Jesus meant by the parables as is possible; otherwise we fall back into the error of regarding them as illustrations of general truths. The parables were meant to force people to decide about their attitude to Jesus and his message and thus to bring them into a new relationship with Him and the Kingdom of God.

Roy Zuck suggests nine kinds of occasions or purposes that led to Jesus’ parables: parables in answer to questions, parables in answer to requests, parables in answer to complaints, parables given with a stated purpose, parables of the kingdom given because of Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah, parables following an exhortation or principle, parables that illustrate a situation, and parables with the purpose implied not stated.

Bob Stein suggests asking seven questions to help identify the main point of a parable.

1. What terms are repeated in the parable? Which are not?
2. Upon what does the parable dwell, i.e., to what or to whom does the parable devote the most space?
3. What is the main contrast found in the parable?
4. What comes at the end of the parable?
5. What is spoken in direct discourse in the parable?
6. What characters appear in the parable? Which are the least important? Which are the two most important characters? (Usually a parable focuses on two characters to establish its main point.)
7. How would you have told the parable? If Jesus told it differently, does this reveal anything?

Craig Blomberg seeks to synthesis our understanding of Jesus' parables under four major ideas:

1. Jesus clearly has three main topics of interest: the graciousness of God, the demands of discipleship and the dangers of disobedience.
2. The central theme uniting all of the lessons of the parables is the kingdom of God. It is both present and future. It includes both a reign and a realm. It involves both personal transformation and social reform.
3. The teaching of the parables raises the question of Jesus' identity. Who is the one who, by his teaching, can claim to forgive sins, pronounce God's blessing on social outcasts and declare that final judgment will be based on the responses people make to him? Christological claims are concealed in the parables. They are not as direct as in some other strands of the Gospel tradition, but they are present nevertheless.
4. Jesus' parables include implicit claims to deity. Jesus associates himself with authority figures in his parables which obviously stand for the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. His audiences must decide whether to accept these claims and worship him or reject them as misguided or even blasphemous. But Jesus' parables leave no neutral ground for casual interest or idle curiosity. They sharply divided their original audiences into disciples and opponents. They must continue to function in the same way today.

Jesus' parables are unique. The parables of other teachers can to some extent be separated from the teachers themselves, but Jesus and his parables are inseparable. To fail to understand him is to fail to understand his parables.

Mark Bailey, "Guidelines for Interesting Jesus Parables," *BibSac* (Jan.-Mar., 1998), 29-38.

Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 326-27.

D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 139.

I. Howard Marshall and R.V.G. Tasker, "Parable," *New Bible Dictionary*, 867-869.

Bob Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables*, 56.

## **THE FORM OF ANCIENT LETTERS**

### **SALUTATION**

A to B – Greetings (Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1)

Shalom

Grace

### **THANKSGIVING and/or PRAYER**

“I thank my God through Jesus Christ” – Rom. 1:8

“I give thanks to God” – 1 Cor. 1:4

“We give thanks to God always” – 1 Thess. 1:2

### **BODY OF LETTER**

Romans 1:18-11:26

Galatians 1:6-6:10

1 Corinthians 1:10-16:12

### **EXHORTATION AND INSTRUCTION**

Romans 12:1-15:32

Galatians 5:1-6:10

Colossians 3:1-4:6

### **CONCLUSION**

A wish for peace (2 Cor. 13:11); Greeting (1 Cor. 16:1-20a);  
Kiss (Rom 16:16); Concluding Autograph (1 Cor. 16:21);  
Benediction (Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23-24)

## **SECTION 8**

### **The Exegetical Process Observations and Methods of Gifted Expositors of Scripture**

## **“THE EXEGETICAL PROCESS”: OBSERVATIONS AND METHODS OF GIFTED EXPOSITORS OF SCRIPTURE**

*“If exegetical theology is worth anything, it must aid the student and pastor/teacher in bridging the gap between the original situation and the present-day audience”*

-(Kaiser, 186)

*“The Word is supernatural, and woe to the preacher who leaves the supernatural for the natural; who sets aside the sword of the Spirit to use in its stead a blade of his own tempering!”*

-Howard Cosby, Chancellor of the University of the City of New York in the late 1800s (quoted in *Berean Call*, Feb. 1999, pg. 3)

*“A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers.”*

-(Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, 64.)

### **INTRODUCTION:**

A commitment to historical-grammatical interpretation is a natural complement to a high view of biblical inspiration. Discerning the author's intended meaning is a "moral" presupposition which guides our exegetical and homiletical work.

*“We cannot be acquitted as scholarly exegetes until we have led the church to understand how to respond to the very words that we have analyzed most critically and carefully.”*

-Walt Kaiser, *Towards An Exegetical Theology*, 247)

When one surveys specific approaches to the exegesis of Scripture among evangelicals, one discovers a variety of methods and, at the same time, “common threads” that run through each model. Contrasting and comparing these proves most insightful and helpful: to our task.

## **I. HADDON ROBINSON'S 10 STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPOSITORY MESSAGES.**

1. Choose the passage to be preached.
2. Study your passage and gather your notes.
3. As you study the passage, relate the parts to each other to determine the exegetical idea and its development.
4. Submit the exegetical idea to 3 development questions:
  1. What does it mean?
  2. Is it true?
  3. What difference does it make? (application)
5. In light of the audiences knowledge and experience, think through the exegetical idea and state it in its most exact, memorable sentence possible.
6. Determine the purpose of the sermon.
7. Thinking about the homiletical idea, ask yourself how this idea should be handled to accomplish your purpose.
8. Having decided how the idea must be developed to accomplish your purpose, outline the sermon.
9. Fill in the outline with supporting materials that explain, prove, apply or amplify the points.
10. Prepare the introduction and the conclusion of the sermon.

**II. DAVID ALLEN (Dean of Theology, SWBTS):**  
**HOW TO ANALYZE A TEXT OF SCRIPTURE FOR PREACHING**  
**OR TEACHING**

1. ANY TIME YOU PREACH OR TEACH GOD'S WORK, YOU SHOULD BE ATTEMPTING TO DO SEVEN THINGS IN YOUR STUDY, PREPARATION AND DELIVERY:

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. OBSERVATION    | (What do I see?)  |
| 2. INVESTIGATION  | (What is the background?)                                 |
| 3. INTERPRETATION | (What does it mean?)                                      |
| 4. ILLUSTRATION   | (How can I help the audience understand and remember it?) |
| 5. APPLICATION    | (How can I help the audience see how it works in life?)   |
| 6. MOTIVATION     | (How can I move the audience to obey the text?)           |
| 7. COMMUNICATION  | (How can I best deliver the message to the audience?)     |

2. IN ALL PREACHING/TEACHING, YOU WANT TO APPEAL TO THE TOTAL PERSON:

MIND                      EMOTIONS                      WILL

3. THERE ARE TWO PRIMARY METHODS (ORDERLY PROCEDURE) OF BIBLE STUDY:

1. INDUCTIVE/ANALYTIC - Begin with the parts and move toward the whole.
2. DEDUCTIVE/SYNTHETIC -Begin with the whole and move toward the parts.
3. REMEMBER THAT A CRUCIAL KEY IN BIBLE STUDY IS ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.

I have six faithful serving men  
Who taught me all I know,  
Their names are what and where and when  
and how and why and who.  
-Rudyard Kipling



## SOME “HOW TO” BOOKS ON EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF A TEXT

Grant Osborne & Stephen Woodward, *Handbook for Bible Study* (1979)  
Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (1984)  
Frederick Danker, *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study* (Rev. Ed., 1993)  
Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology, Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (1981)  
Walter Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition* (1984)  
Thomas Schreiner, *Interpreting Pauline Epistles* (1990)  
John Beekman & John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (1974)  
David Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek* (1988)  
Cotterell & Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (1989)

## **PROCEDURE FOR BIBLICAL EXEGESIS**

### **A. OBSERVATION**

1. Pray!
2. Read the text several times in English.
3. Read the text in Greek or Hebrew.
4. Make notes on what you observe in the text:

PEOPLE:	Who are the people in the text? Characters, etc.
PLAN:	What type of discourse is the text? (Expository, Narrative, Hortatory, etc.) What are the major chapter divisions of the entire book? What are major paragraph divisions of the text? What are key themes, words, doctrines, etc.?; note them.
PURPOSE:	Why is the author writing to the recipients? What does he tell the readers to do? What command forms appear? (Imperatives, Hortatory, Subjunctives, etc.)

## **B. INVESTIGATION**

Study the BACKGROUND of the text - Read a good introduction. Note the authorship, date, recipients, occasion, purpose, etc.

## **C. INTERPRETATION**

1. LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION:       Begin at the paragraph level.
  - a. What is the main thought of the paragraph?
  - b. How many sentences in the paragraph?
  - c. What is the relationship among the sentences? (Ex. - which sentences convey primary information, which contain secondary (subordinate) information?)
  - d. How many paragraphs are in the text?
  - e. What is the relationship of the paragraphs?
  - f. Which paragraphs convey the most important information?
2. GRAMMATICAL/SYNTACTICAL INTERPRETATION: Move to the sentence/clause level.
  - a. Diagram the sentence to determine Subject, Main Verb, and Object.
  - b. Identify independent clauses and dependent clauses.
  - c. Determine grammatical relationship of clauses to one another.
  - d. Decline nouns and parse verbs (if studying Greek text).
  - e. Compare different translations of the text.
3. LEXICAL INTERPRETATION: Move to the word level.
  - a. Do word studies of important nouns and verbs.
  - b. Note things like lexical repetition; words in same semantic domain (different words that have similar meanings).
4. DOCTRINAL INTERPRETATION:
  - a. What doctrines are presented, if any?
  - b. How is the author using this doctrine?

5. COMMENTARIES - Consult them now to check your interpretation and to gain new insight.

\*At this point you are ready to begin the actual writing of the sermon.

**D. ILLUSTRATION** - Choose good illustrations to help audience “see” the meaning.

**E. APPLICATION**

1. To you personally.
2. To the people you will be teaching or preaching:
  - a. How does this text apply to modern life?
  - b. Specific applications: Definite commands in the text.
  - c. General applications: based on teaching of the text.

**F. MOTIVATION**

Challenge them to obey the text; consequences and rewards, etc.

**G. COMMUNICATION**

Sermon delivery.

**III. JOHN MACARTHUR'S STUDYING FOR THE EXPOSITORY SERMON  
(*REDISCOVERING EXPOSITORY PREACHING*, 218-222)**

- Read the Book
- Read the Passage
- Find the Main Point
- Organize the Passage
- Analyze the Structure
- Put Together an Exegetical Outline
- Add Illustrations

#### **IV. JERRY VINES' PROCESS OF EXPOSITION**

Working with a Scripture passage is like dividing a block of wood. You examine the block of wood carefully, turning it from side to side, over and over. After noticing the natural divisions in the wood, you crack the wood in these places.

##### **INVESTIGATION**

Investigation answers the question, "What does the Scripture passage really say?" It is the fundamental step in Scripture exposition.

G. Campbell Morgan had four rules for studying a Bible book:

1. Read and gain an impression.
2. Think and gain an outline.
3. Meditate and gain an analysis.
4. Sweat and gain an understanding.

##### **A. Read Prayerfully**

##### **B. Read Carefully**

"Rudyard Kipling: "I kept six honest serving men; they taught me all I knew; their names are what and why and when and how and where and who. I sent them over land and sea, I sent them east and west; but after they had worked for me I give them all a rest."

\*Use these six words as you read the paragraph. (Meditation is also helpful.)

##### **C. Read Imaginatively**

1. Put yourself into the passage.
2. Live out what is taking place.
3. Role play the people who appear in the verses.
4. But do not go to the extreme.

\*Imagination is the difference between a good preacher and an average preacher. If imagination is used properly it can make the passage come alive.

##### **D. Read Obediently**

1. Look for Theme and Main Points.
2. Pursue Several Clues.
3. Look for repetitions of terms, phrases, clauses, or sentences.
4. Be aware of transitional words: then, therefore, wherefore, but, nevertheless, and meanwhile.
5. Pay attention to rhetorical questions.
6. Note a change in location, time, or setting.
7. Recognize when the writer gives a clue as to the meaning of the passage.

## INTERPRETATION

Interpretation answers the question, “What does this passage mean?”

### **A. Diagram the Passage**

(Using a block diagram, called a “syntactical display” by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., is helpful and illuminating as interpretation begins.)

### **B. Do Word Studies**

\* Process of doing word studies:

1. In the original languages, if possible, look for the meanings of words.
2. Check other occurrences in the Bible.
3. Compare the Old and New Testament usage of the word.

\* Considerations in doing word studies:

1. Find the usage of a word at time of the author.
2. Determine the grammatical use of the word.
3. Be aware of figures of speech in the Bible such as simile, metaphor, paradox, and hyperbole.

### **C. Study the Context**

The word context comes from two Latin words: *con*, which means “with” or “together,” and *texere*, which means “to weave.” Context deals with something woven together. One must be aware of the book's location in the Bible to know its literary form.

Kaiser points out five basic literary forms in the Bible:

1. Prose
2. Poetry
3. Historical Narrative
4. Wisdom Writings
5. Apocalyptic Literature

Kaiser notes four connections between a passage and its context:

1. Historical (events or facts)
2. Theological (doctrines)
3. Logical (arguments)
4. Psychological (expressions)

#### **D. Gather the Historical Data**

Gathering background data involves several matters:

1. Who wrote the passage under consideration?
2. Who is the speaker (if different from the writer)?
3. Who is the audience?
4. Is the time of year relevant?
5. What is the stage of revelation of the particular passage?

#### **E. Do Cross-Reference Work Let Scripture interpret Scripture.**

#### **F. Determine the Theological Significance**

#### **G. Consult Commentaries**

#### **H. Apply Proper Principles of Interpretation**

The ethnic division principle - do not confuse passages written to a specific category of the human race (Jews, Gentiles, or the Church) and those written to another group.

1. **The first mention principle** - the first time a topic is mentioned is key to understanding its meaning.
2. **The full meaning principle** - often subjects are given one comprehensive treatment in the Bible, which sheds light on other occurrences.
3. **The proportionate mention principle** - note the amount of space given in the Bible for a particular subject; magnify those truths that Scripture magnifies.
4. **The repeated mention principle** - often a subject will at first be given the barest treatment, but with repeated mentioning, additional details are given.
5. **The gap principle** - note instances where God leaps several centuries without comment.
6. **The salvation/fellowship principle** - we understand verses differently, depending on whether they deal with salvation or fellowship.
7. **The threefold principle** - i.e. salvation understood as past, present, and future.
8. **The recurrence principle** - the Bible may mention a subject again from a different standpoint, with a different purpose (i.e., Genesis 1 and 2).

#### **APPLICATION**

“What does the passage tell me, and the people to whom I preach, to do?”

#### **\*Self-Application**

The preacher is more ready to apply the truths of God's Word when he has first applied them to himself.

**V. WALTER LIEFIELD'S PREPARING THE TEXT (THE FACTS: PRACTICAL EXEGESIS)**

**1. SURVEY THE CONTEXT**

1. Observe the background
2. Note the "Connecting Tissue" between the Text and Its Content.
  - Thought Patterns
  - Verbal Patterns
  - Structural Patterns

**2. NOTE THE DOMINATE CHARACTERISTICS AND THEMES OF THE PASSAGE**

The hearers could lose confidence in the preacher when he ignores obvious phenomena in the text.

- Ideas and Concepts
- Doctrines
- Character Delineation
- Sequence of Events
- Rhetorical Questions
- Complex of Topics, Problems, or Circumstances

**3. SELECT SIGNIFICANT ITEMS FOR EXEGETICAL STUDY**

\*Key Question: "What items in the passage are truly significant?"

- Doctrinally Important
- Ethically Important
- Difficult to Understand
- Thematic in the Context, Book, or Corpus
- Crucial to Understanding of the Author's Intent
- Dependent on the Literal Form

## **VI. BRYAN CHAPPELL AND THE EXPOSITOR'S ASSIGNMENT**

### **1. THE PRIORITY OF THE TEXT**

#### **A. Begin Here**

Expository preaching points the preacher to the Scriptures as a beginning. The sermon is intended to explain what the Bible says.

#### **B. Considerations for Selecting a Passage**

1. Passage Length
2. Sermon Length

“Every sermon should seem like twenty minutes, even if it is much longer.”  
-J. Stott (54)
3. Concerns

God's preference is not always our own. Pastor's should evaluate, look back and forward in their plans and preaching ministry.
4. Catalysts

The following types of eventful preaching can strengthen the preacher's ability and respectability:

  - Series
  - Contexts

The context of the preacher and the congregation will ultimately aid in decision making about delivery and application.
5. Cautions

The author's general cautions include: do not avoid familiar texts, do not purposely avoid any text, and do not use spurious texts. The preacher must remember the inspiration of the Scripture, and be guided by its completeness.

#### **C. Tools for Interpreting a Passage**

Many different tools can be used to assist the preparer of the sermon. Preaching is at its best when it comes from the Holy Spirit stirring the heart of the preacher. These tools are guides and suggestions.

“Every preacher is to regard himself as an original exhibitor and enforcer of the terms of human salvation; a channel of gracious speech, markedly different from every other.” -J. R. Wilson

#### **D. Principles for Interpreting a Passage**

1. Use grammatical-historical method.
2. Observe the historical, cultural, and literary context.
3. Determine the redemptive context.



## 2. THE COMPONENTS OF EXPOSITION

### A. The Goal

People long to understand how the text of Scripture applies to their lives. The goal of expository preaching is to do just this. “However, a true expository sermon uses all its resources to move to application. It is the main thing to be done.” -D. Larson  
“The application of the sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing to be done.” - J. Broadus (79).

### B. The Pattern

Jesus set a pattern on the road to Emmaus by beginning with Moses and the prophets and explaining what the text said about himself (Luke 24).

### C. The Components

Explanation, illustration, and application act as the proof, the clarification or the specification of the exhortation the preacher offers and the transformation that God requires.

### D. The Balance

Remember, explanations prepare the mind, illustrations prepare the heart, and applications prepare the will (p. 86).

### E. The Attitudes

1. *A Divine Authority*  
When the preacher says what God's Word says, he has authority.
2. *A Biblical Manner*  
Evangelize, teach, clarify, and challenge
3. *A Humble Boldness*  
Be bold in the conveying of the Word of God, but remain humble, realizing that it is not your authority but God's.
4. *A Christ-Likeness*

### 3. THE PROCESS OF EXPLANATION

#### A. The Labyrinth

The Word of God is a maze to many people. It is the preacher's job to shed light in the right areas so the hearer can begin to understand the well-worn path which leads to understanding the text.

#### B. The Path of Preparation

##### 1. Six Critical Questions

1. What does the text mean?
2. How do I know what the text means?
3. What concerns caused the text to be written?
4. What do we share in common with:
  - a. Those to (or about) whom the text was written, and/or
  - b. The one by whom the text was written.
5. How should people now respond to the truths of the text?
6. What is the most effective way I can communicate the meaning of the text?

##### 2. Four Necessary Steps

###### a. Observe

"Get saturated with the Gospel. I always find that I can preach best when I can manage to lie soaked in my text. I like to get a text, and find out its meanings and bearings. Then, after I have bathed in it, I delight to lie down in it, and let it soak into me." - Spurgeon (103).

###### b. Interrogate

The question which must be asked is simply, "What's here?" This question leads to more penetrating questions.

"To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view... The opposite of exposition is 'imposition' which is to impose on the text what is not there." - John Stott (104)

##### 1. *Exegete the Passage (What Does It Say?)*

Exegesis is the process by which preachers discover the precise definitions and grammatical distinctions of the words in a text. This can and should be done in both the original language and a careful evaluation of the English versions.

##### 2. *Outline the Passage (How does it fit together?)*

Three types of outlines are suggested:

- Grammatical
- Mechanical
- Conceptual Outlines

##### 3. *Background the Text (Where does it fit?)*

c. *Relate*

This step seeks to determine how the passage will be and should be received by a given audience.

d. Organize

1. *Sequence and Order*

The text should be put into logical order. The exegetical outline is not usually the homiletical outline. The exegetical outline establishes what the text says. The homiletical outline establishes how the meaning is best communicated to the congregation.

2. *Exhaust and Cover*

The main points of the text should be reflected in the proposition and application of the sermon.

3. *Highlight and Subordinate*

The irrelevant must be discarded.

**C. The Light of Presentation**

The effective preacher needs to understand three basic steps for the actual presentation of the stated facts.

1. State and Place

First state what the text means. Then locate or place it in the text where the idea came from.

2. Prove

After stating the truth and properly placing it in the text, then it must be proven true to the hearer. This can be done with five methodologies:

- a. Restatement
- b. Narration
- c. Description and Definition
- d. Exegesis
- e. Argument

3. More Light

*Da lucem, Domine* – “Give light, O Lord!”

The fundamental obligation of an expositor: To state what you know and show how you know.

## **VII. SOME SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS**

### **1. Examine Key Words or Phrases in the Text.**

1. *Key Words*
2. *Repetition of Words or Phrases*
3. *Contrasts Between Words or Phrases*
4. *Comparisons Between Words, Ideas, or Phrases*
5. *Expressions of Time or Sequence*
6. *Terms of Conclusion, Transition, or Result*

2. Look for Themes that emerge as you read the text.
3. Investigate verb tenses in the original language. Track those verbs.
4. Watch for Questions asked and answers given in the text.
5. Look for warnings.
6. Watch for cause and effects relationships that may not be set off by a key word or phrase.
7. Look for promises (noting their general or specific nature).
8. Look for movement.
9. Watch for lists.
10. Look for explanations.
11. Look for commands.
12. Look for the important descriptions given by the text.
13. Watch for, and interpret carefully, figures of speech.

## CONCLUSION:

In his article, “Exegesis and Expository Preaching,” Robert Thomas reminds us that exegesis is the product of the skillful use of biblical languages in determining the original meaning of a given text.

### EIGHT THINGS ARE IMPORTANT:

1. The expositor must be a trained exegete with a “working” knowledge of the biblical languages.
2. Exegesis builds on sound hermeneutical principles or a systematic method for using them to analyze a text.
3. Investigation of the biblical introduction of the passage (book, chapter, and verses) to be used is foundational for a proper exegesis.
4. Exegesis includes a study of words, idioms, terms, phrases, and paragraphs. A study of their historical evolution, usage, and structure are critical to the exegetical process.
5. It includes an examination of the historical development of the book.
6. Expositors are to use the abundant resources available to them from scholars.
7. Preachers must speak on the level of the people. Technical data should not be used in the pulpit.
8. The meaning of the text must be communicated.

The exegete enhances his exegetical work by investigating other related fields of study.

Thomas lists four cognate areas of study:

- **Biblical and Systematic Theology** – One’s sermons must be based upon a biblically and theologically sound interpretation of Scripture.
- **Church History** - Sermons benefit from illustrations and lessons of the past.
- **Apologetics** - Apologetical methodologies of former Christians can be useful in devising current defenses of the faith. However, these defenses must emerge out of a sound interpretation of the Bible.
- **Applicational Ministries** - Here the Scriptures are applied to the human experience.
  1. *Homiletics* - sermon structure and its motivation are rooted in the text.
  2. *Counseling* - expository preaching is exhortation to groups as well as to individuals.
  3. *Christian Education* - the impartation of biblical truth emerges from the text also.
  4. *Missions and Evangelism* - the sermon's offer of salvation must be both mission and evangelistic oriented.
  5. *Social Issues* - Christians are responsible to help alleviate social ills and human need.

## **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING**

**(Robert Thomas)**

1. Select what is most important about the text.
2. Use technical items when necessary, but sparingly.
3. Describe the writer's thoughts, aims, and purpose.
4. Show why you prefer a certain passage. Briefly, address any known difficulties.
5. Prepare a personal translation of the passage.
6. Remember you are servicing the mind as a groundwork for a service to the heart.
7. Follow the sequential flow of Scripture, but deviate from it when necessary.
8. Do not preach textual assumptions or idealistic assumptions about the text.
9. Select a proper translation on which to base a sermon.
10. Be yourself. Use your own gifts.
11. Know your audience. Challenge them with reachable possibilities.
12. Add something new to the known.
13. Cover a sufficient portion of Scripture. Do not try to preach it all at once.
14. Apply the text proportionately.
15. Teach the known as a point of reference, then move to the unknown.
16. Avoid sensationalism.

## WALT KAISER ON DOING EXEGESIS WITH INTEGRITY

*“The sole object of the expositor is to explain as clearly as possible what the writer meant when he wrote the text under examination.” (45)*

*“...preparation for preaching is always a movement which must begin with the text of Scripture and have as its goal the proclamation of that Word in such a way that it can be heard with all its poignancy and relevancy to the modern situation without dismissing one iota of its original normativeness.”(48) “Background studies about the author, culture, time, literary genre, and organizing principles of the Biblical book are exceedingly helpful and necessary as a proper preparation for approaching a Biblical text. But finally we must come to the text itself. It must consume the majority of our interest and attention. It must be to that text's phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and strophes that we devote our most detailed examination and searching analysis.” (50)*

*“Thus Biblical exegesis must use any and all of those tools which it legitimately can, while preserving the autonomy of the text and assuming its integrity.” (66)*

*“All sorts of “shortcuts” and “innovative ideas” are being introduced as substitutes for proclamation of the Word of God These substitutes include relational theology, transactional therapy, fellowship groups, “what-do-you-think” (pooled ignorance) Bible study groups, topical seminars, and just plain Christian entertainment in music, films, and variety programs. Some of these (in their most wholesome form) may have a function in the body of Christ, but never as substitutes of the declaration of the Word of God.” (202)*

## **SECTION 9**

### **The Exegetical/Interpretive Process: Guidelines, Principles and Aids**



# THE BASICS OF EXPOSITION THE EXEGETICAL PROCESS

John MacArthur has said,

“The proper elements in an expository sermon may be summed up as follows:

***Preaching is expository in purpose. It explains the text.***

***Preaching is logical in flow. It persuades the mind.***

***Preaching is doctrinal in content. It obligates the will.***

***Preaching is pastoral in concern. It feeds the soul.***

***Preaching is imaginative in pattern. It excites the emotion.***

***Preaching is relevant in application. It touches the life.***

The task of the expository preacher is to take the mass of raw data from the text and bridge the gap between exegesis and exposition.”

-(*Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 289)

Explaining the text and examining the raw data involves exegesis. This in turn entails hermeneutics.

## Some Definitions of Key Terms Related to Hermeneutics and Exegesis

1. Hermeneutics: The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined.
2. Exegesis: The determination of the meaning of the biblical text in its historical and literary contexts (as opposed to *eisegesis* which is reading meaning into the text).
3. Exposition: The communication of the meaning of the text along with its relevance to present day hearers.
4. Homiletics: The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning and relevance of the biblical text are communicated in a preaching situation.
5. Pedagogy: The science (principles) and art (task) by which the meaning and relevance of the biblical text are communicated in a teaching situation.

## Luther and Calvin on Hermeneutics

“What I have advised elsewhere I here repeat and shall advise again: the Christian reader should devote his first effort to searching for what is called the literal sense.”

Martin Luther

“The literal sense of Scripture is the whole essence of faith and Christian theology. Every word should be allowed to stand in its natural meaning, and should not be abandoned unless faith forces us to it.”

Martin Luther

*Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*

(Scripture is its own interpreter.)

“That is the true method of interpretation which puts scripture along side of Scripture in a right and proper way.”

Martin Luther (Works, 3:334)

“It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.”

John Calvin  
(Preface to *Romans*)

“We must ever be on guard against wresting Scripture from its natural setting.”

John Calvin  
(*Psalms*, 2:388)

“Let us know, then, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning.”

John Calvin

## **MODERN HERMENEUTIC: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS**

- ❖ The Allegorical/Symbolic School (Idealism)  
Approaches the text looking for a deeper symbolic meaning. Looks beyond the surface narrative to a more spiritualized meaning. Very popular in the early centuries of the church when the Platonic worldview was dominant.
- ❖ The Literal/Historical/Grammatical School (Realism)  
Approaches the text assuming that the plain sense meaning is to be taken unless there are clues that symbolic language is being employed. Textual Criticism is employed to discover the original text. Takes narrative more seriously than the allegorical school.
- ❖ The Critical School (Naturalism)  
Approaches the text with naturalistic presuppositions, particularly about the method of inspiration. Expressions of the Critical Method include:
  - Form Criticism (Rudolf Bultmann) –  
Analyzes how the oral tradition/forms shape the literary form utilized by the biblical author as it impacts the text.
  - Source Criticism (Julius Wellhausen) –  
Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis found in the two creation narratives of Gen. 1 and 2 the clue to four sources for the Old Testament: J (Jahwist), E (Elohist), D (deuteronomic), and P (priestly). In New Testament studies, source criticism has focused on the Synoptic Problem and what written sources are behind our gospels (Q, M, L, Markan priority).
  - Redaction Criticism (Hans Conzelmann) –  
Attempts to discover the unique theology of each author.  
(Compare Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39)
  - Structuralism (Ferdinand de Saussure) –  
Views language as synchronic and ahistorical. There are intrinsic structures in all languages which are not time-bound. The exegete should look for these intrinsic linguistic structures in the text.
  - Reader Response Criticism –  
Interpretation is a dynamic interaction between the text and personal application to the reader's situation. The reader determines meaning.
  - Deconstruction (Jacques Derrida, Mark Taylor) –  
Much more radical than reader response criticism. The text has no fixed meaning. The author is dead and the text relativized by the reader. There are as many meanings as there are readings.

❖ The Devotional School (Pragmatism)

Approaches the text with a view to finding not a timeless truth but a truth that works for me. The focus is on application, not authorial intent/textual meaning.

❖ The Existential School (Existentialism)

Approaches the text as that which prompts the reader to existential choice and an authentic life. Bultmann and Tillich sought to reinterpret the Bible in the light of Heidegger's existential categories. Popular existentialist simply posit their own subjective meaning onto the text.

**A COMPARSION OF HERMENEUTICAL PERSPECTIVES**

	<b>PRE-CRITICAL</b>	<b>MODERN</b>	<b>POST-MODERN</b>
<b>HERMENEUTIC</b>	Traditional dogmatic interpretation	Historical Critical method	Reader Response criticism
<b>PHILOSOPHICAL ONTOLOGY</b>	Platonism and Aristotelianism	Enlightenment rationalism	Existentialism and Pragmatism
<b>EPISTEMOLOGY</b>	Fideism	Rationalism, Foundationalism	Subjectivity, Antifoundationalism
<b>HERMENEUTICAL FOCUS</b>	Church doctrine	Reason, historical criticism	The reader
<b>ROLE OF TEXT</b>	The text is inviolable; seek to understand authorial intent	Use reason to determine the cultural and historical forces which shaped the author and text	The text has no closure; it is incomplete without the reader's response
<b>ROLE OF READER</b>	To understand and accept the author's intended meaning	To investigate the background and presuppositions of the author	To interact with the text pursuing one's own perspective
<b>HERMENEUTICAL EXPRESSIONS</b>	Traditional, plain sense interpretations	Source, form, and redaction criticism	Post-structuralism, reader response, deconstruction

## A MODERNIST CHALLENGE

The definition of the meaning of a text changed dramatically in 1946 with the announcement that it is a fallacy to depend on what an author meant to say as a guide to determining what a text means. Since that time, three figures have tended to dominate the continuing refinements or protests to this announced fallacy: Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and E.D. Hirsch. Gadamer stressed a "fusion of horizons" (almost in a recasting of the Hegelian dialectic in new terms), Ricoeur envisaged a whole new set of operations when communication is written down, while Hirsch claims it was impossible to validate meaning if it was not connected with the author's truth-assertions and distinguished from significances [applications] of a text.

At present there are four main models for understanding the Bible: 1) the proof-text method, 2) the historical-critical method, 3) the reader-response method, and 4) the syntactical-theological method. The first is often naive, the second has been judged sterile, the third is often reactionary to the second, but the fourth is holistic and involves both historical and practical applications. Amid all this dramatic change, we have come to realize that the word "meaning" is currently used to include the referent, the sense, the author's intention, the significance a passage has, its value, and its entailment. Hermeneutics has become a multifaceted discipline. Here, we give our attention to only one aspect, the most basic and fundamental.

## A Guide to the Exegetical Process

### Introduction:

- I. Spiritual Qualifications of an Interpreter of Holy Scripture
  - A. Born again (John 3; I Cor. 2:14-16). You cannot truly understand the Bible without the new birth. Unbelievers may achieve some degree of knowledge and appreciation of the text (see Stein), but they cannot embrace it in all its fullness without the new birth and the illumination of the Spirit.
  - B. Passion to know and obey God's Word (James 1:22-25)
  - C. Deep respect and reverence for God and His holiness (I Peter 1:13-16)
  - D. Complete and utter dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide and direct (John 14:25). "To pray well is to study well."

- E. A total confidence in the Bible as the inerrant and infallible Word of God (Matt. 5:17-18; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:21)
- II. The Perspective of the Interpreter
  - A. The question of critical methods

Summary: Never let any commentary or interpreter place himself in judgment above the Word of God; watch critical interpreters who correct the biblical authors as though they had a superior vantage point and ability. The Revelation of God is superior to the reason, experience, and the traditions of man.
  - B. The need for interpretive tools--pitfalls of neglect:
    - 1. A veiled egotism – “I don’t need the help of more than 2000 years of spiritual insight, scholarship or interpretation.”
    - 2. The danger of confusing biblical inspiration with biblical illumination.
    - 3. A caution about interpretive tools; never let them replace your work in the Scripture.

### III. The Exegetical Process

The exegetical process consists of several steps. These steps may overlap, but it is important to examine them one at a time. Followed consistently, these steps will become good habit. The habit will improve the quality of your studying and teaching by increasing the thoroughness of your study. It will also help you be diligent in the study of God's Word on days when you feel like doing something else (or nothing at all!). Furthermore, the steps break the process into manageable pieces.

### Step 1: Selecting a Text

- I. Choose a complete text (not a fragment to be used out of its context). Of course working straight through a book of the Bible will greatly assist you here. Paragraph preaching is an excellent model to follow.
- II. Select a genuine, properly translated text. See step 3 below.
- III. Approach the text with a mind that is willing to be stretched and taught by the text.

### Step 2: Determining the Limits of the Text

- I. The Aim
  - A. Seek to identify where a passage of Scripture begins and ends. Look for a complete unit of thought (paragraph or pericope). Remember that chapter and verse divisions are relatively recent additions to the Bible. The original manuscripts had no such divisions. Sometimes they fit, but on some occasions they do not.
  - B. Try to find the natural breaks in the text (seams). Discourse analysis and strategies are especially helpful at this point.
- II. The Procedure
  - A. Check the paragraphing indicated in the Hebrew and Greek texts (if you can!) and in English translations using paragraphing. The New American Standard Bible, for example, indicates a new paragraph by boldfacing the verse number of the first letter in the new paragraph. The NIV and NKJV also do this.
  - B. Consider how what goes before and after your text (context) influences the interpretation of the text. Would broadening the scope of your text by a verse or two in either direction alter your understanding of the text?
  - C. Look for literary clues: introductory statements; indications of time, place, or location; and concluding summary statements. These elements often mark beginnings and endings of units of thought.
  - D. Look for thematic elements that hold a passage together and set it off from surrounding verses. Reoccurring phrases or words are a valuable clue.
  - E. Consider the way commentators arrange the text into sections.

### Step 3: Exploring the Text

- I. Read the passage repeatedly from one of the more literal English translations: the New American Standard is the best option available today. If you have the ability, you should read directly from the original languages. Note any significant differences in translation for future investigation.
- II. Read the passage aloud several times. This will assist you also for the public reading of the word in worship.
- III. As you do these first several readings, jot down quickly whatever observations, questions, initial impressions, and related thoughts come to mind. Do not worry about evaluating them now. Just record them. Think, feels, and imagine. Ask God to speak to you personally from the text. Do not bring in commentaries and reference books just yet unless you hit a wall. Let them wait until after you have spent considerable time exploring the passage yourself.

### Step 4: Establishing the Text (Textual Criticism)

- I. Definition – “The procedure of checking for any variant or alternative words or phrases in the text and determining which reading is the original.” This does not refer to differences in translation: it refers to questions about the actual wording of the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts. This is an issue of the transmission of the text not the inspiration of the text!
- II. Why Establish the Text
  - A. It shows respect for the Bible by seeking to be true to exactly what God inspired and the author wrote.
  - B. It promotes a habit of honesty in handling the Scriptures, helping you learn to resist the temptation that whispers, “But the people I teach would never know the difference.”
  - C. It affects what you believe and thus what you teach.
  - D. People you teach have study Bibles that point out textual variations. Some will have legitimate questions that need answering.
  - E. It increases your confidence and your effectiveness as a preacher/teacher because you know you are prepared. You need not dread having someone ask a question that will expose the shortcuts of your preparation.

### Step 5: Studying the Text in Its Contexts

It is at this point that it is helpful to turn to reference books and commentaries. It is important to delay using these works until you have done your own research and had time to think



about the passage for yourself. Having done that, it is valuable to compare your first impressions with the conclusions of devout scholars who have given the passage a lifetime of study.

At this stage you may possibly adjust (or reject!) some of what you wrote during the first reading of the text. That is to be expected. What remains may well be valuable material when it comes to teaching. Your first impression may give you a good idea about the first impressions your hearers will have when they hear the text read. Often the things about the passage that intrigued you will make effective teaching introductions. But you will want to be sure that your interpretation squares with the findings of reliable interpreters. If you were the only person to interpret and understand a text in a particular way you may be right, but you are probably not! Your search will cover several areas.

## I. Historical Context

### A. Information Sought

1. Identity of the author
2. Date and place in which the book originated
3. Identity any circumstances of the recipients
  - a. Identity
    - (1) Believers or unbelievers
    - (2) Ethnic or religious background
  - b. Problems they faced
  - c. Their manner of life
    - (1) Social customs
    - (2) Material context
  - d. The relationship of author and recipients
  - e. Historical events of that time that have a bearing on the understanding of the passage
  - f. Geographical information

### B. Sources of Historical Information

1. Primary source - the Bible itself -- Sometimes this material is stated openly by the biblical writers. Read the beginning and ending portions of that book of the Bible to see if there are statements given about the author, recipients, date, or circumstances. In other cases the information can be gleaned from something elsewhere in the Bible.
2. Secondary sources of information -- Often we find help from extrabiblical sources. In still other cases the best that can be done is to make an educated guess. Recommendations from faculty members teaching in the departments of biblical backgrounds, Old Testament, and New Testament are the best guide to secondary sources of information about the historical context. Be careful to note a scholar's background and theological perspective (Conservative vs. Liberal). The following list will offer an idea of the types of reference books which are helpful.

- a. Bible Dictionaries - definitions of biblical terms, brief biographies of biblical characters, information about people and places, etc.

Example: *Harper's Bible Dictionary*  
*\*Holman Bible Dictionary*  
*New Bible Dictionary*  
*New International Dictionary of the Bible*  
*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*

- b. Bible Encyclopedias - more extensive coverage of subjects than that which is found in Bible Dictionaries, plus articles about theological subjects.

Example: *International Bible Standard Encyclopedia*  
*Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*  
*\*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*

- c. Bible Atlases - maps, plus information about geography, topography, climate, etc.

Example: *Macmillan Bible Atlas*  
*Oxford Bible Atlas*  
*Harper Atlas of the Bible*

- d. Old Testament and New Testament Introductions

Use your textbooks or consult textbook lists for current recommendations by faculty members in Old and New Testament departments. See Akin's *Building A Theological Library*.

- e. Bible Commentaries

(1) Types as to Arrangement

- (a) One-volume commentaries on the whole Bible, though useful in some respects, are not detailed enough to be fully adequate in the kind of careful study done in sermon preparation. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* with a volume on the OT and a volume on the NT is the best available in my judgement.
- (b) Individual commentaries on one or more books of the Bible are excellent sources of information. The key question is knowing who the writer is, whether his expertise covers this particular part of the Bible, and the theological perspective from which he writes.
- (c) Sets of commentaries in which each volume covers one or more books of the Bible generally have a common format and usually reflect a common perspective, either denominational or theological. The quality of the commentaries often varies considerably from volume to volume, depending on the ability of the author of that particular volume of the set.

## (2) Types as to Aim

Commentaries are as unique as the authors who write them. Even within a series they will vary somewhat in emphasis. Yet they can generally be divided into three classes. It is likely that some people would place a given series in a different category. But to give some guidance, the following list is offered:

- (a) Devotional/Sermonic commentaries emphasize the relationship of the passage to modern hearers. Often the volume is the outgrowth of a sermon series. Usually they are written for laymen, pastors (sometimes without theological training), and others who are more concerned with the significance of the passage for today than with the historical, linguistic, and grammatical details of the passage. They may help preachers and teachers see how to apply the Bible to modern life.

Examples:     \*Be Series (Warren Wiersbe)  
                  *Communicator's Commentary*  
                  *Daily Devotional Bible Commentary*  
                  Exploring Series (John Philips)  
                  *Interpretation series*  
                  \**Preaching the Word* (Kent Hughes)  
                  *Pulpit Commentary*  
                  *Proclamation series*  
                  *Speaker's Bible*

- (b) Exegetical Commentaries are written for the pastor with seminary training and for other well-informed readers. They are more detailed in their analysis of the passage's original meaning and they focus less on its contemporary application. They are scholarly, but not written exclusively for scholars. These are an important part of the pastor's library.

Examples:     *The Bible Speaks Today*  
                  \**Expositor's Bible Commentary* (EBC)  
                  *Harper's New Testament Commentary*  
                  \**New American Commentary*  
                  *New Century Bible Commentary*  
                  \**New International Commentary on the N.T.* (NICNT)  
                  \**New International Commentary on the O.T.* (NICOT)  
                  *Old Testament Library*  
                  \**Tyndale Commentaries*  
                  *Word Biblical Commentary*

- (c) Technical Commentaries assume an audience with considerable theological background, including a healthy knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. They focus on some of the finer points of interpretation and usually deal with matters of history, linguistics, theology, and grammar and syntax more completely. They often are a source of information not found in other commentaries.

Examples:     Augsburg series of commentaries  
                  *Hermeneia Commentary*  
                  \**International Critical Commentary*  
                  \**New International Greek Testament Commentary*

(3) Selecting Commentaries. This is a highly individual matter, depending on your skill with Hebrew and Greek and your familiarity with the Bible. Once again the recommendations of faculty members in the Old and New Testament departments are invaluable.

Daniel Akin's *Building a Theological Library* is a helpful tool in making commentary selections. Other similar books are also available. Remember that some very fine commentaries on individual books of the Bible are not part of any commentary set. If you use only sets, you will miss some treasures.

You will want to work with the exegetical and technical commentaries. Avoid the exclusive use of the devotional/sermonic commentaries. Otherwise you may be tempted to take their sermonic treatment for your own and you may not deal as accurately with the text as you ought. That would rob you of the joy of formulating your own message. Additionally, the focus of the exegetical process is determining what the author intended to say to the original hearers. The text's significance for today is not the primary aim of this stage of the process.

## II. Literary Context

A. Genre identification (see Fee and Stuart, *How to Study the Bible for All Its Worth* for an excellent discussion of the literary genre of Scripture and the unique hermeneutical questions relating to the different genre).

1. Identifies the literary form or method used in a given passage. Is the passage a historical narrative? A parable? A prophecy? Poetry? An epistle? An apocalypse?
2. Determining the type of literature being studied helps you know whether to take language in the passage as figurative or in a more straightforward sense. It also can help you see how verses relate to one another.

B. The purpose of the book

Sometimes this is explicitly stated, as in Luke 1:1-4 and John 20:31. More often the purpose is discerned by reading the whole book and noticing recurring themes and emphases. Outlining the book of the Bible being studied is often helpful in seeing the purpose of the book. The outline need not be excessively detailed: as a beginning point, see if you can summarize in a complete sentence each chapter, then each paragraph.

C. The author's method of presenting the material

1. Usually the sequence in which materials are presented is significant.
2. Sometimes the author speaks directly; sometimes the message comes indirectly, between the lines.
3. Sentence flow diagrams of didactic passages are excellent helps in this regard. They give a visual depiction of the flow of the passage, showing how ideas relate to one another. Narrative texts can be "plotted"; describe the scenes, action, characters, climax, etc.

D. The relationship of the text to the overall flow of the book.

1. Some books of the Bible are tightly woven arguments in which every paragraph has a clear function.
2. Narrative portions of the Bible often have an essential unity that gives each section a clear reason for being there.
3. Some stories, especially in the Gospels, do not have as obvious a connection with their context. Yet even there it is wise to look and see if there is a connection. There probably is one.
4. The outline done previously is an excellent way of seeing how the passage being studied relates to the book as a whole.

### III. Linguistic Context

In this stage of studying the text, the point is to understand what the words mean as they work together to form sentences.

A. Lexical Study

1. Nature- It deals with the origin and development of word meanings. While origins of words are important--and often fascinating--what you want to know is what it meant the way this particular writer used it in this particular place. Beware of "exegetical fallacies!" (see D. A. Carson and his important work by the same title).
2. Need for lexicography- Most words which survive long in a language acquire denotations (specific meanings) and connotations (additional implications); these must be distinguished and defined.

### 3. Reference books for use in word study

#### a. Old Testament (Hebrew)

\*Brown, Driver, and Briggs (BDB), *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Botterweck, G. Johannes, and Ringgren, Helmer. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by John T. Willis. Grand Rapids:

Harris, R. Laird; Archer, Gleason; and Waltke, Bruce, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Chicago: Moody, 1980.

#### b. New Testament (Greek)

\*Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker (BAG), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.

\*Brown, Colin, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-78.

Earle, Ralph. *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. 6 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974.

\*Robertson, A.T. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 6 vols. Nashville: Sunday School Board of the SBC, 1930.

Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gergard, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-75.

“Little Kittel,” one volume work.

Vincent, Marvin. *New Testament Word Studies*. 4 vols. New York: Scribners, 1887-1900.

\*Vine, W.E. *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. London: Oliphants, 1939-41.

Wuest, Kenneth. *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973.

### B. Grammatical and Syntactical Study

1. Nature - Grammar and syntax deal with the way words, phrases, sentences and even paragraphs work together to convey meaning. “Syntax” is derived from two Greek words, “syn” (with) and “tassein” (to put in order). Therefore, “syntax” means “to put together in order.” Syntax is the study of sentence structure, the arrangement of word forms to show their mutual relationships in the sentence.

#### a. Two kinds of syntax:

(1) Analytic: word order as guide (English)

(2) Synthetic: word-endings or case endings as guide (Greek)

#### b. Importance

(1) Martin Luther: “at its root, theology is grammar”

(2) Hebrew Example: Genesis 3:12

(a) Translation: the woman / the man / and he said / with me / you gave / whom / the tree from / to me she gave / she / and I / ate: “And he said the man the woman, whom you gave to me, she gave to me from the tree and I ate.”

(b) Significance: use of the personal pronoun “she”, subjective case, before verb, places focus not on the action but on the person performing the action; thus Adam is directly and emphatically blaming Eve for his action.

(3) Greek Examples:

(a) 1 John 3:9 – “does not commit sin” = “does not continue in the habit or pattern of sin”

(b) Matt. 28:19 – “go into all nations” = “as you are going into all nations”

#### Step 6: Gleaning the Theological Context of the Text

##### I. Get the Big Picture of the Passage as a Whole.

At this point in your study of the passage, you are moving from the details of grammar and syntax to see the big picture and understand what the passage as a whole is affirming. Exegesis is incomplete until the parts are properly put together, reassembled. Understood in context, the words and phrases have a theological message.

##### II. Understand How the Author’s Message Flows.

Identify the key affirmations of the passage. Note how the writer supports those affirmations with evidence and arguments. Write a paraphrase of the passage, trying to capture the essence of the passage in modern terminology. Then expand the paraphrase by elaborating on the various ideas involved.

##### III. Identify The Key Theological Statements and Related Implications.

Determine what the passage has to say about God and His nature, what it indicates about humankind, what it indicates about Christ, the gospel, the nature and mission of the church, last things, etc. You may discover yourself answering some of the questions you asked in the initial reading of the passage.

##### IV. Compare Scripture With Scripture - Theological Principle of the Analogy of Faith

A. Definition: Scripture is best interpreted by Scripture, viewing the Bible as a whole.

1. Presuppositions:
  - a. The Bible is unified, as God is a unity
  - b. The Bible is coherent: there are no contradiction between Paul and James, for example (Eph. 2:8-10 and James 2:14-26)
  - c. The Bible is inspired, of divine origin and therefore infallible and inerrant
  - d. The whole Bible is profitable for edification
  - e. The whole Bible is completely true and trustworthy
2. General Principles:
  - a. Obscure passages give way to clear
  - b. No major doctrine should be based on one verse or a few miscellaneous verses--(ex. the time of the rapture should not be a test of orthodoxy)
  - c. Points of doctrine not settled by specific reference may be settled by the general tenor of Scripture
  - d. Doctrines are more secure as they are taught in many verses and various parts of Scripture
  - e. If two biblical doctrines humanly appear to be in contradiction, (like human freedom/predestination) we must accept both (antinomy or compatibilism).
  - f. Passages which are brief should be studied in light of passages of greater length  
- Acts 2:38 in light of Romans 3:21-8:39
3. Specific Principles:
  - a. NT is the norm for interpreting OT
    - (1) OT moral laws should still be followed (Matt. 5:17-48)
    - (2) Dietary laws are rejected (Acts 15 council)
    - (3) Some civil laws are rejected or reinterpreted (ex.. an eye-for-eye)
    - \*(4) OT is promise, NT is fulfillment
  - a. First three gospels and historical portions of Acts should be interpreted in light of the Epistles
4. Priority of systematic passages over incidental; when purpose of passage is to teach a doctrine, it should take precedence over incidental allusions.
  - a. 1 Cor. 15:29-30 baptism for the dead is not mentioned anywhere else; but cf. The elaborate Mormon system build on this one text.
  - b. 1 Peter 3:19, "preach to those imprisoned," must consider Hebrews 9:27, "it is appointed unto all men once to die, then the judgment."
5. Seek universal principles in the midst of local ceremonies.
6. Teaching passages are helpful for the meaning of symbolic passages.



7. Each part of the Bible should be seen in light of its overall emphasis: God's glory and the salvation of man.

#### Step 7: Contextualizing (Applying) the Text

- I. Identify cultural elements present in the text.
- II. Evaluate cultural elements in the text as to their influence on the theology and ethics of the passage.
- III. Use principles of contextualization to determine the application of the text to modern recipients. The teaching may transfer directly or may require adaption of some sort. Specify which and why.
- IV. Specify culturally-relevant beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that should flow from the teaching of the passage.

#### A Brief Word on Principles For Interpreting Prophecy

1. Follow the normal hermeneutic of historical-grammatical-rhetorical interpretation. The historical element means that the cultural background and circumstances of the prophets are considered. The grammatical element means (a) that words are taken in their normal sense unless it is evident that a figure of speech or symbol is used, and (b) that words are considered in the light of their immediate and broad context. The rhetorical element considers the special features of apocalyptic and prophetic genres and considers the place of figurative and symbolic language.
2. Compare parallel passages, and fit all prophetic passages together in a unified whole. An understanding of the Book of Revelation, for example, is aided by an understanding of the Books of Daniel and Ezekiel.
3. Recognize the principle of "foreshortening: or perspective, in which events separated by many years are sometimes seen together (e.g., Is. 9: 6-8; 61: 1-2).
4. Recognize the several themes of both fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy.
5. Follow consistency in interpreting prophecy.
6. Determine if the predictions are conditional or unconditional.
7. Determine if the predictions are fulfilled or unfulfilled.

Adapted from notes by Dr. Roy B. Zuck of  
Dallas Seminary

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERPRETING THE TEXT OF SCRIPTURE (A Second Summation)**

### **I. Study the book as a whole.**

1. Consider the questions of date, authorship, recipients, and purpose (general matters of introduction).
2. Develop an outline of the entire book (study Bibles and commentaries will be helpful).
3. Examine the relationship of the passage under consideration to the book as a whole.

### **II. Establish the best textual base possible.**

1. Use the original language if you can.
2. Compare various versions and translations.

### **III. Investigate the text linguistically (e.g., word by word).**

1. Make a lexical (definitional) study of crucial words.
2. Research the passage for key words, phrases and ideas.
3. Track the verbs!

### **IV. Examine the form or forms of the material in the passage.**

1. What is the literary type (history, poetry, prophetic, apocalyptic)?
2. Is there any indication of the life situation from which the material came?

### **V. Analyze the structure of the passage.**

1. Determine if the material constitutes a literary unity.
2. Is there a logical sequence of ideas present?
3. Outline the passage you are studying.
4. Use the outline as the framework for your teaching.

**SEVEN STEPS TO STUDYING AND PREACHING/TEACHING  
THE BIBLE  
(A Summation)**

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Observation    | What do I see?  |
| 2. Interpretation | What does it mean?  |
| 3. Correlation    | How does it fit together?   |
| 4. Application    | How do I put this into practice?  |
| 5. Illustration   | How has this principle worked in other areas and in other people's lives? |
| 6. Proclamation   | How do I communicate this truth to others?                                |
| 7. Motivation     | How do I encourage others to love God by obeying God?                     |

## Appendix I

### **QUESTIONS TO AID TEXT INTERPRETATION**

by James Cox (Sr. Prof. of Preaching, Southern Seminary)

1. What is the text about?
2. What does the text mean to you?
3. What crucial exegetical issues in the text might bear on a correct interpretation?
4. What is the significance of the text in relation to Jesus Christ and the history of redemption?
5. What has the text meant to other interpreters?
6. What is the point of immediacy? Where does the text strike closest home in your own life?
7. What is there in the text that would make it difficult to communicate?
8. Can the truth in the text stand alone, or does it need to be seen in relation to a counterbalancing truth?
9. What are some of the causes of the condition or situation discussed or suggested in the text?
10. What are the theological implications or practical duties that grow out of the truth of the text?
11. What objections may be raised to your conclusions about the implications and applications of the truth of the text?
12. What would be the results of knowing or failing to know, believing or failing to believe, or doing or failing to do what the text suggests?
13. What must you do to make the message of the text real and true in your own life?
14. What is there in general literature, in biblical resources, in personal counseling, and in personal observation and experience that will exemplify or illustrate the truth of the text?

-(*Preaching*, by James W. Cox, pages 73-76)

## **“GETTING THE GOLD OUT OF THE ORE”**

### ***How to Study the Bible to Preach effectively***

by Joel Gregory (former Professor of Preaching, SWBTS)

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

The contemporary preacher finds it essential to discover a secure, repeatable, practical way for finding, studying and preserving biblical material. The week-by-week challenge to find the text, research materials, understand and analyze the text so it can be explained and applied... is a major task. The key is learning how to “get the gold out of the ore.”

#### **HOW DO YOU GET AT THE TASK OF SERMON PREPARATION?**

##### **A. TWO APPROACHES MAY BE TAKEN.**

1. Begin with the congregation and their needs, problems, challenges, opportunities and difficulties... then move toward the text.
2. Begin with the text and move toward the contemporary needs of the congregation.

##### **B. REMEMBER THAT THE BIBLE BY DEFINITION IS RELEVANT TO EVERY HUMAN NEED, TEXT BY TEXT.**

##### **C. DESIGN A PLAN FOR YOUR PREACHING.**

1. A plan is necessary in order to be free in terms of study and preparation.
2. Set up a calendar, taking into consideration the needs of the church family (i.e. seasons, special occasions, church programs, holidays, promotions).
3. Select a text and sermon title for each Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening message you plan to preach.

#### **SELECT A BIBLICAL TEXT FOR YOUR MESSAGE.**

##### **A. HOW MUCH TEXT IS A TEXT?**

1. Almost any amount of the Word of God can be used.

- a. Individual words - giving meaning, tense, mood, purpose and application.
- b. A phrase or part of a sentence.
- c. A biblical paragraph - including 3 to 5 or even 10 verses.
- d. A biblical chapter - covering all of it in a narrative style.
- e. An entire biblical book- using key words, catching major themes, setting the entire book out before the people.
2. Limit the sermon to the text, since “limitation” produces power in preaching.

## B. HOW DO YOU ANALYZE THE TEXT?

1. First, discover the three levels of context.
  - a. The immediate context - verses that precede and follow the text.
  - b. The book context - understand the place of the text in the whole of the book in which the text is set.
  - c. The canonical context - where the text fits in the whole broad sweep of the time-line of how God dealt with mankind in redemptive history.
2. Pay attention to the text before you try to interpret it.
3. Do what you can do through study and preparation, and God will do what only He can do when you stand to preach.

## COLLECTING, PRESERVING, EXPANDING, AND FILING YOUR STUDY NOTES.

### A. WRITE ONE VERSE AT THE TOP OF A PAGE.

1. Find out all you can about each word, phrase, and clause in that verse.
2. This procedure will allow you to make quick retrieval of the material as it relates to that text and passage.

### B. ADDITIONAL NOTES TO INCLUDE ON THE REFERENCE SHEET.

1. Write down you own best impressions, understanding and thoughts about the verse.
2. Turn next to comparative translations to make comparisons, contrasting the translations of the words, phrases and clauses in the text.
3. Review commentaries for analogy and validation from other students of the Bible.

**C. THREE LEVELS OF COMMENTARIES TO USE IN ANALYSIS OF THE VERSE-BY-VERSE STUDY.**

1. “Heavy-weight” - analytical, critical or exegetical commentaries that address every word, phrase and clause, finding their root meaning, tense, mood, voice, etc.
2. “Mid-weight” - commentaries that look at a verse at a time, having digested the “heavy” commentaries and popularizing them. “Light-weight” popularized commentaries that comment in broad and sweeping examination of entire biblical chapters and books.

**D. GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT YOUR STUDY NOTES.**

1. Approximately one half of sermon preparation time should be spent researching the text and taking notes.
2. You should have 3 to 5 times more material than you will be able to use when preaching the message.
3. Speak out of the overflow of your study when you present the sermon.

**WHEN YOU GET READY TO SAY IT, WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?**

**A. YOU STAND ON THE RAZOR’S EDGE BETWEEN THE PAST BIBLICAL REVELATION AND THE PRESENT HUMAN SITUATION.**

1. Take your technical study and transfer it into the popular, contemporary street language of the people.
2. People need to know and want to know how God can relate to them in their lives.

**B. MOVING FROM THE TECHNICAL STUDY - WORD BY WORD – WITH DIRECT BIBLICAL AUTHORITY ENABLES YOU TO BRING THE MESSAGE OUT OF “THEN” INTO “NOW”.**

**CONCLUSION:**

Preaching begins with a plan of action, followed by word-by-word, verse-by-verse study of the text and its context. After translating this into the present idiom of the people, it is then related to every point of the message with direct biblical authority. The message becomes a means of communicating life-changing truth to the congregation.

## **SECTION 10**

**Correlation: How does it fit together?**



## **CORRELATION**

(How does it fit together?)

Because Scripture is the Word of God written in the words of men we operate from the premise that it is both unified and diversified. Because it is the Word of God, there is an expected unity and harmony to all its parts. Because it is the words of men, at least 40 authors writing over a 1500 year period, there is progression and variety. Putting all of this together presents a significant challenge to the expositor.

Theological exegesis is a badly missing element in much modern preaching. To overcome this weakness, preachers and teachers of the Word must discover and declare the theology which naturally arises from the exegetical study of the text. Several principles should guide us in our hermeneutical/homiletical process. These observations will tie together some of our previous discussion.

### **1. HONOR THE AUTHORIAL INTENT OF THE TEXT**

Walt Kaiser notes four ways to ascertain the intention of the writer:

- a) See if the writer himself clearly sets forth his purpose in the text (e.g., John 20:30-31)
- b) Study the parnetical sections in order to determine the author's own applications of his writing.
- c) Observe what details the author selected for inclusion and how he arranged them.
- d) When no other clues are available, the interpreter must develop his own purpose statement for the passage.

### **2. CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE CONTEXT**

Various connections between paragraphs and immediate context may include:

- a) **Historical** - connection of facts, events, or happenings in space and time.
- b) **Theological** - a doctrine may be dependent upon some historical fact and circumstance.
- c) **Logical** - a paragraph may connect with an argument or line of thought that is under development in the whole section.
- d) **Psychological** - something in the preceding line of reasoning may trigger a related idea.

Kaiser well notes,

“Good exegetical procedure dictates that the details be viewed in light of the total context. Unless the exegete knows where the thought of the text begins and how that pattern develops, all the intricate details may be of little or no worth.” (*Towards An Exegetical Theology*, 69)

“Only an awareness of and respect for the immediate context will keep the exegete from going off the deep end here. The author has the right to define his own words as he wishes to do so - and context is the key to unlocking part of that meaning.” (Ibid., 85)

“Any successful exegete must face the question of intentionality. We are most confident that the meaning of any given word (and therefore its text and context) will be discretely contained in a single intention of the author. If it is to be found anywhere else and extricated by some means other than the usual methods of exegesis, no one has yet spelled out how that process works or how we may authenticate the additional meanings at which that process arrives.” (Ibid., 113)

### **3. BE ALERT TO NARRATIVE AND COMPOSITIONAL PATTERNS IN THE TEXT.**

Walter Liefeld points to narrative and compositional patterns in the text that must guide our study of Scripture.

Such patterns serve at least three purposes:

- a) They draw the attention of the reader (especially of the Greek text) to conceptual relationships he or she might not otherwise have observed.
- b) They can provide a structure for a sermon outline.
- c) They contribute to the stylistic excellence of the work.

#### **A. NARRATIVE PATTERNS**

Various cultures have different ways of telling stories. We do need to be aware that there are certain conventions that are followed in narration.

These patterns are part of the inspired text. They help us understand the dynamics of the conversation and the theological and personal issues.

Work to identify with people, situations, and feelings of the text.

Haddon Robinson provides some additional assistance as we consider narrative text of Scripture.

He notes that a series of different questions must be raised when trying to understand a story. These include:

- a) Who are the characters in the story and why did the author include them?
- b) Do the characters contrast with one another?
- c) How do these characters develop as the story develops?
- d) What does the setting contribute to the story?
- e) What structure holds the story together and provides its unity?
- f) How do the individual episodes fit into the total framework?
- g) What conflicts develop and how are they resolved?
- h) Why did the writer bother telling the story?
- i) What ideas lie behind the story, implied but not stated?

## **B. COMPOSITIONAL PATTERNS**

These are patterns that lie more on the surface of the passage. They may occur in narrative or logical argument. Some are marked by specific words or constructions. Often these are marked by semantic patterns.

There are twelve kinds of patterns which are very useful to the expositor:

- a) ***Comparison or Contrast***  
Romans 5:12-19; Luke 7:36-50
- b) ***Repetition*** (a simple device, sometimes reflecting Semitic style) Matt. 5:3-11; Eph. 4 (one body and one spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, etc.)
- c) ***Continuity*** (passages that may, or may not, have a repeated phrase) Matt. 13:24-52; Luke 4:1-12
- d) ***Climax***  
Matt. 4; Luke 4 (Jesus' temptations); Eph. 3:14-21 (Paul's doxological climax)

- e) **Cruciality** (a point that is of extreme importance)  
Matt. 16:16 (Peter's confession); Rev. 11:15 (The eternal Kingdom and reign of Christ)
- f) **Interchange** (the alteration of person or subject)  
Luke 1:2 (the approaching birth of John, then of Jesus); Rom. 5:12-19 (interchange and contrast of Christ and Adam)
- g) **Particularization**  
Eph. 4; Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12 (gifts of the Spirit)
- h) **Generalization** (the reverse of particularization) Matt. 7:12 (the "Golden Rule")
- i) **Cause to Effect**  
Matt. 21:33-46 (parable of the tenants)
- j) **Substantiation** (providing the grounds or reason for something) Luke 12:13-34  
(Jesus' teaching on 'possessions')
- k) **Radiation** (a central theme that radiates outward in various directions) Matt. 23 (Jesus' comments about the Pharisees)
- l) **Progression** (it is not easy to tell when an author is consciously using a progression of thought)  
Rom. 1:18-32 (degenerating activities of humankind)

Liefield notes that when we discipline ourselves to be alert for the twelve compositional patterns, we accomplish two things:

- a) We are likely to find a pattern that itself can form the basis of a sermon outline.
- b) We will follow closely the author's own direction of thought, rather than superimpose our own impressions.

#### **4. GIVE CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE PARTICULAR LITERARY FORM(S) UNDER CONSIDERATION.**

Five basic literary forms used by Biblical writers are:

1. ***Prose*** - the basic model of Biblical communication  
This includes: Descriptive Prose, Explanatory or Expository Prose, Emotive Prose, and Polemical Prose.  
Common features are Speeches; Records; and Historical Narratives.
2. ***Poetry*** - composes one-third of the OT
3. ***Historical Narrative***
4. ***Wisdom Writings***
5. ***Apocalyptic***
  - a) Rich symbolism involving heavenly and earthly creatures
  - b) Formalized phraseology indicating the revelation came by a vision or dream
  - c) Frequent conversations between the prophet and the heavenly being who discloses God's secrets to him
  - d) Cosmic catastrophes
  - e) The radical transformation of all nature and nations
  - f) The imminent end of the present age

#### **5. LOCATE THE "SEAMS" IN A TEXT WHICH WILL MARK OFF PARAGRAPH OR SECTION DIVISIONS.**

Seams will reveal themselves through:

- a) Repeated terms, phrases, clauses, or sentences
- b) Grammatical clues
- c) Rhetorical questions
- d) Change in time, location, or setting
- e) Vocative form of address showing shift of attention between groups
- f) Change in tense, mood, or aspect of the verb
- g) Repetition of the same key word, proposition, or concept
- h) A new theme

"The grand object of grammatical and historical interpretation is to ascertain the *usus loquendi*, that is, the specific usage of words as employed by an individual writer and/or as prevalent in a particular age. And the most fundamental principle in gramatico-historical exposition is that words and sentences can have only one signification in one and the same connection."

## 6. CAREFULLY DEFINE KEY WORDS

General principles for understanding word meaning include:

- a) The meaning of words is determined, in the first place, by custom and general usage current in the times when the author wrote them.
- b) In assigning meaning to a word, the exegete is on the most solid basis when the author himself has defined the term he uses.
- c) A word may be explained by the immediate attachment of a genitive phrase, an appositional phrase, or some other defining expression.
- d) The grammatical construction of a word may be another clue to its meaning.
- e) The meaning of some words may be determined by contextual antithesis and contrasts.
- f) In OT poetry, often one of the best ways to determine the meaning of a word is by means of Hebrew parallelism.
- g) A careful comparison of parallel passages may help an exegete define a word or phrase.

“Figures of speech can be a joy to the interpreter. But we must never label an expression as a figure of speech just to avoid difficulties. One has never settled an issue by proclaiming with a wave of the hand or shrug of the shoulder, ‘Oh, that is just figurative. We need not bother with it!’” –(Kaiser, 124-125).

“Words, then, are the basic building blocks for building meaning. We repeat, they must not be torn from their contexts. They will become untrustworthy guides if this happens. But when they are viewed and treated in their distinctive roles as part of the larger context, they serve the exegete well.” –(Ibid., 129)

## 7. GIVE DUE ATTENTION TO CULTURAL CONTEXT AND ITS CLUES

Kaiser provides exegetical principles for approaching cultural terms. These include:

- a) Those items that reflect the specific times, culture, and temporal forms in which the message was given should be identified.
- b) Where a distinction between cultural form and its content is to be made. The following guidelines can be used to distinguish timeless truth from that which is temporary and contingent.
  - The exegete must determine when the writer is merely describing something and setting a background for his abiding principle, and when he is prescribing something for his time and afterwards.
  - The exegete must determine whether the passage is inculcating a theological principle by means of a handy illustration from the culture of the day.
  - The exegete should ask himself whether the same theological principle may not be recognized just as fully today through an equivalent but not culturally identical medium.
  - There is something to be learned whenever Scripture itself, in a later historical situation, applies a different form or sanction to the same content.
- c) If a reason for a practice or for what might appear to a culturally-conditioned command is given and that reason is located in God's unchanging nature, then the command or practice is of permanent relevance for all believers in all ages.
- d) There are times when the principle of *ceteris paribus* ("other things being equal") may be attached to some of these commands.
- e) Special emphasis must be placed on the context every time the exegete meets what is suspected of being a strictly cultural item.
  - The use of explicit doctrinal and theological statements interspersed throughout a passage which treats some local or cultural problem indicates that serious teaching is involved even if the form of the custom is not always to be retained.
  - If the context rejects a practice or custom mentioned in the text being examined, we may be sure the practice or custom was never normative for believers.

- A more difficult decision is to be made when the immediate passage is not qualified by anything except an explanatory clause(s) or sentence(s) that follows it.
- Strict attention must be paid to the Bible's own definition of its terms as found in context.

“The historically or culturally conditioned nature of some of the Bible’s ethical demands or general teachings should not embarrass the interpreter. Particularity is often nothing more than a specific application or illustration within the universal to which it belongs. Thus the exegete may not, and in a fair number of cases should not, universalize or ‘principalize’ every injunction or description in Scripture.” - (Kaiser, 121)

## **8. ENGAGE IN THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

- A. Remember, “Scripture interprets Scripture.” It is its own best interpreter.
- B. Examine explicit theological affirmations found in the text.
- C. Compare with similar affirmations found in passages that have preceded the text under study.
- D. Study the clues to the antecedent theology within the text:
  1. The use of certain terms which have already acquired a special meaning in the history of salvation and have begun to take on a technical status;
  2. A direct reference or an indirect allusion to a previous event in the progress of revelation with a view to making a related theological statement;
  3. Direct or indirect citation of quotations so as to appropriate them for a similar theological point in the new situation;
  4. Reference to the covenant(s), its contents of accumulating promises, or its formulae.
- E. Consider again those key words that bear theological weight.
  1. Select those words which are significant.
    - It plays a key role in the passage.
    - It occurs frequently in previous contexts.
    - It is important in the history of salvation up to this point.



2. Define the word selected in terms of its function in the immediate context.
3. Examine the usages of the same word in other authors from the same period.
4. Use lexical tools to examine word roots and variations in meaning.
5. Consult an exhaustive concordance for the following:
  - The total number of times it appears in the Bible.
  - The period in which there is the highest concentration of usage.
  - Any limited context that exhibits an extraordinary number of usages.
  - Those contexts that illustrate its usage prior to the selected text being exegeted.
6. Consult various cognate languages to find additional usages, especially for words which occur infrequently in the Bible.

***“Simply to impose a theological grid on a text must be condemned as the mark of a foolish and lazy exegete. Further, the facile linking of assorted Biblical texts because of what appears on a prima facie reading to be similar wording or subject matter (usually called the proof-text method) must also be resisted since it fails to establish that all of the texts being grouped together do indeed share the same theological or factual content.”***

-(Kaiser, 134)

***“...the discipline of Biblical theology must be a twin of exegesis. Exegetical theology will remain incomplete and virtually barren in its results, as far as the church is concerned, without a proper input of ‘informing theology.’”***

-(Ibid, 139)

## **SECTION 11**

### **The Main Idea of the Text (MIT) and The Main Idea of the Message (MIM)**

## **THE MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT (MIT)/THE MAIN IDEA OF THE LESSON (MIM)**

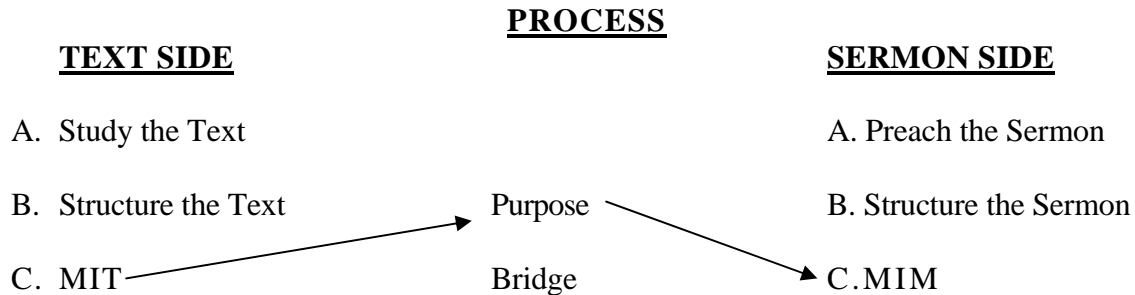
Every Bible teaching should focus on one main idea. If our people leave with one truth they have learned and intend to put into practice, we will have succeeded in our assignment.

Haddon Robinson challenges us to determine the “Big Idea” by asking:

1. What is the author talking about? - and –
2. What is he saying about what he is talking about?

Wayne McDill speaks of “Naming the Textual Idea.”

Ramesh Richard provides a method that balances the “text” and “sermon” aspects of homiletics. Central to his method is the parallel focus on the Central Proposition of the Text (CPT) and the Central Proposition of the Sermon (CPS). One (CPS) grows naturally out of the other (CPT) and insures that our work in the Scriptures and the Sermon will be true to the text. I have adjusted his terminology slightly.



## **I. THE MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT (MIT)**

### ***The “Heart” of the Passage***

At the heart of a paragraph should be one cardinal thought: the “main idea of the text” (MIT). This proposition is made up of two components: the theme and the thrust. The main idea is sometimes called by other names: “textual thrust,” “central idea,” “exclusive emphasis,” or the “big idea.”

### **Components of the Main Idea**

Theme (subject or topic)

Thrust (complement or assertions)

The main idea is the singular theme/thrust around which the details of the text are woven. Since we want to communicate one major point for the people to hear, understand, and obey, we seek to communicate the major idea of each Scripture text in contemporary terms.

Reduce your text to a simple proposition ... illustrating the main idea by the various terms in which it is contained. (Charles Simeon in John R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, 226)

### ***A. Identifying the Main Idea of the Text (MIT)***

The main idea of the text is the single unit of thought that binds together and gives meaning to all the particulars of a text. [In some manner it should relate to your title]

### ***B. What Does the MIT Look Like?***

It should always be in the form of a full grammatical sentence.

### ***C. What Does the MIT Contain?***

- The *theme* of the text: What is the author talking about in the text?
- The *thrust* of the text: What is the author saying about what he is talking about in the text?

#### ***D. From Where Does One Get the MIT?***

The MIT is derived from your structuring of the text. In order to get the main idea of the text, put the content of the subjects, themes, main points, or summaries together. In arriving at the MIT you are looking for accuracy and adequacy. The MIT must precisely reflect your particular text and must cover the assertions of the text.

##### *1) The Theme*

The theme of a paragraph should be specific. Grammatical or content cues will tell you which is the controlling theme-what the author is talking about.

##### *2) The Thrust*

What is the author saying about the theme?

#### ***E. Organizing Your Textual Work***

- Give a tentative title to the text. This could well be the “theme” of the MIT.
- If possible write a personal translation or paraphrase of the text reflecting the flow or argument of the text.
- Write out the main idea of the text. (Put the theme and thrust in full sentence form. The full statement does not need to be long, but make it adequate. You will refine it and shorten it as you work with it.)
- Write out the outline. (All points and sub-points should be in full sentence form.)

Here you are culminating the study process as far as the text itself is concerned. If you really desire to be an expositor of the Word of God, you will seek to impress on your people what the author stresses-the truth of his text. A good lesson, message or sermon should have a one-sentence statement that summarizes the passage being taught.

The task is not often easy, but if undertaken, pays rich rewards.

- The preacher/teacher avoids the often-heard criticism that expository sermons/teaching lack structure.
- The discipline gives the preacher/teacher a better understanding of the truths he will share with his people.
- It assists those hearing the message to understand the message.

Wayne McDill says a concept needs a name. Define the textual idea precisely in your own mind. Unless it is clearly defined by a careful choice of words, the idea remains vague.

Reflect what the biblical writer is saying. You want to see if what you are calling the subject is actually what the writer is talking about.

Give the textual idea an accurate name so that the same words can be used in the lesson or teaching. Unless we find the right words to identify the textual idea, how will we ever teach that idea?

Carefully identify all the theological themes in the text for insight into its main idea. You can usually recognize the theological themes in the text by looking at the significant words you see there.

Consider the plain and obvious meaning of the text for indications of the textual idea.

Look for a pivotal verse in the text which may contain the main theme. Though every text does not have a pivotal verse, many will. It will be the one verse which seems to summarize the meaning of the entire section.

## **II. The Purpose Bridge**

### ***The “Brain” of the Message***

When you cross this bridge, you will have gone from studying the Scriptures—a hermeneutical exercise—towards teaching the Scriptures—the homiletical exercise.

#### ***A. The Purpose of Purpose***

The purpose controls many aspects of lesson preparation and teaching. A valid and clear purpose of the lesson:

1. focuses the introduction of the lesson on the need that will be raised in the lesson;
2. determines what must be included and/or excluded in the body of the teaching;
3. influences the teaching’s conclusion and any application;
4. helps in choosing the illustrations that will help accomplish the purpose of the lesson;
5. provides a more objective way to measure the proficiency or success of the lesson;
6. but most important, the purpose of the teaching directly contributes to the form of the theme of the main idea of the message (MIM).

#### ***B. Determining the Purpose of the Message***

We find the purpose of the message (construct the purpose bridge) by asking and answering the following question: *On the basis of the main idea of this text, what does God want my people to understand and obey?*

#### ***C. Connecting the Purpose of Your Text and the Purpose of Your Lesson***

Answer two *compatibility questions*.

1. Can I make an exegetical or theological case that my lesson's purpose is compatible with the *purpose* of the text?
2. Can I make a sociological or psychological case that my lesson’s purpose is compatible with the *needs* of my audience? This question is clearly secondary, but it enables one to be relevant to the audience.

***D. The Purpose Bridge***

Number one issue: What are the needs and conditions of my audience?

You are both liberated and limited by the main idea of the text. You must identify the lesson's purpose and fine tune it to the audience to whom you minister.

Two purposes are legitimately drawn from most text. The first is content oriented; the second behavior oriented. Your purpose statement will almost always, in raw form, provide the *theme* of the central proposition of the lesson.



### III. The Main Idea of the Message (MIM) *The “Heart” of the Message*

Here the MIT is channeled through the purpose. It is then contemporized by the main idea of the message. The MIM takes you into the homiletical aspects of the lesson/sermon preparation process.

For the sermon, as a living word from God to his people, should make its impact on them then and there. They will not remember the details. We should not expect them to do so. But they should remember the dominant thought, because all the sermon’s details have been marshaled to help them grasp its message and feel its power.

John R. W. Stott,  
*I Believe in Preaching*, 225

The subject answers the question, What is the sermon about? ... Whether a sermon has two points or ten points, it must have one point, it must be about something.

John A. Broadus,  
*On the Preparation and Delivery of a Sermon*, 38

The first thing in making a sermon, the *sine qua non*, is the idea. There can be no sermon that was not first preceded by an idea or a theme.

John Killinger,  
*Fundamentals of Preaching*, 44

I have a conviction that no sermon is ready for preaching, not ready for writing out, until we can express its theme in a short, pregnant sentence as clear as crystal. I find the getting of that sentence is the hardest, the most exacting, and the most fruitful labour in my study.

J. H. Jowett,  
*The Preacher: His Life and World*, 133

Too many so-called expositors simply make the one central idea the substance of their message. The narrative may be read or retold, but the sermon is essentially their central expository idea-it is explained, illustrated, and applied without further recourse to the text. This approach is not valid exegetical exposition. In exegetical exposition, the substance of the exposition must be clearly derived from the text so that the central idea unfolds in the analysis of the passage and so that all parts of the passage may be interpreted to show their contribution to the theological idea.

Allen P. Ross,  
*Creation and Blessing*, 47

#### ***A. Coming Up with the MIM***

The teaching process is thoroughly integrated. Our study (step one) and structure (step two) influence the main idea of the text (step three). The MIT influences the purpose of the lesson (step four). From the purpose of the lesson, we have to articulate the main idea of the message (step five).

Just as the text has a singular theme/thrust, your teaching must have a singular theme/thrust as well. For the MIM, you ask the key questions, of yourself rather than of the biblical author.

#### **The Main Idea of the Message**

Theme: What am I talking about?  
Thrust: What am I saying about what I am talking about?

Guidelines for the

## **Message Idea**

### **(MIM)**

- Develop the MIM with your audience in mind.
- State the MIM in the most memorable sentence possible.
- State it positively, not negatively if possible.
- State it in the active voice, not the passive voice if possible.
- State it in words or phrases which are precise, concrete, and familiar to your listeners.
- State it so that the truth is readily seen as relevant to your audience and their needs.

## **Characteristics of the Main Idea of the Message**

### **(MIM)**

- It is derived from the main idea of the text.
- It is what the teacher is saying.
- It is a carefully worded statement.
- It is geared to the audience.
- It has a subject and a complement.
- It is a complete sentence.

## **SECTION 12**

### **Application**

## **APPLICATION**

### **SHOWING YOUR AUDIENCE HOW CHRISTIANITY WORKS**

“A teacher is a stimulator/motivator: a coach. A student is an investigator/discoverer: a player.” (Danny Akin)

“Without practical application, exposition is mere description. If exposition is explanation, expository preaching is explanation applied.” (Liefeld, p.6)

“We must constantly be asking ourselves not only what we are preaching, but why.” (Ibid, p.7)

“It is the personal concern that distinguishes the good pastor from the mere minister.” (Ibid, p.109)

“Solid biblical content can impart important new concepts and even plans of action, but yet fail to ‘speak to the heart,’ stir the hearers to appropriate the new concepts and take the proposed action.” (Ibid)

“...for expositional preaching to be fully effective in teaching the text, touching the heart, and transforming listeners, practical application must be considered a vital element in preparing expository sermons.” (Scott Blue, “The Necessity of Application in the Expository Sermon,” Unpublished paper, April 1999, SBTS, p.5)

“Biblical exposition without application leads to spiritual constipation.” (Ramesh Richard)

#### AS WE APPLY SCRIPTURE:

1. The mind must be educated (discernment)
  2. The heart must be motivated (desire)
  3. The will must be activated (decision)
- (Steven and David Olford)

“... a gap of crisis proportions exists between the steps generally outlined in most seminary or Biblical training classes in exegesis and the hard realities most pastors face... as they prepare their sermons. Nowhere in the total curriculum of theological studies has the student been more deserted and left to his own devices than in bridging the yawning chasm between understanding the content of Scripture as it was given in the past and proclaiming it with... relevance in the present.” (Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, p.18)

“[Application is] that process by which preachers make scriptural truths so pertinent to members of their congregations that they not only understand how those truths should effect changes in their lives but also feel obligated and perhaps even eager to implement those changes.” (Jay Adams, *Truth Applied*, 17)

“[Application answers] two questions: So what? and Now what? The first question asks, ‘Why is this passage important to me?’ The second asks, ‘What should I do about it today?’” (Daniel Veerman, “Sermons: Apply Within,” *Leadership*, Sept. 1990, 122)

“Application is more than just taking the sermon truth and attacking the congregation with it. Application presents the implications of biblical truth for the contemporary audience. It is a call for action, for putting the principles of Scripture to work in our lives. It deals with attitudes, behavior, speech, lifestyle, and personal identity. It appeals to conscience, to values, to conviction, to commitment to Christ.” (Wayne McDill, *The 12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishing, 1994], 187)

“What advantage would there be if we were to stay here half a day and I were to expound half a book without considering you or your profit and edification? ... We must take into consideration those persons to whom the teaching is addressed... For this reason let us note well that they who have this charge to teach, when they speak to a people, are to decide which teaching will be good and profitable so that they will be able to disseminate it faithfully and with discretion to the usefulness of everyone individually.” (John Calvin, quoted in Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Word*, 132-133)

“Contextualization can be defined as the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word and will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of the Holy Scripture, and that it is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts. Contextualization is both verbal and nonverbal and has to do with the theologizing, Bible translation, interpretation and application, incarnational lifestyle, evangelism, Christian instruction, church planting and growth, church organization, worship style - indeed with all those activities involved in carrying out the Great Commission.” (David J. Hesselgrave, “Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant,” *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 12, July-August 1995, 115)

*“They may not care what became of the Hittites and the Jebusites; they want to know, “what will become of us?” (Charles Koller, p.77)*

*“[Preaching] is not completed until God's people think and act differently for having heard the Word expounded” (Timothy Warren, “A Paradigm for Preaching,” BibSac, Oct-Dec 1991, p.143)*

## I. DEFINING APPLICATION

“‘Application’ stems from two Latin words: *Ap*, meaning ‘to,’ and *plico*, meaning ‘to knit.’ Application developed into the idea of joining something in such a way as to change or effect that to which it was joined. Historically, two other terms were used to describe the act of applying Scripture:

*Improvements* - enabling a congregation to utilize God’s Word in their daily lives.

*Uses* - the practical implications of a biblical text, following the “Doctrines,” showing how the latter might impact everyday living.” -(Adams, *Truth Applied*, 15-16)

<u>RESOURCE</u> WORD OF GOD	<u>METHOD</u>	<u>RESULT</u> MAN OF GOD
<b>Belief</b>	Doctrine / Correction	
Given by God		Character: Who he is.
<b>Behavior</b>	Instruction / Reproof	
Inspired by God		Conduct: What he does.

SCOTT BLUE BELIEVES APPLICATION IN THE EXPOSITORY SERMON MUST INCLUDE AT LEAST 5 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS:

1. Sermon application must be based on biblical truths gained by a historical grammatical-literary examination of the biblical text chosen for the expository sermon.

2. Sermon application should be related to the author's intended purpose for the text or a portion of the text.
3. Sermon application must relate why the biblical truths are relevant for the listeners in their contemporary lives.
4. Sermon application must include practical examples and suggestions of how listeners can adapt their lives to the biblical truths presented.
5. Sermon application must persuade listeners that they should adapt their lives to the biblical truths presented and encourage them to do so.

*From this Blue provides an excellent definition: "Application is the process whereby the expositor takes a biblical truth from his sermon and applies it to the contemporary context of his audience, prophetically relating why it is relevant for their lives, practically showing how it should affect their lives, and passionately encouraging them to make necessary changes in their lives." (p.9)*

RAMESH RICHARD SAYS BY THE END OF THE SERMON THE AUDIENCE MUST HAVE THE ANSWERS TO THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

1. What did the preacher speak about?
2. So what difference does or should it make?
3. Now what do I do with God's claims in this sermon?

## **II. THE STEPS TO APPLICATION**

("Clothing Truth with Overalls")  
(How can Biblical truth change my life?)

Application is always built on interpretation. If the interpretation is wrong, the application will be wrong. Caution! Never attempt to apply before observing and interpreting.



## **1. Be aware of the problems to application.**

- A. Some stop the hermeneutical process before it is complete! Howard Hendricks says, "Observation and Interpretation without Application is Abortion!"

***"Let the baby go full term."***

Remember: The Bible was not written to make us smarter sinners, but holy saints.

- B. We substitute knowledge for experience.  
Key question to ask: "Do I know a lot more, or do I live a lot better?" (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1)
- C. We like to apply to areas we already are working on and neglect new avenues of need.
- D. We rationalize the process to fit our present lifestyle.
- E. We allow an emotional experience to be substituted for a volitional decision.
- F. Pressures from society cause us to compromise what we know to be true.
- G. Our prejudice and spiritual truth come into conflict.  
"Most of us don't think; we just rearrange our prejudice."
- H. Ignorance.

WE SHOULD LOOK TO THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE OF THE TEXT, THEN TO OURSELVES, THEN ASK 4 KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How are we like them?
2. How are we unlike them?
3. How should we be like them?
4. How should we be unlike them?

## **2. Know the interpretation of the text bridging the hermeneutical horizons (gap).**

Beware of the error of the fork. To take the wrong path is to diverge more and more from the truth.

## **3. Know you applicational situation. Remember: the interpretation is one but the application is many.**

- A. Know yourself. (1 Tim. 4:16)
  1. Your strengths/assets. It will build confidence.
  2. Your weaknesses/inabilities. (Rom. 12:3) It will encourage humility and build faith.
- B. Know your people - age, background, individual needs, etc.

**4. State your application in the form of a universal principle.**

Ultimate principle to remember: the solution to your problem is a person (Jesus Christ).

- A. Be in line with the needs, interests, questions, and problems of today.  
This is the key to relevance.

**THERE ARE TWO HISTORIES AND YOU MUST BRIDGE THE HORIZONS:**

**ORIGINAL HISTORY**

**OUR HISTORY**

Colossae A.D.60-63

Truth revealed out of  
“the then”

**COLOSSIANS**

between two worlds  
Principle Bridges

Raleigh/Durham 2005

Truth reborn into  
“the now”

- B. Be in harmony with the general tenor of Scripture. The analogy of faith:  
Scripture will not contradict Scripture.

- C. Be specific enough to indicate a course of action. 13 Questions to ask:

1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin to avoid/confess?
3. Is there a promise to claim?
4. Is there a prayer to repeat?
5. Is there a command to obey?
6. Is there a condition to meet?
7. Is there a verse to memorize?
8. Is there an error to avoid?
9. Is there a challenge to face?
10. Is there a principle to apply?
11. Is there a habit to change - i.e. start or stop?
12. Is there an attitude to correct?
13. Is there a truth to believe?

**5. Saturate your mind in terms of relationships.**

Proposition: Christianity is best understood as a series of new relationships.

## APPLICATION

*A dynamic process of change  
changes*

### IN CHRIST

Education

Social

Business

Church

Values

Thought

Home Life

Sex

cf. 2 Cor. 5:17

*Jesus invades and*

*every area of our life.*

- A. Probe your passage with questions regarding the relationships of life.
- B. Take the leash off your mind and let it run freely. (See how many relationships can be affected by this truth.)
- C. Forget the critical. Examine every possible area even if it seems trivial.
- D. Plug into real life.
  - Be realistic - concentrate on the concrete vs. abstract thinking.
  - Think vicariously - see through the eyes of others.
  - Expose yourself to people and life.

## 6. Consciously Practice.

- A. Remember - you have not applied until you have practiced.
- B. There is great danger of trafficking in unlived truth. Vance Havner said, "What we live is what we believe. Everything else is just so much religious talk."
- C. The practice itself will be a commentary on your understanding of the truth.
- D. You cannot adequately apply to others what you have not applied to yourself.
- E. You cannot be diligently applying everything but you should be consciously applying something.

## TWO QUESTIONS:

1. What am I trusting God for right now?
2. What is my plan of action?

Fenelon said, "The essence of Christianity resides in the will."

Maturity is not a mechanical process of addition but a dynamic process of growing. One reason why people do not change is they have no plan of action.

**THINK IN TERMS OF:**

1. Interpretation
2. Practicality
3. Need - your objective and your audience

**IN SUMMATION** - How should my character, conduct, or conversation be effected by the Word of God?

**How should this truth affect my:**

- Attitudes - toward God, others, circumstances
- Knowledge of God
- Behavior - habits to develop, habits to change, habits to confirm
- Relationships - Where do I need to forgive, seek forgiveness, encourage, rebuke, submit, lead?
- Motives - Am I doing right for the wrong reasons?
- Values and Priorities - Who or what comes first? Who or what should?
- Character

Application requires a decision and a specific plan of action in order to allow the Holy Spirit to make scriptural principles part of us.

A word about habits: Here is where the "rubber meets the road." It takes about three months to change a habit and the enemy knows this very well. Be ready for conflict and failure mixed with success. The Lord has, however, predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son, so ... keep plugging! (Rom. 8:28-30)

**IN BRINGING THE SCRIPTURES TO LIFE, VIEW YOUR LIFE AS A SERIES OF NEW RELATIONSHIPS:**

**A. WITH GOD**

1. A truth to understand
2. A command to obey
3. A prayer to express
4. A challenge to heed
5. A promise to claim
6. A fellowship to enjoy

**B. WITH YOURSELF**

1. A thought or word to examine
2. An action to take
3. An example to follow
4. An error to avoid
5. An attitude to change or guard against
6. A priority to change
7. A goal to strive for
8. A personal value or standard to hold up
9. A sin to forsake

**C. WITH OTHERS**

1. A witness to share
2. An encouragement to extend
3. A service to do
4. A forgiveness to ask
5. A fellowship to nurture
6. An exhortation to give
7. A burden to bear
8. A kindness to express
9. A hospitality to extend
10. An attitude to change or guard against
11. A sin to forsake

**D. WITH SATAN**

1. A person to resist
2. A device to recognize
3. A temptation to resist
4. A sin to avoid and confess
5. A piece of spiritual armor to wear

-adapted from *Unlocking the Scriptures* by Hans Finzel

**“THE PEOPLE I PREACH TO”**

1. Work life: how will this apply to:
  - Unemployed
  - steadily employed
  - retired
  - retiring
  - disabled
  - laid off or fired
  - own their own business
  - work for another person good or bad

2. Home life
  - a. How does this apply to marriage?
    1. the husband
    2. the wife
    3. newlyweds
    4. elderly in their golden years
  - b. How does this apply to the divorced?
    1. divorced recently
    2. divorced several times
    3. divorced because of adultery
    4. divorced and didn't want a divorce
    5. divorced with children
  - c. How does this apply to children and young people?
    1. abusive parents
    2. parents who aren't supportive
    3. fine Christian parents
    4. children in single parent homes
    5. kids whose parents are divorced or divorcing (How does this apply to parents raising children?)
      - (a) a wayward child
      - (b) compliant and obedient children
      - (c) a disrespectful young person
      - (d) a sick or terminally ill child
  - d. How does this apply to children with aging parents?
    1. parent with Alzheimer's disease
    2. parent grieving over the loss of their spouse
    3. parent living on a life support machine
    4. parent confined to a nursing home
    5. parent whom demands inordinate amount of attention from their children
  - e. How does this apply to the personal life?
    1. struggle against a besetting sin
    2. finances

3. career decisions
4. moral choices
5. setbacks
6. victory in an area of their life
- f. How does this apply to church life?
  1. pastor
  2. Sunday school teachers
  3. leadership
  4. inactive members
  5. disgruntled members
  6. relationships broken because of an offense
- g. How does this apply to friendships and relationships?
  1. neighbors
  2. recreational friends
    - (a) friends you fish with
    - (b) friends you shop with
    - (c) friends you share confidentially with
  3. casual acquaintances
    - (a) a workout partner
    - (b) waiter or server you see regularly

#### **IV. HADDON ROBINSON AND THE HERESY OF APPLICATION**

In the Fall of 1997, Haddon Robinson in *Leadership Magazine* (pgs. 21-27) spoke of the heresy that is often found in the application section of preaching. What follows is an outline synopsis of that interview:

- I. “MOST HERESY IS PREACHED IN APPLICATION THAN IN BIBLE EXEGESIS.”
  - A. Preachers want to be faithful to the text. While in seminary they learned exegesis but not how to make the journey from the biblical text to the modern world.
  - B. In order to make the jump from text to the world we have to deal with the preacher's question which is application. If we have used the wrong application then the heresy is a good truth applied in the wrong way.

## II. WHAT DOES HERESY LOOK LIKE?

Ex. To preach a sermon from Ruth about how to treat your in-laws. “that’s a rape of the Bible. Your saying what God doesn't say.” (p.22)

## III. What is the effect of this kind of preaching on one's congregation?

- A. You undermine what the Scripture is actually saying and you give people the idea anything with a biblical flavor is what God says.
- B. “The long term effect is that we preach mythology.” (p.22)

## IV. What makes Bible application so prone to error?

- A. Because we are taking the eternal truth of God given in a particular time, place and situation and trying to apply it to a modern world living in different context.

## V. What is the best way to avoid error?

- A. One way is to bring the text straight over to the modern situation. Ex. "Jesus says love your enemies, if you have enemies, love them."
- B. Some texts are not able to come directly over to the modern situation. In order to avoid this the preacher must understand both the circumstance of the text and the modern situation. For example, when Paul speaks about 1st century slavery he is referring to a much different institution than we know from the 19th century America.
- C. We must determine if the questions being answered are the ones we are asking.

## VI. How to know if we are confusing the questions?

- A. “A text cannot mean what it has not meant.” (p.23)
- B. “The Ladder of Abstraction” - Picture a ladder which comes up from the biblical world, and crosses over to the modern setting. Robinson says, “I want to make sure the biblical situation and the current situation are analogous at the points I am making them connect. The center of the analogy must connect not the extremes.” (p.23)
- C. Example - boiling a goat in its mother's milk is actually a prohibition about being involved in pagan practices. Climb the ladder until you reach the principle.



VII. How do you climb the ladder if the text cannot come straight over?

A. Abstract up to God. Find the vision of God in the passage.

B. Depravity Factor. What in humanity rebels against that vision of God? (p.24)

(Bryan Chapell calls this the Fallen Condition Focus [FCF].)

VIII. Does the Bible address every situation?

Not directly and we should acknowledge this.

IX. How do you apply Scripture to people with such varied backgrounds?

Make a grid of the people in your congregation. Find the principle of the passage and ask how it relates to each of the people on your grid.

X. What do you say when something is not a matter of obedience?

A. We can't always have a thus saith the Lord about everything so you have to distinguish between various types of implications.

1. Necessary implication - you shall not commit adultery.

2. Probable implication - Be careful about strong bonding friendships with the opposite sex.

3. Possible implication - Don't travel regularly [at all!] to conventions or other places with the opposite sex.

4. Impossible implication – Don't have dinner with another couple because you are at the same table with a person who is not your spouse. (pgs. 25-26)

B. "One way to phrase these distinctions in the pulpit is to say, 'This is the principle and the principle is clear. How it applies in our lives may differ with different people in various situations.'" (p. 26)

XI. How do different genres affect our application?

A. The most extensive Bible genre is story. But it's dangerous to go into a narrative and say, here are three things to learn about the providence of God.

To interpret the Word accurately you must consider the methods used to proclaim it.

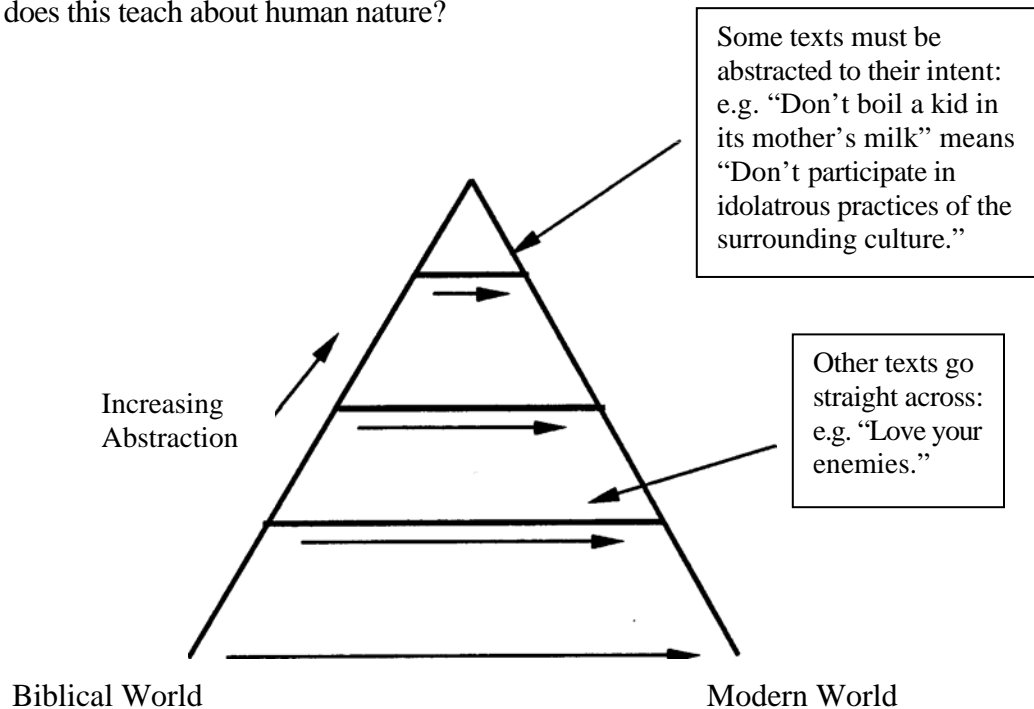
B. The best way to handle the situation is to take the principle and apply it to the universal experience not the specific individual situation. (pgs. 26-27)

- XII. What is the best use of increased time in sermon preparation? Spend time on what you usually don't focus on.
- XIII. How does the Spirit apply the text to the listener's life?
- A. The Spirit answers to the Word. If I am faithful to the Scriptures the Spirit will honor that.
- B. Formula: Pain+Time+Insight=Change. Pain and time are not enough to change people but if you combine these with insight then you will create change. That insight comes from the Word of God.

### ABSTRACTION LADDER

Climb by asking:

1. What does this teach about God?
2. What does this teach about human nature?



## **V. BENEFITS OF APPLICATION**

1. Application fulfills the obligation of “purpose” in the sermon. Listeners are urged to move as a result of hearing the demands made upon them by the biblical truth presented to them in the sermon.
2. Application helps reach the whole person. It touches the will and moves toward intention.
3. Application develops Christ-likeness in the listeners.
4. Application develops moral discernment in an amoral environment.
5. Application allows hearers to grasp the biblical message as relevant to their contemporary needs.

“Good preaching begins in the Bible, but it doesn’t stay there. It visits the hospital and the college dorm, the factory and the farm, the kitchen and the office, the bedroom and the classroom. Good preaching invades the world in which people live, the real world of tragedy and triumph, loveliness and loneliness, broken hearts, broken homes, and amber waves of strain. Good preaching invades the real world, and it talks to real people - the high-school senior who’s there because he’s dragged there; the housewife who wants a divorce; the grandfather who mourns the irreversibility of time and lives with a frantic sense that almost all the sand in the hourglass has dropped; the farmer who is about to lose his farm, the banker who must take it from him; the teacher who has kept her lesbianism a secret all these years; the businessman for whom money has become a god; the single girl who hates herself because she’s fat. Good preaching helps them do business with God; it helps them interpret their own human experience, telling them what in their heart of hearts they already know, and are yearning to hear confirmed.” (Louis Lotz, “Good Preaching,” *Reformed Review* 40, Autumn 1986, 38)

## **“PREACHING WITH RELEVANCE”**

by Tim Schroeder, Senior Pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Kelowna, BC and an auxiliary member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

### **I. THE REALITY GAP**

#### **A. Self test for measuring your reality gap:**

- Name 2 of the top 10 songs popular among youth. What are the messages of each?
- Name 2 of the top 10 videos being rented. What are the themes?
- What are the various buzz words being used by various age groups in your audience?
- What are the 5 hottest television programs and what are their main topics?
- What one social problem impacts your city most?
- How long has it been since you've heard someone swear in your office without apologizing?
- Do you know what is being discussed in your city?

#### **B. There's a gap between what the preacher perceives as reality and what the hearers experience.**

#### **C. The people in the pews have the most at stake when the preacher enters the pulpit.**

#### **D. 60% of Americans feel the church is irrelevant.**

#### **E. We don't know what's going on in people's lives.**

### **II. ACTION STEPS**

#### **A. Stay current with information common to your audience.**

#### **B. Identify and use the resources that you already have.**

#### **C. Recruit your congregation to help you preach.**

#### **D. Use your natural interests and abilities.**

#### **E. Cultivate relationships with non-Christians.**

**CONCLUSION:** Having stepped into the real world, a new level of consciousness is present when we step into the pulpit.

# **AN ILLUSTRATION OF PERSONAL APPLICATION THROUGH FIVE HYPOTHETICAL OUTLINES**

(by Walter Liefeld)

**The subject matter: God as light, Savior, and refuge.**

## **Type One: Description**

1. The Lord, our Light
2. The Lord, our Salvation
3. The Lord, our Refuge

## **Type Two: Declaration**

1. The Lord is our Light
2. The Lord is our Salvation
3. The Lord is our Refuge.

## **Type Three: Explanation**

1. What does it mean that the Lord is our Light?
2. What does it mean that the Lord is our Salvation?
3. What does it mean that the Lord is our Refuge?

## **Type Four: Exhortation**

1. Let the Lord be your Light
2. Let the Lord be your Salvation
3. Let the Lord be your Refuge

## **Type Five: Application**

1. How the Lord can be our daily Light in darkness.
2. How the Lord can be our Savior when we sense our guilt.
3. How the Lord can be our strong Refuge when we feel besieged.

**THE LAW OF APPLICATION: PART 1**

(from chapter 5)

1. Application is the central reason for God's revelation (126).
2. Application is the responsibility of the preacher/teacher (126).
3. Application and information should be balanced (127).
4. Application focuses Scripture on the students' (congregation) needs (131).
5. Application that has impacted the teacher/preacher tends to impact the student (133).
6. Prepare your message during the whole week (minimally) before you preach (135).
7. Ask the Lord to apply the specific truth you will teach to you (135).
8. Communicate with all of your mind, will and emotion the applications the Lord has taught you from the Bible (135).
9. Application must ultimately lead the student (congregation) from studying the Bible to obeying the Lord (136).

***“Apply for Life Change”***

## **THE LAW OF APPLICATION: PART 2**

(from chapter 6)

1. Ask God to develop in your heart an applier's heart (156).
2. Prepare applications in relation to your people's needs (157).
3. Plan all parts of the message to contribute to the application (158).
4. Lead your people beyond general applications to specific steps of obedience (159).
5. Illustrate the application of Scripture, history, personal experience, and imagination (159).
6. Employ an appropriate style when calling for commitment (161).
7. Strengthen applications with accountability (To self, peers, significant persons, pastor/mentor, God) (163).

## Appendix 2

### **TEN STEPS TO APPLYING THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE**

1. Find the meat of the passage.
2. Hold fast to the belief that every passage contains at least one key principle.
3. Finding the essence of the content takes time and effort.
4. Pray for illumination from the Holy Spirit to see more of what has already been written.
5. Think! Think a lot! Meditate over and over on the passage.
6. Don't hunt for the principle in the commentaries.
7. Relax. Enjoy developing the principle through your personality.
8. State the principle in a simple and motivating sentence.
9. Make sure your principle is thoroughly biblical.
10. Lead your people to leap past your principle and "prediscover" their own applications.



Appendix 3

**THE LAW OF RETENTION: PART 1**

(from chapter 7)

1. Retention of facts by your people is your responsibility (180)
2. Retention of facts is effective only after they are understood (181)
3. Retention increases as your people recognize the contents relevance (182)
4. Retention requires you to focus on the facts that are most important (184)
5. Retention arranges the facts so they are easy to memorize (186)
6. Retention strengthens long-term memory through regular review (187)
7. Retention minimizes time for memorization to maximize time for application (188)

*“Master the Minimum”*

**THE LAW OF RETENTION: PART 2**

(from chapter 8)

1. Represent the facts in a picture (210)
2. Express the facts with a story (213)
3. Transfer the facts by the alphabet (214) [?]
4. Associate the facts with objects and actions (216)
5. Impress the facts with drama (216)
6. Note the facts through music (217)
7. Summarize the facts with graphs and charts (217)

## Appendix 4

### **SEVEN KEYS TO BIBLICAL RETENTION**

1. Review is the primary method by which everyone memorizes everything.
2. Review is effective only when your people adequately understand the material.
3. Review should be practiced in the same order and with the same words until the Irreducible Minimum is fully memorized.
4. Review should be most frequent and intense when the facts are first taught.
5. Review should be regularly practiced but spaced less and less frequently as time passes.
6. Review should continue until your people demonstrate mastery of the Irreducible Minimum.
7. Review should be done using a variety of methods.

## Appendix 5

### **THE LAW OF EQUIPPING**

(from chapter 12)

Instruct	➔	Prepare	➔	“I understand”(315)
Illustrate	➔	Preview	➔	“I see”(315)
Involve	➔	Practicum	➔	“I’m doing it”(316)
Improve	➔	Perform	➔	“I’m getting better” (317)
Inspire	➔	Passing it on	➔	“I’ll keep it going”(320)

## **BILL GOTHARD ON LIFE-CHANGING SERMONS**

### **PREPARE YOUR MESSAGE AROUND FOUR UNSPOKEN QUESTIONS:**

#### ***Why is it important for me to listen to your message?***

\* Be Convincing

1. You will solve a problem you have been having in your personal life, marriage, family, business (illustrations)
2. You will avoid problems in the future by making this commitment and taking this action (illustrations)
3. You will learn more about Christ and experience more of God's power and the fruit of God's Spirit
4. You will finally understand the answer to a question which you have had

#### ***Exactly how do I apply your message to my life?***

\* Be Clear

1. What are the steps of action which I must take?
2. How can I be sure that this is sound doctrine?
3. What about my unique circumstances?

#### ***Who are your illustrations of this?***

\* Be Correct

1. Illustrations from the Bible of those who followed this action in their lives and succeeded
2. Illustrations from the Bible of those who did not follow this action and the consequences.
3. Illustrations from history of famous Christians who did or did not follow this, and the results

#### ***What do you want me to do right now?***

\* Be Convicting

1. What decision should I make to do this?
2. When should I put this into action?
3. Who is going to check up on me?
4. What if I encounter unforeseen problems?

## **SECTION 13**

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Biblical Interpretation**

## **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Biblical Interpretation**

### **The Spirit helps the interpreter only in the area of “Significance”:**

- (1) The view of Robert Stein, Daniel Fuller, Scott Hafemann, etc.
- (2) Seems to be supported by some Biblical Texts
  - (a) Stein’s and Fuller’s interpretation of 1 Cor 2:14
- (3) Helps explain several phenomena
  - a. The largely correct and helpful biblical studies of some unbelievers
  - b. The incorrect and contrasting work of some Christians who claim the illumination of the Spirit
- (4) This view is very understandable, clear and measurable.

### **Against the “Significance-Only” view:**

- (1) Not the traditional view of Protestants since the Reformation
- (2) Other Biblical texts seem contradict this view (see below)
- (3) Does the “Significance-Only” view discount the noetic effects of the Fall? (a semi-Pelagian epistemology?)

### **The Spirit helps the interpreter with both “Understanding” and “Significance”:**

- (1) The traditional view of Protestants since the Reformation.
- (2) Seems to be supported by Biblical texts:
  - (a) Matt 13:13-17; Mark 8:18; Rom 1:21-25; Rom 11:7-8
  - (b) John 14-17?
  - (c) 1 John 2:20-27
  - (d) John 20:19-23; Luke 24:40-47
  - (e) 2 Corinthians 3:13-18
  - (f) Eph 4:11-16
- (3) Helps explain several phenomena
  - (a) The experience of Christians in understanding the Biblical text
  - (b) The example of many unbelievers who grossly distort or misinterpret the Biblical text

- (4) The Bible does not dichotomize volition and cognition. Proper Mental Understanding and Believing Response are two sides of the same coin in the Biblical view.

**Against the traditional “Illumination and Conviction” view:**

- (1) The helpful biblical studies of some unbelievers.
- (2) The difficulty of quantifying or demonstrating “illumination” in a consistent and persuasive way.
- (3) The difficulty of defining exactly how and to what degree illumination works in believers.
- (4) The diversity of interpretation among genuine believers (though this can be overstated).

## **Various Approaches to the Miraculous in Scripture**

### **1. The Supernatural Approach**

- a. The event(s) really took place.
- b. The event(s) happened as recorded.
- c. The text proclaims a divine event .
- d. Since God performed this event, search for a natural cause is irrelevant.
- e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum denied. Openness in history maintained.
- f. The intention of the text (the author's meaning) is maintained.

### **2. The Rationalist Approach**

- a. Presupposition – The event(s) could not have taken place.
- b. The event(s) happened differently than recorded.
- c. The text contains a natural event behind it.
- d. The natural cause of this event can and should be learned.
- e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed.
- f. The intention of the text (the author's meaning) is not maintained.

### **3. The Mythical Approach**

- a. The event(s) could not have taken place (cf. 2[a] above).
- b. The text proclaims a divine event (cf. 1[c] above).



- c. The search for a natural cause is irrelevant (cf. 1[d]).
- d. There is neither a divine nor natural cause, since the text proclaims a myth.
- e. NOTE: A closed cause-effect continuum affirmed.
- f. The "deeper" intention of the text (the author's meaning) is maintained.

**"Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?"  
(a famous article by Rudolf Bultmann)**

"One presupposition that cannot be dismissed is the historical method of interrogating the text (p. 291)."

This involves:

- (1) "It belongs to the historical method, of course, that a text is interpreted in accordance with the rules of grammar and of the meaning of the words (p. 291)."
- (2) "The historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect . . . this closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers, and that therefore there is not 'miracle' in the sense of the word. Such a miracle would be an event whose cause did not lie within history (pp. 291-92)."

## **SECTION 14**

### **Sermon Teaching Structure and Outlining**

“Exegesis is never an end in itself. Its purposes are never fully realized until it begins to take into account the problems of transferring what has been learned from the text over to the waiting Church. To put it more bluntly, exegesis must come to terms with the audience as well as with what the author meant by the word he used.” (Kaiser, p.149)

“The exegete must resist the temptation to impose a mold over the text by forcing that text to answer one of his favorite questions or to deal with one of the contemporary issues development; that our culture wants to have solved.” (Ibid., 153)

“It is hoped that God's men and women will be challenged to reread that very same Biblical text on their own soon after they have heard the message. Even if they cannot recall the outline (they probably will not - sorry!), the Word of Scripture will still speak to them because they have thought through its structure and shape in such a way as to have divinely met God in that text.” (Ibid., 160)

A. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE OUTLINING OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT:

1. Use complete sentences not single words or phrases.
2. Use, when possible, a key word or phrase to assure consistency in division statements
3. Craft your statements so that they stand alone as universal principles.
4. Follow a logical progression of thought in the arrangement of the division statements.
5. Use present tense, contemporary language suitable for the audience you address.
6. State your division statements as sound theological principles which encourage faith in the hearer.
7. If additional development is needed under a particular point, do so but make it simple.
8. Outline the text with your audience in mind.
9. Do not let the points stray from the main thesis.
10. Alliteration is O.K. for some, but is not a requirement for effective teaching or preaching.

B. WHY IS OUTLINING IMPORTANT?

1. It is important because it is foundational for effective communication.
2. It is important because it is helpful for understanding.
3. It is important because the human mind seeks unity.
4. It is important because the human mind seeks order.
5. It is important because it helps us know how we have gotten where we are and where we want to go.
6. It is important because it helps you gain a proper perspective on the text you are studying.
7. It is important because it helps us discover the pattern, order or logic of the original author.
8. It is important because it helps us isolate the main idea of the original author.
9. It is important because it helps us identify the main points or thoughts (different from the main idea) in the text and the subpoints which explain and amplify the main points or thoughts.

## A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR GOOD OUTLINING

- I. A well-developed outline has structure.
  - A. The main points are the central ideas designated by the Roman numerals I, II, III, etc.
  - B. Subpoints are the points that explain the main topics designated by Arabic #'s 1,2,3. They are subordinate to the main point either amplifying , supporting, or illustrating the main point.
  - C. Outlining beyond this stage is usually too detailed.
- II. The passage outline should honor the strategy of the original author.
- III. An effective outline deals with complete ideas and not partial thoughts or fragments.
  - A. Each point in the outline should be a complete sentence.
  - B. Usually you should use declarative or imperative statements instead of questions when outlining. The point of the outline is to explain and apply the text not develop questions. However, there are legitimate exceptions to this principle.
  - C. Each point should be a single idea most of the time. Avoid the use of compound and complex sentences.
- IV. Each main point will usually have at least two sub-points most of the time. [This is not a hard, fast rule.]

## **STEPS IN BIBLE TEACHING PREPARATION**

1. Pray!
2. Read the text several times in English.
3. Translate the text from Greek or Hebrew if you can.
4. Observation - make notes about what you observe re: people, plan, purpose of text, etc.
5. Investigation - of the background of the text.
6. Interpretation - Linguistic, Grammatical/Syntactical, Lexical, Doctrinal, etc.
7. Outline the text.
8. Determine the Main Idea of the Text (MIT).
9. State the MIT in Proposition Form: Subject and Complement.
10. Determine the specific objectives for the teaching.
11. Develop the teaching outline (teaching points).
12. Write out the conclusion of your teaching.
13. Write out the introduction of your teaching.
14. Write out the body - including illustrations and applications.

## Appendix 3

### STEPS TO SERMON PREPARATION (from *Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Select the passage to be preached             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discover author's thoughts units</li> <li>2. In narrative: literary unit</li> <li>3. Usually a paragraph</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Read and reread the passage and gather notes             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note context</li> <li>2. Investigate details: structure, vocabulary, grammar</li> <li>3. Use study tools</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Get the Big Idea (Exegetical Idea/CPT) Subject - What am I talking about? Complement - What exactly am I saying about it?</li> <li>4. Outline development of the idea from the passage.</li> <li>5. Analyze the idea (restate, explain, prove, or apply)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What does it mean?</li> <li>2. Is it true? (how so?)</li> <li>3. So what? (what difference does it make?) purpose of the biblical writer (theological intent) indications of purpose, editorial comments, interpretations? Theological judgements made? Example of warning? intent for readers? why did the Holy Spirit include this in Scripture? Concerns for contemporary audience setting for original writing vs. our setting (common ground) how can we identify with Biblical audience? what do we know from additional revelation? Context basic principles</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Anticipate questions</li> <li>5. Assess accuracy of your conclusion             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. correctly understood the facts and asked the right questions (any other questions?)</li> <li>2. determined all the theological principles and assigned proper weight</li> <li>3. espouse truly biblical theology (no proof texting)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Restate the exegetical idea in light of the audience (Homiletical idea / CPS)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. precise</li> <li>2. personal</li> <li>3. an exact, memorable sentence</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. Determine the purpose of the sermon             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. what to expect or accomplish?</li> <li>2. why did the author write this?</li> <li>3. destination/route/how to tell when arrived</li> </ol> </li> <li>8. Decide how to accomplish the purpose (Sermon type)             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. an idea to explained</li> <li>2. a proposition to be proved</li> <li>3. a principle to be applied</li> <li>4. a subject to be completed</li> <li>5. a story to be told.</li> <li>6. inductive/deductive/combination</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. Outline the sermon             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. in expository sermons, main points and sub-points come from the text</li> <li>2. each point a grammatically complete sentence directly relating the textual point to the audience</li> <li>3. write out clear transitions between points</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. Fill in the outline             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restate</li> <li>2. Define</li> <li>3. Quotes</li> <li>4. Illustrations</li> <li>5. Explain</li> <li>6. Facts</li> <li>7. Narration</li> <li>8. Examples</li> </ol> </li> <li>11. Prepare introduction             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. command Mention</li> <li>2. surface needs</li> <li>3. introduce body and conclusion</li> <li>4. ask for a verdict</li> <li>5. no new material</li> </ol> </li> <li>12. Use a clear style             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. clear outline</li> <li>2. short sentences</li> <li>3. simple sentence structure</li> <li>4. direct and personal</li> <li>5. vivid (specific, concrete details)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
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## **Method of Pastor Jim Wilson Huntsville, Alabama**

### EXEGETICAL OUTLINE: Colossians 1:3-8

- I. THE REASON PAUL GIVES THANKS TO GOD FOR THE COLOSSIANS IS BECAUSE HE HAS HEARD OF THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST AND LOVE FOR THE SAINTS WHICH ARE CAUSED BY THE HOPE RESERVED FOR THEM IN HEAVEN. (1:3-5e)
  - A. Paul always gives thanks to God when he prays for the Colossians (1:3)
  - B. The reason Paul gives thanks to God when praying for the Colossians is because he has heard of their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints (1:4)
  - C. The reason the Colossians have an active faith and love is because of the hope reserved for them in heaven. (1:5a)
- II. THE GOSPEL WHICH THE COLOSSIANS LEARNED FROM EPAPHRAS WAS BEARING FRUIT AND GROWING AMONG THEM AND IN ALL THE WORLD. (1:5b-8)
  - A. The Colossians had previously heard the gospel. (1:5b)
  - B. The gospel was bearing fruit and growing in all the world and in the Colossians (1:6e)
  - C. The gospel was bearing fruit in the Colossians from the day they heard and understood it. (1:6b)
  - D. The Colossians learned the gospel from Epaphras, the faithful servant of Christ who brings Paul a report of the Colossians' love (1:7-8)

#### IDEA:

THE REASON PAUL GIVES THANKS TO GOD FOR THE COLOSSIANS IS BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH AND LOVE WHICH ARE MOTIVATED BY HOPE, WHICH WAS COMMUNICATED TO THEM IN THE GOSPEL THROUGH EPAPHRAS AND WHICH (GOSPEL) IS EFFECTIVELY GROWING AMONG THEM AND IN ALL THE WORLD.

### EXEGETICAL OUTLINE: Colossians 1:9-14

- I. (IN LIGHT OF THEIR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS) PAUL PRAYS FOR THE COLOSSIANS. (9e)
- II. THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY BE CONTROLLED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL (9b)
- III. THE RESULT OF BEING CONTROLLED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IS A LIFE THAT PLEASES GOD. (10a)
- IV. THE MEANS BY WHICH ONE PLEASES GOD IS BY LIVING A LIFE OF GROWTH, ENDURANCE AND THANKSGIVING FOR SALVATION. (10b-4)
  - A. The means by which one has a God-pleasing lifestyle is by producing good works. (10b)
  - B. The means by which one has a God-pleasing lifestyle is by growing in the knowledge of God (10c)
  - C. The means by which one has a God-pleasing lifestyle is by relying on the strength of God's power, which will result in steadfastness under trial and patience toward people. (11)
  - D. The means by which one has a God-pleasing lifestyle is by joyfully giving thanks to God for His work of salvation. (12-14)
    - 1. God is to be thanked for forgiving us and giving us an inheritance. (12)
    - 2. God is to be thanked for rescuing us and bringing us into His kingdom. (13)
    - 3. The Son is the source of our redemption and forgiveness. (14)

#### IDEA:

THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY BE CONTROLLED BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL SO THEY MIGHT LIVE A PLEASING LIFE OF GROWTH, ENDURANCE, AND THANKSGIVING FOR SALVATION.



EXEGETICAL OUTLINE: Colossians 1:15-20

- I. JESUS (GOD'S BELOVED SON - v. 14) IS THE LIKENESS AND MANIFESTATION OF GOD, WHO IS INVISIBLE. (15a)
- II. JESUS IS PRE-EXISTENT AND SOVEREIGN OVER ALL BECAUSE ALL THINGS (INCLUDING THE ANGELIC POWERS OF THE COLOSSIANS HERESY) HAVE BEEN CREATED IN HIM, THROUGH HIM, AND FOR HIM, AND BECAUSE HE SUSTAINS THEM. (15b-17)
  - A. Jesus is pre-existent and sovereign over every creature. (15b)
  - B. The reason that Jesus is pre-existent and sovereign over every creature is because all things (including the angelic powers of the Colossians heresy) have been created in Him, through Him and for Him. (16)
  - C. Jesus is pre-existent and pre-eminent over all. (17a)
  - D. The reason that Jesus is pre-existent and sovereign over all because He sustains all things. (17b)
- III. JESUS IS PRE-EXISTENT AND SOVEREIGN OVER THE CHURCH BECAUSE HE IS ITS BEGINNING, THE HABITATION OF ALL DIVINE ATTRIBUTES, AND THE AGENT OF GOD'S RECONCILING WORK. (18-20)
  - A. Jesus is sovereign over the church (10a)
  - B. The reason Jesus is sovereign over the Church is because He is its beginning, its sovereign first-born from the dead (18b)
  - C. The purpose of Jesus' being the beginning of the Church, its sovereign first-born, is so that in all things – new creation as well as old – He might be pre-eminent. (18c)
  - D. The reason why the Son is pre-eminent in the Church is because God was pleased that all the fullness of the divine attributes take up their abode in Him. (19)
  - E. The reason why Christ is pre-eminent in the Church is because God was pleased to reconcile to Himself, through Him all things - whether on earth or in heaven. (20)
  - F. The means by which God reconciled all things to Himself was through Jesus' death on the cross. (20)

IDEA:

JESUS, THE LIKENESS AND MANIFESTATION OF GOD, IS PRE-EMINENT IN BOTH CREATION AND THE CHURCH BECAUSE HE WAS THE CREATING AGENT AND IS SOVEREIGN IN EACH.

Colossians 1:24-29

1. PAUL REJOICES IN HIS AFFLICTIONS IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHURCH AND BY THOSE AFFLICTIONS, HE (AS CHRIST'S SERVANT) RECEIVES THE SUFFERING A HOSTILE WORLD WOULD INFLICT ON CHRIST. (v.24)
  - A. Paul rejoices because of his afflictions which are in the interest of the Colossians. (v. 24a)
  - B. Paul suffers physically in the interest of the church and in so doing he (as Christ's servant) receives the suffering a hostile world would inflict on Christ. (v. 24b)
- II. (THE CONTENT OF THE REVEALED SECRET) WHICH PAUL IS RESPONSIBLE TO PROCLAIM IS THAT CHRIST INDWELLS EACH BELIEVER AND SO ASSURES ALL BELIEVERS OF COMPLETE SALVATION. (vs. 25-27)
  - A. Paul has become a servant of the Church because he was given a secret trust by God (v. 25)
  - B. (The content of the sacred trust given to Paul by God) was to proclaim the word of God, which is the previously hidden, but now revealed, glorious secret which God wished to make known to the Gentles. (vs. 26-27a)
  - C. (The content of the previously hidden, but now revealed, glorious secret) is that Christ indwells each believer and this assures all believers of complete salvation. (v. 27b)
- III. THE PURPOSE OF PAUL WORKING HARD BY GOD'S POWER TO PROCLAIM CHRIST IS THAT MEN WILL BECOME MATURE IN CHRIST. (v. 28-29)
  - A. Paul proclaims Christ by warning and teaching all men. (v. 28 a)
  - B. The purpose of Paul proclaiming Christ to all men is that all men will become mature in Christ (v. 28 b)
  - C. The means by which Paul is able to work hard for the purpose of maturing men is by relying on the power of God to work through him. (v. 29)

IDEA:

THE PURPOSE OF PAUL'S HARD-WORKING, GOD-EMPOWERED MINISTRY OF PROCLAIMING THE TRUTH OF CHRIST INDWELLING MEN AND ASSURING THEM OF COMPLETE SALVATION (WHICH MINISTRY WAS HIS SACRED TRUST, AND FOR WHICH MINISTRY HE SUFFERED PHYSICALLY) WAS TO BRING MEN TO MATURITY.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE: Colossians 2:1-5

- I. THE PURPOSE OF PAUL INFORMING THE COLOSSIANS OF HIS STRUGGLES FOR THEM IS THAT THEY WILL BE STRENGTHENED (AGAINST FALSE TEACHING) BY MEANS OF BEING UNITED IN LOVE SO THEY WILL HAVE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING WHICH WILL LEAD TO A FULL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST IN WHOM IS STORED ALL WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE. (1-3)
  - A. Paul's desire for the Colossians and those in Laodemia (and Hieropolis) is that they know his intense, internal struggles which he has on their behalf. (1)
  - B. The purpose for Paul informing the Colossians about his struggles is that they will be strengthened (against false teaching). (2e)
  - C. The means by which the Colossians will be strengthened (against false teaching) is by being united in love. (2b)
  - D. The goal of the Colossians being united in love is that they will have a full assurance of understanding, (2c)
  - E. The goal of the Colossians being united in love and having full assurance of understanding is that they will have a full knowledge of Christ [the mystery of God]. (2d)
  - F. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are stored in Christ (3)
- II. THE PURPOSE OF PAUL TELLING THE COLOSSIANS THAT ALL THE TREASURES OF WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE ARE STORED IN CHRIST IS THAT THEY WILL NOT BE DECEIVED BY PERSUASIVE SPEECH. (4)
- III. EVEN THOUGH PAUL IS PHYSICALLY SEPARATED FROM THE COLOSSIANS HE REMAINS CONCERNED FOR THEM AND REJOICES ABOUT THEIR ORDERLY LIVES AND STEADFAST FAITH. (5)
  - A. Even though Paul is physically separated from the Colossians, he is still concerned for them. (5a)
  - B. Paul rejoices to be made aware of the Colossians' orderly lives and steadfast faith in Christ (5b)

IDEA #1

THE PURPOSE OF PAUL TELLING THE COLOSSIANS OF HIS STRUGGLES FOR THEM IS THAT THEY WILL BE STRENGTHENED (AGAINST FALSE TEACHING) BY MEANS OF BEING UNITED IN LOVE WHICH WILL RESULT IN FULL ASSURANCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST WHICH WILL KEEP THEM FROM BEING DECEIVED.

IDEA #2:

DESPITE HIS PHYSICAL ABSENCE PAUL REMAINS CONCERNED FOR THE COLOSSIANS AND REJOICES BECAUSE OF THEIR ORDERLY LIVES AND STEADFAST FAITH.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE: Colossians 2:6-10

I. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY CONTINUE TO LIVE THEIR LIVES WITH CHRIST JESUS AS THEIR LORD BY WAY OF HAVING BEEN MADE SECURE IN CHRIST AND BY WAY OF CONTINUALLY BEING BUILT UP IN CHRIST AND BY CONTINUALLY BEING ESTABLISHED IN THE TRUTH THEY WERE TAUGHT AND BY CONTINUALLY EXPRESSING THANKS. (vs. 6, 7)

A. (In light of the Colossians steadfast faith) (the content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians] is that they continue to live their lives with Christ Jesus as their Lord, in accord with what they have been taught (v.6)

1. The Colossians had been taught that Christ Jesus is Lord (v. 6e)

2. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they continue to live their lives with Christ Jesus as Lord (v.6b)

B. The manner in which the Colossians are to continue to live with Christ Jesus as their Lord (since they have been made secure in Christ) is by way of continually being built up in Christ and by continually being established in the truth they were taught and by continually expressing thanks. (v. 7)

1. The Colossians were made secure in Christ (at conversion). (v. 7a)

2. The manner in which the Colossians are to continue to live with Christ Jesus as their Lord is by way of continually being built up in Christ (v. 7b)

3. The manner in which the Colossians are to continue to live with Christ Jesus as their Lord is by way of continually being established in the truth they were taught. (v. 7c)

4. The manner in which the Colossians are to continue to live with Christ Jesus as their Lord is by way of continually expressing thanks (v. 7d)

II. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY BE CONSTANTLY ON GUARD AGAINST BEING LED AWAY FROM THE TRUTH BY MEANS OF THE COLOSSIAN PHILOSOPHY WHICH IS AN EMPTY DECEPTION AND A HUMAN FABRICATION AND WHICH PAYS ALLEGIANCE TO COSMIC SPIRITS RATHER THAN CHRIST. (v. 8)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they be constantly on guard against being led away from the truth. (v. 8a)

B. The means by which the Colossians may be led away from the truth is through the (Colossian) philosophy, which is an empty deception and a human fabrication, and which pays allegiance to cosmic spirits rather than Christ. (v. 8b)

III. THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS ARE NOT TO BE LED AWAY FROM THE TRUTH BY THE COLOSSIAN PHILOSOPHY IS BECAUSE ALL THE FULLNESS OF DEITY PERMANENTLY RESIDES EXCLUSIVELY IN THE INCARNATE AND GLORIFIED PERSON OF CHRIST AND BECAUSE THE COLOSSIANS HAVE BEEN MADE SPIRITUALLY COMPLETE BECAUSE OF THEIR UNION WITH CHRIST, WHO IS THE SUPREME RULER OF ALL OTHER AUTHORITIES. (vs. 9-10)

A. The reason the Colossians are not to be led away from the truth by the Colossian philosophy is because all the fullness of deity permanently resides exclusively in Christ. (v. 9)

B. The reason the Colossians are not to be led away from the truth by the Colossian philosophy is because they have been made spiritually complete because of their union with Christ. (v. 10a)

C. Christ is the supreme ruler of all other authorities. (v. 10b)

IDEA:

THE REASON THAT PAUL EXHORTS THE COLOSSIANS TO CONTINUE TO LIVE WITH CHRIST AS LORD (BY WAY OF CONTINUALLY BEING BUILT UP ESTABLISHED IN THE TRUTH AND EXPRESSING THANKS) AND TO CONSTANTLY BE ON GUARD AGAINST BEING LED AWAY FROM THE TRUTH BY THE COLOSSIAN PHILOSOPHY IS BECAUSE ALL THE FULLNESS OF DEITY PERMANENTLY RESIDES EXCLUSIVELY IN CHRIST AND BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN MADE SPIRITUALLY COMPLETE BECAUSE OF THEIR UNION WITH CHRIST.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE - Colossians 2:11-15

I. THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS ARE NOT TO BE LED AWAY FROM CHRIST BY THE COLOSSIAN HERESY IS BECAUSE THE COLOSSIANS WERE SAVED (SPIRITUALLY CIRCUMCISED) BY MEANS OF GOD'S DIVINE WORK (IN CHRIST) OF REMOVING THEIR SINFUL NATURE BY MEANS OF THEIR IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST THROUGH WHICH THEIR SINFUL NATURE WAS RENDERED INOPERATIVE AND THROUGH WHICH THEY WERE GIVEN NEW LIFE THROUGH THEIR FAITH IN GOD. (11-12)

- A. The Colossians were saved (spiritually circumcised) because of their union with Christ (11b)
- B. The means by which the Colossians were saved by God's divine work of removing their sinful nature (and not by means of a physical rite). (11b)
- C. The active agent of the Colossian's salvation was Christ. (11c)
- D. The means by which the Colossians were saved was by way of their identification with Christ's death, burial and resurrection through which their sinful nature was rendered inoperative (Rom 6) and through which they were given life through their faith in God. (12)

II. THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS ARE NOT TO BE LED AWAY FROM CHRIST BY THE COLOSSIAN HERESY IS BECAUSE THE COLOSSIANS (WHO WERE FORMERLY SPIRITUALLY DEAD) WERE GIVEN SPIRITUAL LIFE BY GOD BY MEANS OF GRACIOUSLY FORGIVING THEIR DELIBERATE ACTS OF DISOBEDIENCE BY WAY OF CANCELLING AND REMOVING THE DEBT OF MOSAIC REGULATIONS (13, 14)

- A. The Colossians (who were formerly spiritually dead, both in practice and nature) were given spiritual life by God (13b)
- B. The means by which God gave the Colossians spiritual life was by way of graciously forgiving their deliberate acts of disobedience. (13b)
- C. The means by which God graciously forgave the disobedience of the Colossians was by canceling and removing the debt of Mosaic regulations which the Colossians could not keep (14)

III. THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS ARE NOT TO BE LED AWAY FROM CHRIST BY THE COLOSSIAN HERESY IS BECAUSE GOD HAS EXPOSED EVIL SPIRITUAL FORCES TO PUBLIC DISGRACE BY DEFEATING THEM AT THE CROSS AND DIVESTING THEM OF THEIR POWER AND AUTHORITY. (16)

- A. God exposed evil spirit forces to public disgrace by divesting them of their power and authority. (15a)
- B. The means by which God publicly exposed evil spirit forces to public disgrace were by defeating them in Christ (at the cross). (15b)

IDEA:

THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS ARE NOT TO BE LED AWAY FROM CHRIST BY THE COLOSSIAN HERESY IS BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN SAVED (SPIRITUALLY CIRCUMCISED) BY GOD'S WORK OF REMOVING THEIR SINFUL NATURE AND BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN SPIRITUAL LIFE BY MEANS OF GOD'S GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS AND BECAUSE GOD HAS ACCOMPLISHED COMPLETE VICTORY OVER EVIL SPIRITUAL FORCES.

## EXEGETICAL OUTLINE - Colossians 2:16-23

I. [IN LIGHT OF THEIR SPIRITUAL FULLNESS] (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO MAKE JUDGEMENTS ABOUT THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION WITH REFERENCE TO JEWISH REGULATIONS BECAUSE THESE PRACTICES ARE ONLY AN INSUBSTANTIAL FORESHADOWING WHEREAS CHRIST IS THE SPIRITUAL REALITY. (16-17)

A. [In light of their spiritual fullness of the content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians] is that they not allow anyone to make judgements about their spiritual condition with reference to Jewish regulation of diet and holy days. (v. 16)

B. The reason the Colossians are not to allow themselves to be judged with reference to Jewish regulations is because these practices are only an insubstantial foreshadowing whereas Christ is the spiritual reality. (17)

I. [IN LIGHT OF THEIR SPIRITUAL FULLNESS] (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY NOT ALLOW ANYONE (WHO IS UNJUSTIFIABLY ARROGANT) TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON THEM BY MEANS OF TAKING DELIGHT IN ASCETIC PRACTICES AND MYSTICALLY ENTERING HEAVEN TO PARTICIPATE IN ANGELIC WORSHIP. BECAUSE SUCH A PERSON WAS NOT MAINTAINED CLOSE CONNECTION WITH CHRIST WHO IS THE SOURCE OF GROWTH FOR THE CHURCH. (18-19)

A. (In light of their spiritual fullness) (the content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that not allow anyone to pass judgement on them (regarding their spiritual condition) by means of taking delight in ascetic practices and mystically entering the heavenly realm to participate in the worship angels perform. (18a)

B. The person who delights in ascetic ritual and mystical angelic worship is unjustifiably arrogant by means of his carnal mind (18b)

C. The arrogant person who delights in ascetic ritual and mystical angelic worship has not maintained close connection with Christ (the head) through whom all members of the church (the body) are nourished, bound together and grow (spiritually). (19)

II. THE RESULT OF (IDENTIFICATION WITH THE DEATH OF CHRIST WHICH FREED THE COLOSSIANS FROM THE RULES CONTROL OF REGULATIONS) WHICH ARE PERISHABLE AND WHICH HAVE A (MERE) REPUTATION FOR WISDOM BY MEANS OF SELF-DENIAL BUT WHICH LEAD TO SENSUAL GRATIFICATION (20-23)

A. The result of (identification with the death of Christ which freed the Colossians from the control of demonic spirits) is that the Colossians should not subject themselves to ascetic rules and regulations. (20,21)

B. The physical elements behind ascetic rules and regulations (based on human commands and teachings) are perishable (and of no importance). (22)

C. The human, ascetic rules and regulations - which have a (mere) reputation for wisdom by means of self-made religion and ascetic ritual and harsh bodily treatment, have no spiritual value - lead to the gratification of the flesh. (23)

### IDEA:

[IN LIGHT OF THEIR SPIRITUAL FULLNESS] AND BECAUSE OF THEIR IDENTIFICATION WITH THE DEATH OF CHRIST, (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO MAKE JUDGEMENTS ABOUT THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION WITH REFERENCE TO JEWISH REGULATIONS AND THAT THEY NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON THEM BY MEANS OF TAKING DELIGHT IN ASCETIC PRACTICE AND MYSTICAL ANGELIC WORSHIP AND THAT THEY NOT SUBJECT THEMSELVES TO ASCETIC RULES WHICH HAVE NO SPIRITUAL VALUE.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE - Colossians 3:1-4

I. IN LIGHT OF THEIR SPIRITUAL FULLNESS AND THE INADEQUACY OF LEGALISM AND ASCETIC, MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES) AND BECAUSE OF THEIR NEW LIFE THROUGH IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST'S RESURRECTION (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY ACTIVELY PURSUE AND CONTINUALLY THINK ABOUT THINGS RELATED TO THEIR NEW LIFE IN CHRIST (WHO IS THE HONORED AND EXALTED ONE) AND NOT THINGS RELATED TO THEIR OLD LIFE. (19-2)

- A. The Colossians have new life because of their identification with the resurrection of Christ. (1a)
- B. The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians is that they actively pursue things related to their new life (1b)
- C. Christ is honored and exalted in heaven. (1c)
- D. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they continually think about things related to their new life, and not things that we related to their old life. (2)

II. THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS ARE TO ACTIVELY PURSUE AND CONTINUALLY THINK ABOUT THINGS RELATED TO THEIR NEW LIFE IS BECAUSE THEY ARE DEAD TO THE OLD LIFE AND THEIR NEW LIFE IS CONCEALED AND/OR SECURE TOGETHER WITH CHRIST IN GOD AND BECAUSE THEY WILL BE VISIBLY MANIFESTED IN GLORY WHEN CHRIST (WHO IS THEIR LIFE) IS VISIBLY MANIFESTED IN GLORY (AT THE  $\pi\alpha\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ ). (3-4)

- A. The reason the Colossians are to actively pursue and continually think about things related to their new life is because they are dead to the old life (3a)
- B. The reason the Colossians are to actively think about things related to their new life is because their new life is concealed and /or secured together with Christ in God. (3b)
- C. The reason the Colossians are to actively pursue and continually think about things related to their new life is because they will be visibly manifested in glory when Christ (who is their life) is visibly manifested in glory (at the  $\pi\alpha\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ ) (4)

IDEA:

[THE OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY CONTINUALLY THINK ABOUT AND ACTIVELY PURSUE THINGS RELATED TO THEIR LIFE NEW BECAUSE THEY ARE DEAD TO THE OLD LIFE AND THEIR NEW LIFE IS CONCEALED AND SECURE IN CHRIST AND WILL BE VISIBLY MANIFESTED ( $\pi\alpha\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ ).

## EXEGETICAL OUTLINE - Colossians 3:5-11

I. (IN LIGHT OF THE COLOSSIAN'S UNION WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION...) (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY COMPLETELY EXTERMINATE GROSS SENSUAL SINS BECAUSE SUCH SINS FORMERLY CHARACTERIZED THEIR PAGAN LIFE-STYLE. (vs. 5-7)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians is that) they completely exterminate gross sensual sins (v. 5)
- B. The reason the Colossians should completely exterminate gross sensual sins is because God's wrath comes on such sins. (v.6)
- C. The reason the Colossians should completely exterminate gross sensual sins is because such sins formerly characterized the Colossian's pagan lifestyle (v. 7)

II. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY RID THEMSELVES OF SINS OF IMPROPER SPEECH AND STOP LYING TO ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE THEY ARE NOW PART OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY. (vs. 8-11)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians is that) they now rid themselves of sins of improper speech. (v. 8)
- B. The reason the Colossians should not lie to one another is because they are now part of the Christian community. (vs. 9-11)
  - 1. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they should not lie to one another. (v. 9a)
  - 2. The reason the Colossians should not lie to one another is because they have discarded their former pagan lifestyle. (v. 9b)
  - 3. The reason the Colossians should not lie to one another is because they have identified with the Christian community in which there are no distinctions between believers. (vs. 10-11a)
  - 4. The reason that there are no distinctions between believers in the Christian community is because Christ is all and in everyone who is in the community. (v. 11b)

IDEA:

THE REASON THE COLOSSIANS SHOULD CEASE FROM SENSUAL AND SPEECH SINS IS BECAUSE THEY HAVE ABANDONED THEIR FORMER LIFE-STYLE AND ARE NOW A PART OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE- Colossians 3:12-17

I. (BECAUSE THEY HAVE BECOME A PART OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY) [THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS] IS THAT THEY PRACTICE COMPASSION, HUMILITY AND PATIENCE BY MEANS OF TOLERATING AND FORGIVE EACH (BECAUSE GOD HAS FORGIVEN THEM) AND THAT THEY PRACTICE LOVE WHICH WILL PRODUCE CORPORATE MATURITY. (12-14)

A. (In light of the fact that the Colossians have become a part of the Christian community) (v. 10) (the content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they (God's chosen, set-apart, and beloved people) practice compassion, humility, and patience. (12)

B. The means by which the Colossians practice compassion, humility and patience is by way of tolerating and forgiving each other whom there are causes for complaint. (13e)

C. The reason the Colossians are to tolerate and forgive each other is because God has forgiven them. (13b)

D. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians is that they practice love which unite them its them (the Colossians) and produce corporate maturity (14)

II. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY MAINTAIN PEACE AMONG THEMSELVES BECAUSE THIS WAS GOD'S PURPOSE IN CALLING THEM INTO ONE BODY AND THAT THEY EXPRESS THANKS. ( 15)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is not that they maintain peace among themselves (15a)

B. The purpose of God calling the Colossians into one body was peace (15b)

C. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they express thanks. (15c)

III. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY (CORPORATELY) LEARN AND APPLY THE MESSAGE ABOUT CHRIST BY MEANS OF TEACHING AND WARNING EACH OTHER WITH SINCERE, WORSHIPFUL SINGING (16)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians is that they (corporately) learn and apply this message about Christ (16e)

B. The manner in which the Colossian body is to learn and apply the message about Christ is by wisely teaching and warning each other by means of sincere, worshipful singing. (14b)

IV. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN ALL ACTIVITIES OF LIFE IN A WAY THAT DEMONSTRATES THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO AND IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS CHRIST. (17)

IDEA:

(THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY PRACTICE CHRISTLIKE VIRTUES BY MEANS OF TOLERATING AND FORGIVING EACH OTHER AND PRACTICE LOVE WHICH WILL PRODUCE CORPORATE MATURITY, MAINTAIN PEACE AMONG THEMSELVES, EXPRESS THANKS, LEARN AND APPLY THE MESSAGE ABOUT CHRIST AND CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN A WAY THAT DEMONSTRATES THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO AND IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS CHRIST.



EXEGETICAL OUTLINE - Colossians 3:16-21

I. (THE CONTENT) OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN WIVES) IS THAT THEY VOLUNTARILY SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO THE GOD-ORDAINED AUTHORITY OF THEIR HUSBAND BECAUSE THIS IS APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR FOR CHRISTIAN WIVES. (V. 18)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian wives) is that they voluntarily submit themselves to the God-ordained authority of their husbands. (18a)

B. The reason Christian wives are to voluntarily submit themselves to their husbands is because this is appropriate behavior for Christian wives. (18b)

II. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS) IS THAT THEY SACRIFICIALLY (Eph. 5) LOVE THEIR WIVES AND NOT TREAT THEM IN A HARSH MANNER. (v. 19)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian husbands) is that they sacrificially (Eph. 5) love their wives. (19a)

B. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian husbands) is that they not treat their wives in a harsh manner. (19b)

III. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN CHILDREN) IS THAT THEY OBEY THEIR PARENTS BECAUSE OBEDIENCE IS PLEASING TO GOD. (v. 20)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian children) is that they obey their parents. (20a)

B. The reason Christian children are to obey their parents is because obedience pleases God. (20b)

IV. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN FATHERS) IS THAT THEY NOT IRRITATE (BY OVERCORRECTION) THEIR CHILDREN BECAUSE THIS WILL DISCOURAGE THEIR CHILDREN. (v. 21)

A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian fathers) is that they not irritate (by over-correction) their children. (21a)

B. The reason Christian fathers are not to irritate (by over-correction) their children is because this will discourage their children. (21b)

IDEA:

[THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO CHRISTIAN FAMILIES] IS THAT WIVES SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE HUSBAND AND PARENTS, BECAUSE THIS IS APPROPRIATE AND PLEASING BEHAVIOR AND THAT THE HUSBAND/FATHER LOVE HIS WIFE AND NOT TREAT HER HARSHLY AND THAT HE NOT IRRITATE HIS CHILDREN WHICH WILL LEAD TO DISCOURAGEMENT.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE- Colossians 3:22-4:1

I. THE MANNER IN WHICH CHRISTIAN SLAVES ARE TO OBEY THEIR EARTHLY MASTERS IS SINCERELY AND OUT OF REVERENCE FOR CHRIST AND NOT WITH HYPOCRITICAL OBEDIENCE MEANT ONLY TO BE SEEN BY MEN AND MEANT TO PLEASE ONLY MEN. (22)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian slaves) is that they obey their earthly masters in all things. (22a)
- B. The manner in which Christian slaves are to obey their earthly masters is not by hypocritical obedience which is meant only to be seen by men and intended only to please men. (22b)
- C. The manner in which Christian slaves are to obey their earthly masters is sincerely. (22c)
- D. The manner in which Christian slaves are to obey their earthly masters is out of reverence for Christ. (22d)

II. THE REASON CHRISTIAN SLAVES ARE TO WORK HARD AND RENDER THEIR SERVICE FOR CHRIST AND NOT MEN IS BECAUSE CHRIST WILL GIVE AN ETERNAL REWARD FOR GOOD SERVICE AND WILL IMPARTIALLY PUNISH POOR WORKING SLAVES. (23-25)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian slaves) is that they work hard and render their service to Christ and not men. (23)
- B. The reason Christian slaves are to work hard for Christ and not men is because Christ will give them an eternal reward (24a)
- C. Slaves, in reality, serve Christ. (24b)
- D. The reason Christian slaves are to work hard for Christ and not men is because the slave who does wrong will be punished by Christ who is not partial. (25)

III. THE REASON CHRISTIAN MASTERS ARE TO TREAT THEIR SLAVES WITH FAIRNESS IS BECAUSE THEY KNOW THAT THEY HAVE A MASTER IN HEAVEN (TO WHOM THEY ARE ACCOUNTABLE). (4:1)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to Christian masters) is that they treat their slaves with justice and fairness. (4:19)
- B. The reason that Christian masters are to treat their slaves with justice and fairness is because they know that they have Master in heaven (to whom they are accountable). (4:1b)

IDEA:

THE REASON CHRISTIAN SLAVES ARE TO SINCERELY OBEY THEIR EARTHLY MASTERS AND WORK FOR CHRIST AND NOT MEN IS BECAUSE CHRIST WILL GIVE AN IMPARTIAL, ETERNAL REWARD AND THE REASON CHRISTIAN MASTERS ARE TO TREAT THEIR SLAVES FAIRLY IS BECAUSE THEY ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO CHRIST (THEIR MASTER IN HEAVEN).

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE- Colossians 4:2-6

I. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY DEVOTEDLY COMMIT THEMSELVES TO PRAYER BY BEING SPIRITUALLY ALERT AND THANKFUL AND AT THE SAME TIME PRAY FOR HIM AND HIS ASSOCIATES THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO PROCLAIM THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION IN A CLEAR AND PROPER MANNER. (2-4)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossian) is that they devotedly commit themselves to prayer. (2a)
- B. The manner in which the Colossians are to devote themselves to prayer is by being spiritually alert and thankful. (2b)
- C. The content of the Colossians prayer for Paul and his associates is that God will provide opportunities for proclaiming Christ (the message of salvation). (3)
- D. The content of the Christian prayer for Paul is that he will proclaim the message of salvation clearly with proper speech. (4)

II. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY CONDUCT THEIR LIVES IN A WISE MANNER BEFORE UNBELIEVERS BY MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY AND THAT THEIR SPEECH ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS, WHOLESOME, AND INTERESTING SO THAT THEY WILL KNOW HOW TO RESPOND TO ALL UNBELIEVERS. (5-6)

- A. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they conduct their lives in a wise manner before unbelievers by means of making the most of every opportunity.
  - 1. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that they conduct their lives in a wise manner before unbelievers.
  - 2. The means by which the Colossians are to conduct their lives in a wise manner before unbelievers is by making the most of every opportunity.
- B. (The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians) is that their speech always be gracious, wholesome, and interesting.
- C. The result of the Colossians speech always being gracious, wholesome and interesting is that they will know how to respond to all unbelievers.

IDEA:

(THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO PRAYER BY BEING SPIRITUALLY ALERT AND THANKFUL AND THAT THEY PRAY THAT GOD WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION AND THAT THEY CONDUCT THEMSELVES BEFORE UNBELIEVERS IN A WISE MANNER AND ALWAYS SPEAK IN A GRACIOUS, WHOLESOME, AND INTERESTING WAY.

EXEGETICAL OUTLINE - Colossians 4:7-18

I. THE PURPOSE OF PAUL'S SENDING TYCHICHUS AND ONESIMUS TO THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY WILL INFORM THE COLOSSIANS OF EVERYTHING CONCERNING PAUL (IN ROMAN PRISON) SO THAT THEY WILL BE ENCOURAGED. (7-9)

- A. Tychichus (the beloved brother, faithful servant and fellow slave of Paul) will tell the Colossians all about Paul. (7)
- B. The purpose of Paul sending Tychichus to the Colossians is that he might tell them all about how Paul is doing and that they might be encouraged (by knowing about Paul). (8)
- C. Tychichus is traveling with Onesimus (the faithful and beloved brother of Paul who is a native of Colosse) and together they will inform the Colossians everything concerning Paul (in Roman prison). (9)

II. THOSE SENDING GREETINGS TO THE COLOSSIANS ARE THE ONLY THREE JEWISH CHRISTIANS WORKING WITH PAUL (WHO HAVE BEEN A CONSOLATION TO HIM) AND EPAPHRAS (WHO WORKS HARD AND PRAYS INTENSELY FOR THEIR MATURITY) AND LUKE AND DEMAS.

A. Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus (the only Jewish Christian working with Paul, and who are a source of a consolation to him) send their greetings to the Colossians. (10-11)

- 1. Aristarchus (Paul's fellow prisoner) and Mark (the cousin of Barnabas) send greetings to the Colossians. (10a)
- 2. The Colossians had received instructions to welcome Mark if he came to them. (10b)
- 3. Jesus (whose Roman name is Justus) sends greetings to the Colossians. (11a)
- 4. Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus Justus are the only Jewish Christians "in whom we currently fellow workers with Paul in his ministry. (11b)
- 5. These three Jewish Christians have been a source of consolation to Paul (11c)

B. Epaphras (a native of Colosse) works hard for and continually prays with zeal and intensity for the Colossians that they will be mature and fully convinced of God's will. (12-13)

- 1. Epaphras (a native of Colosse and a servant of Christ Jesus) sends greetings to the Colossians. (12a)
- 2. Epaphras continually prays with zeal and intensity for the Colossians. (12b)
- 3. The content of Epaphras' prayer for the Colossians is that they will be mature and fully convinced of God's will. (12c)
- 4. The content of Paul's emphatic testimony is that Epaphras works hard on behalf of the Colossians, and those in Laodemia and Hierapolis. (13)

C. Luke (the beloved doctor) and Demas send greetings to the Colossians.

III. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S FINAL EXHORTATIONS TO THE COLOSSIANS) IS THAT THEY PASS ON HIS GREETINGS TO BELIEVERS IN LAODECIA AND THE HOUSE CHURCH OF NYMPHA, AND THAT THEY EXCHANGE AND PUBLICLY READ LETTERS WITH LAODECIA, AND THAT THEY ENCOURAGE ARCHIPPUS TO FULLY DISCHARGE HIS MINISTRY. (15-17)

A. [The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians] is that they pass on his greetings to the brothers in Laodemia and Nympha and the church which meets in her house. (15)

B. [The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians] is that after they have (publicly) read his epistle to them they are to see that it is (publicly) read at Laodemia, and they are to (publicly) read the (lost) letter to the Laodemians. (16)

C. [The content of Paul's exhortation to the Colossians] is that they encourage Archippus to fully discharge his ministry. (17)

IV. THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S CONCLUSION TO THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY REMEMBER HIS IMPRISONMENT AND HE PRAYS FOR GOD'S GRACE TO BE WITH THEM. (18)

IDEA #1

I. THE PURPOSE OF PAUL SENDING TYCHICHUS AND ONESIMUS TO THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY WILL INFORM THE COLOSSIANS OF EVERYTHING CONCERNING PAUL (IN ROMAN PRISON) SO THAT THEY WILL BE ENCOURAGED. (7-9)

IDEA #2

II. THOSE SENDING GREETINGS TO THE COLOSSIANS ARE THE ONLY THREE JEWISH CHRISTIANS WORKING WITH PAUL (WHO HAVE BEEN A CONSOLATION TO HIM) AND EPAPHRAS (WHO WORKS HARD AND PRAYS INTENSELY FOR THEIR MATURITY) AND LUKE AND DEMAS.

IDEA #3

III. (THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S FINAL EXHORTATIONS TO THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY PASS ON HIS GREETINGS TO BELIEVERS IN LAODECIA AND THE HOUSE CHURCH OF NYMPHA. AND THAT THEY EXCHANGE AND PUBLICLY READ LETTERS WITH LAODECA, AND THAT THEY ENCOURAGE ARCHIPPUS TO FULLY DISCHARGE HIS MINISTRY. (15-17)

IDEA #4

IV. THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S CONCLUSION TO THE COLOSSIANS IS THAT THEY REMEMBER HIS IMPRISONMENT AND HE PRAYS FOR GOD'S GRACE TO BE WITH THEM. (18)

**Pastor Jim Wilson**  
**Huntsville, Alabama**

**Sermon Notes**  
**COLOSSIANS – “Christ Is All”**

The PLACE called Colosse -

The PEOPLE of Colosse -

The PURPOSE of Colossians -

**I. COLOSSIANS AFFIRMS THE DEITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST.**

**II. COLOSSIANS REJECTS THE NECESSITY OF MYSTICISM AND LEGALISM.**

***JESUS CHRIST WHO IS FULLY GOD  
AND ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN  
IS ALSO COMPLETELY SUFFICIENT***

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**Application**

- How are you doing in matching your practice with your position? You are a “saint,” that is, “someone consecrated to God.” Are you living up to that designation? Could it be said of you that you are “faithful brother” as well as a saint?
- A proper view of Christ is the antidote for heresy. Knowing the truth is a necessity if we are to be able to detect and reject error. Memorize Colossians 2:9-10 and Hebrews 1:3 so that you will have an answer for those who say that “Jesus may be a great teacher - but He wasn’t God.” Be ready with a biblical reply.
- Jesus Christ is God and He is Lord of All. A.W. Tozer: “God being who and what He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full Lordship on His part and complete submission on our part. We owe Him every honor that is in our power to give Him. Our everlasting grief lies in giving Him anything less ... I speak of a voluntary exalting of God to His proper station over us and a willing surrender of our whole being to the place of worshipful submission...”

Is He Lord in all areas of your life?

\*At Work?      \*In the Family?      \*At Church?      \*Personal life?

- Spirituality is not a matter of extra experiences or a legalistic lifestyle. Don’t be intimidated by anyone who might try and tell you so. When you have Christ, you have it all. The question you have to answer is, “Does Christ have all of me?”
- Spirituality is a matter of attitude and obedience. THAT is what God expects of us.
  - \*How does your attitude fit what is listed in 3:1-4?
  - \*Pick one negative vice listed in 3:5-11 that you need to put to death. Work on putting it to death.
  - \*Pick one positive virtue listed in 3:12-14 that you need to put on and work on putting it on.

**Sermon Notes**  
**“HIM”**  
Colossians 1

**BY HIM**

I. JESUS CHRIST IS THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE.  
(16a)

**FOR HIM**

II. JESUS CHRIST IS THE OWNER OF THE UNIVERSE.  
(16b)

**IN HIM**

III. JESUS CHRIST IS THE SUSTAINER OF THE  
UNIVERSE. (17)

**THROUGH HIM**

IV. JESUS CHRIST IS THE RECONCILER OF MANKIND.  
(21-22a)

**BEFORE HIM**

V. JESUS CHRIST IS THE JUDGE OF MANKIND. (22b)

**PROCLAIM HIM**

VI. JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAVIOR AND MODEL FOR MANKIND.  
(29)

*AS OUR LORD JESUS DESERVES OUR WORSHIP  
AND SUBMISSION: AS OUR SAVIOR JESUS DESERVES  
OUR SERVICE AND DEVOTION*

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**Application**

- In a chapter entitled “Restoring the Creator-Creature Relation” A.W. Tozer says that the fact that God is the Creator gives Him the right to pre-eminence. “Back of all, above all, before all is God; first in sequential order, above in rank and station, exalted in dignity and honor.” In making that a reality in your life, can you pray this prayer?

O God, be Thou exalted over my possessions. Nothing of earth’s treasures shall seem dear unto me if only Thou art glorified in my life. Be Thou exalted over my friendships. I am determined that Thou shalt be above all, though I must stand deserted and alone in the midst of the earth. Be Thou exalted above my comforts. Though it mean the loss of bodily comforts and the carrying of heavy crosses I shall keep my vow this day before Thee. Be Thou exalted over my reputation. Make me ambitious to please Thee even if as a result I must sink into obscurity and my name be forgotten as a dream. Rise, O Lord, into Thy proper place of honor, above my ambitions, above my likes and dislikes, above my family, my health and even my life itself. Let me decrease that Thou mayest increase, let me sink that Thou mayest rise above. Ride forth upon me as Thou didst ride into Jerusalem mounted upon the humble little beast, a colt, the foal of an ass, and let me hear the children cry to Thee, “Hosanna in the highest.”

- That Christ holds the universe together demonstrates His absolute control over His creation. Knowing that He is in control of everything should give us:
  - \* Confidence - to face difficult tasks and circumstances.
  - \* Comfort - since we know He cares for us and will only allow things to happen for our ultimate good.
  - \* Contentment - with what He has provided.

**Sermon Notes**  
**“THE GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL”**  
Colossians 1:3-9

I. GOSPEL TRUTH IS THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD’S GRACE.

- A. Gospel means “good news.”
- B. The gospel is the truth of God.
- C. The gospel is the grace of God.

II. GOSPEL TRUTH SHOULD PRODUCE CHARACTER FRUIT IN US.

- A. The first fruit of the gospel is faith.
- B. The visible fruit of the gospel is love.
- C. The motivating fruit of the gospel is hope.

III. GOSPEL TRUTH SHOULD PRODUCE CONVERSION GROWTH THROUGH US.

- A. The truth of the gospel reaches the world.
- B. The truth of the gospel is reported by men.

*GOSPEL TRUTH SHOULD PRODUCE  
CHARACTER FRUIT IN US  
AND CONVERSION GROWTH THROUGH US*

**Application**

- The first (and most important) question that you must come to grips with is, “Have I put my complete trust in Jesus Christ?” Have I believed the gospel? If you need to make that decision, please mention it to me or someone so that we can have the joy of leading you to faith in Christ.
- Has the seed of the gospel “died” or “produced fruit” in you? Do you have an active faith? Do you demonstrate the visible fruit of love? Is your love “selective?” Why not plan to do something for someone who is not on your “favorite people” list and then do it quietly and sincerely. How much time do you spend thinking about our future blessings. Why not do a concordance study on “hope” this week? Look up several verses on hope and rejoice in the fact that we are given sure and certain promises. You could also review the Bible study notes on “Hope” which we studied earlier.
- Get in touch with the world. Write a letter to a missionary and encourage he/she in their work in that portion of the world. Ask them to write you and tell you of the progress that the gospel is making there. Rejoice in the fact that the gospel that you believe is a part of a world-wide effort to bring glory to God.
- Who needs to “learn the gospel” from you? Make a list and begin praying for them. Prey that God will give you the opportunity to share the “good news” with them. Write out your personally testimony so you can be prepared to share.

“Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.”  
JAMES 1:22





**Sermon Notes**  
**"THE TREE OF  
CHRISTIAN  
LIFE"**  
Colossians 19-14



**THE ROOT-Knowledge**

- I. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WILL IS REQUIRED IF WE ARE TO PLEASE GOD. (vs. 9)

**THE TRUNK-A Worthy Walk**

- II. LIVES WORTHY OF AND PLEASING TO GOD GROW FROM BEING CONTROLLED BY GOD'S WILL. (vs. 10a)

**THE FRUIT-Growth, Patience, Thanksgiving**

- III. WE PLEASE GOD WHEN WE GROW IN DEEDS AND KNOWLEDGE, PRACTICE PATIENCE AND EXPRESS THANKS. (vss. 10b-14 )

*KNOWLEDGE IS THE ROOT  
OF THE PLEASING FRUIT  
OF GROWTH, PATIENCE AND THANKSGIVING*

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**Application**

- When was the last time you thanked God for someone's spiritual growth? Commit yourself to pray for another Christian who is "doing well." Pray that God will continue to work in their life.
- What is the controlling influence in your life? Do you spend more time each day watching TV and reading secular books, magazines and newspapers than you do studying and reading God's Word and learning His standards for living? If so, whose standards are you more likely to be influenced by - the world's or God's? Make it your priority to know God's Word.
- On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate yourself in the area of thankfulness? Take a few minutes and write down as many things as you can think of for which you are thankful. Now, In prayer, thank God for each of the things you have written down. In order to help you In this area, memorize I Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God In Christ Jesus concerning you."
- Make it a point to evaluate yourself Friday on how "worthy" your walk has been in the areas of Growth, Patience and Thanksgiving.

"Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says."  
JAMES 1:22

**Sermon Notes**  
**“THE CHRIST HYMN”**  
**CHRIST THE SUPREME LORD**  
Colossians 1:15-20

I. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD OVER THE FIRST CREATION.  
(15-17)

II. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD OVER THE NEW CREATION.  
(19-20)

III. \_\_\_\_\_

*JESUS CHRIST, THE SUPREME LORD  
OVER ALL CREATION AND THE CHURCH  
SHOULD HAVE FIRST PLACE IN EVERY AREA  
OF OUR LIFE*

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**Application**

But, there remains an important practical question: Will the new creation respond to its Head as the old creation faithfully and unfailingly responds to its Creator and Sustainer? When He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea, the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. The Lord of the billows spoke, and the wet fury suddenly became glassy stillness. Creation acknowledged the Lordship of Christ. While we sturdily affirm our belief that He is pre-eminent in all things, is He really pre-eminent in our lives IN ME? Or, to put it in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism, **“BUT WHAT DOES IT HELP THEE NOW THAT THOU BELIEVEST ALL THIS?”**

“Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.”  
JAMES 1:22

**Sermon Notes**  
**RECONCILED TO GOD**  
Colossians 1:21-23

Justification-

Redemption-

Forgiveness-

Reconciliation-

Adoption -

I. AN UNSAVED PERSON IS AN ALIENATED ENEMY TO GOD. (v. 21)

II. A SAVED PERSON HAS A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH CHRIST'S SACRIFICIAL DEATH. (v. 22)

III. A SAVED PERSON WILL STAND BEFORE GOD MORALLY HOLY AND LEGALLY BLAMELESS BY REMAINING FAITHFUL. (vs. 22-23)

*THE DEATH OF CHRIST MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR GOD'S  
ENEMY TO BECOME GOD'S FRIEND*

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**Application**

**FOR UNBELIEVERS**

- YOU CAN APPROPRIATE THIS GOOD NEWS PERSONALLY AND MOVE FROM ENEMY TO FRIEND. How does a person appropriate the good news of the gospel and become saved?
  1. Recognize your sinful condition. (Rom. 3:23)
  2. Recognize that the penalty of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23)
  3. Recognize that Christ died for your sin. (Rom. 5:8)
  4. Trust Christ and ask God to save you. (Rom. 10:9,10)

**FOR BELIEVERS**

- ROMANS 5:9-14. This passage tells us that we should rejoice because we have been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. This week when the pressure hits take a few moments to reflect on the wonder of salvation. You, at one time were God's enemy, but now you are His child. Rejoice!! Can you think of anything better than that?
- 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21. This passage tells us that God has given to us the ministry of reconciliation and has committed to us the message of reconciliation. How faithful are you to that ministry and to delivering that message? If the world is to be reconciled to God, it is up to us to tell them that God has done His part and has removed the sin barrier.
- EPHESIANS 2:14-18. This passage tells us that in creating the church, God reconciled two hostile peoples (Jew and Gentile) to one another. In the church, we have indeed been reconciled to God, but we should also be reconciled to one another. There should be no hostility in our personal relationships. Take the necessary steps to remove any barriers with another person.
- Are you living a life of continuing faithfulness so that you will not be ashamed when Christ appears? Are you allowing other things to influence you so that the truths of Christianity are not the controlling factors in your life? Spend some time thinking about the reality of standing before Christ!!

**Sermon Notes**  
**“DON’T BE DECEIVED”**  
Colossians 2:1-5

- I. DEFENDING AGAINST DECEPTION IS A DIFFICULT BUT NECESSARY TASK. (v. 1)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- II. DEFENSES AGAINST DECEPTION ARE UNITY AND UNDERSTANDING. (vs. 2-3)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- III. DECEPTION IS DANGEROUS BECAUSE IT IS CONVINCING. (v. 4)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- IV. DEFEATING DECEPTION IS REASON TO REJOICE. (v. 5)

*BELIEVERS WHO UNIFY IN LOVE AND  
UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH WON’T BE DECEIVED*

**Application**

- Ephesians 4:3 makes it clear that it is up to us to maintain the unity of the Spirit. This is done through the “bond of peace.” We can maintain unity by being PEACEMAKERS. Are you doing your part to maintain the unity of Fellowship Bible Church? Is there someone you need to make peace with? Are there two parties you need to bring together? Are you "making every effort" to see that unity is maintained? LOVE is another essential ingredient to unity. Do you have trouble loving someone in Fellowship Bible Church? Read I John 4 -7-5:3. This passage tells us that if we have a problem loving Christians then the real problem is our relationship with God. Spend a moment evaluating your love for God by evaluating your commitment to love for others.

PRACTICAL POINTS TO HELP YOU GUARD AGAINST DECEPTION

- **DON’T BE SPIRITUALLY NAIVE**

The Bible warns against accepting every teaching we hear just because someone says it's from God. “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.” (I Jn. 4:1) False teachers, we are cautioned, will run rampant in the last days. We must be discerning and alert to error.

- **LEARN THE SENSE OF SCRIPTURE**

Exposure to contemporary preachers, no matter how reliable, can never take the place of a personal, functional grasp of the Scriptures. This goes far beyond just memorizing isolated texts. Spend the time necessary - consistent, daily Bible reading and study - to gain an understanding of the Scriptures in context. This will give you a frame of reference to recognize when someone isolates a verse to make it mean something inconsistent with the total teaching of Scripture. Even if you are not able to quote chapter and verse, you will recognize questionable themes and have a base for more detailed examination. Develop an attitude that will not allow Scripture to be subordinate to other sources, written or spoken. Material should be evaluated, then accepted or rejected based on how it stands up when viewed through the Word.

**Sermon Notes**  
**CAPTIVE OR COMPLETE?**  
Colossians 2:6-10

- I. CHRISTIANS MUST CONTINUALLY LIVE UNDER THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST. (vs. 6,7)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- II. CHRISTIANS MUST CONSTANTLY BEWARE OF BEING LED AWAY FROM CHRIST. (v. 8)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- III. CHRISTIANS MUST COMPREHEND THEIR SPIRITUAL COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST. (vs. 9, 10)

*CHRISTIANS MUST LIVE UNDER CHRIST'S LORDSHIP,  
REJECT THE PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN  
AND RECOGNIZE THEIR FULLNESS IN CHRIST*

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**Application**

- Where are YOU in the growing and learning process? Are you learning your way through God's book? Is doctrine important to you? Or do you think of it as dull, irrelevant stuff? Are you "established but stuck?" Picture in your mind a friend or relative who is younger in the faith than you. Perhaps they are still wrestling with some of the basics of belief in Christ. Imagine they are confronted by a deceptive false teacher. Your friend looks to you for help. Is your grip on Bible knowledge strong enough to help your friend cope? Could you point him/her in the right direction? Write that person's name down on a piece of paper and use it as a bookmark. Use it to remind yourself of your need to be continually established in the faith - for your sake and the sake of someone else. Commit yourself to a regular study of God's Word. An excellent book to help guide you would be: A Survey of Bible Doctrine by Charles C. Ryrie (Moody Press, 1972).
  
- Is thanksgiving in your life similar to a river overflowing its banks, or is it more like a shallow trickle? Why not write down five different things you can be thankful for each day of this week. Acknowledge God's goodness and thank Him for His work in your life.
  
- Have you trusted Christ to be your personal savior and make you the complete person you can be? If you haven't I would be glad to talk with you about this most important decision. Feel free to talk to me personally or call me at 586-6520 or 586-1201.
  
- Christian, do you need to remind yourself of your spiritual completeness in Christ? Memorize Colossians 2:9,10; John 1:16; 2 Peter 1:3.

"Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says."  
JAMES 1:22

**Sermon Notes**  
**COMPLETE IN CHRIST**  
Colossians 2:1-15

I. SPIRITUAL FULLNESS MEANS COMPLETE SALVATION.  
(vs. 11,12)

II. SPIRITUAL FULLNESS MEANS COMPLETE FORGIVENESS.  
(vs. 13, 14)

III. SPIRITUAL FULLNESS MEANS COMPLETE VICTORY. (v. 15)

*IN CHRIST WE HAVE COMPLETE SALVATION, TOTAL  
FORGIVENESS, AND ABSOLUTE VICTORY*

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**Application**

- Colossians 2:11 and Romans 6:1-18 make it clear that when we got saved, our “old man” or our sin-dominated nature was rendered inoperative because it was put to death through our identification with the death of Christ. As a result, we are no longer slaves to sin (Rom. 6:6) and we should not allow sin to dominate our lives (Rom. 6:12). We don’t have to sin because we have been given the power to resist through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17). This week, study the great truths in Romans 6 and 8.

Are you allowing yourself to be controlled by the Holy Spirit - or does your flesh have the reigns of your life?

Since sin expresses itself through the members of our body, take time to present the members of your body to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13,14). Do it as a private ceremony in order to make it memorable.  
Begin living like you are saved.

- Are you so certain and appreciative of God’s forgiveness that you tell others that they can be forgiven if they come to Christ? Are you trying to grow so that you reflect God’s forgiveness in your relationships with others? Are you motivated to forgive others based on God’s forgiveness of you? Memorize Ephesians 3:2 and make that the goal of your relationships.

- 1 John 3:8 tells us that, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” Satan was defeated at the cross and we share in that victory as Christians. Satan is the great Deceiver (Rev. 12:9) but we do not need to be deceived because we have the Holy Spirit as our guide (1 John 2:26,27); Satan is the Accuser (Rev. 12:10) but we need not fear that because Jesus Christ is our Advocate (1 John 2:1,2); Satan is the Tempter (Matt. 4:3) but we have the power to resist through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-17). Memorize 1 John 4:4.

“Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.

Do what it says.”

JAMES 1:22

**Sermon Notes**  
**TRUE SPIRITUALITY**  
Colossians 2:16-23

I. SPIRITUAL FULLNESS MAKES LEGALISM  
UNNECESSARY AND UNIMPORTANT. (16, 17)

II. SPIRITUAL FULLNESS MAKES MYSTICISM A  
NEEDLESS OBSTACLE TO GROWTH. (18, 19)

III. SPIRITUAL FULLNESS MAKES ASCETICISM  
NONESSENTIAL AND USELESS. (20-23)

***SPIRITUALITY IS NOT RULES  
OR EXPERIENCES BUT A  
RELATIONSHIP WITH AND OBEDIENCE  
TO JESUS CHRIST***

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**Application**

- If you tend toward legalism in any form, STOP IT! If you are the kind of person who looks down on others (all the while thinking how impressed God must be to have you on His team) because others don't fit your code, then you are a legalist. Stop evaluating other people according to a set of prescribed rules. Contemporary examples might be "movies"; "music"; "attire." Why not sit down and add some things to the list. Now determine not to judge others on the basis of the list. Some time this week read Mark 7:1-23 and Romans 14. Since Christ (and not codes) is the true reality of spiritual experience, it is senseless to look for fulfillment or growth in regulations rather than a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. In what way are you growing in that relationship?
- Our society is experiencing a renewed interest in "spirituality" and there is an accompanying thirst for "experiences." T.M., yoga, trance channeling, past life recall, contact with U.F.O.'s, out of body experiences are some pagan examples of spiritual "arrival." Even in the church we can be led to believe that we are just average, run-of-the-mill, normal Christians if we haven't had a vision or an ecstatic experience, or met an angel or gone to heaven and come back. You do not need to be intimidated by any of these things - you have been given fullness in Jesus Christ. Write down Col. 2:9,10 on a card and put it in a place where you will see it easily. Remind yourself of your spiritual completeness every day this week.
- Concerning spirituality, Barry Seagren has written, "Attitudes and behavior; trust and obedience. This is spirituality ... Often we do not like to hear this. Behavior and Obedience is dreary stuff indeed. We would much rather seek a spirituality which is more "spiritual" in the modern sense of the term. Yet the dreary topic of obedience, or the cultivation of Christian character, is precisely where the Bible puts its emphasis. Galatians 5:22-33 has always been an important passage to me. It tells us that what the Spirit longs to produce in us is not experiences, not gifts, but character, behavior, obedience, conformity to the image of God."

**Sermon Notes**  
“NEW LIFE PM THE NEW LIFE”  
Colossians 3:1-4

**THE PAULINE PATTERN:**

Doctrine > Duty  
Position > Practice

- I. OUR NEW LIFE SHOULD GIVE US A NEW MOTIVE AND A NEW MIND. (vs. 1,2)
  
- II. WE SHOULD LIVE A NEW LIFE BECAUSE WE ARE DEAD TO THE OLD LIFE. (past) (vs. 3a)
  
- III. WE SHOULD LIVE A NEW LIFE BECAUSE OUR LIFE IS CONCEALED AND SECURE IN CHRIST. (present) (vs. 3b)
  
- IV. WE SHOULD LIVE A NEW LIFE BECAUSE OUR LIFE WHICH IS CONCEALED WILL BE REVEALED. (future) (vs. 4)

*THE RISEN LIFE IS CONTINUALLY THINKING  
AND ACTIVELY PURSUING  
A HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE*

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**Application**

- What are the three things you are currently seeking the most? What are the three things you love the most? What are the three things you think about the most? What do you read? What do you watch? What do you daydream about? ponder? Based on your answers, what is your preoccupation, God or self? What should your preoccupation be? If your preoccupation has been yourself, why is that? If your preoccupation has been yourself, then you need to make the commitment today to concentrate on Christ. Read Philippians 3:8-14. What was the goal of Paul's life? Will you make that the goal of your life?
  
- Christian living is more than just "avoiding the bad." It is also pursuing the good. If we would actively pursue the things above, there would be "no room" and no time for the "things of earth." Isolate a problem area in your life and develop a creative way to replace a bad activity /attitude with a good activity /attitude.
  
- If you've never truly realized that your identification with Christ and His cross have made you dead to sin and dead to the world, then read Romans 6:1-18 and Galatians 6:14. Make some observations on the text - write them down. Ponder and meditate on the truths of these passages. Write down your impressions. Memorize key verses.
  
- There is only one spiritual experience yet to come - when the Lord comes and glorification takes place. Don't look for anything in between. LIVE NOW on the basis of your identity with Christ and look forward to the return of the Lord when He and we will be gloriously revealed to the world.

“Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.”  
JAMES 1:22



**Sermon Notes**  
**“GOOD RIDDANCE”**  
Colossians 3:5-11

- I. SINCE WE'RE NOT PAGANS WE MUST PUT AN ABSOLUTE END TO PERVERTED LUST. (vs. 5-7)

- II. MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST RID THEMSELVES OF A SINFUL. TEMPER AND TONGUE. (vs. 8-11)

*A CHANGE IN CITIZENSHIP MUST  
CHANGE OUR CONDUCT*

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**Application**

FIRST-STOP MAKING EXCUSES AND RATIONALIZATIONS! and determine to deal with any of these sins where you have a problem. God has not commanded us to do something we are incapable of doing. He has provided us with the Holy Spirit and through His power we can put an end to and rid ourselves of evil practices (Rom. 8:13). Swindoll says, “Saying no is something all of us who belong to Christ can do. There’s nothing magical about it. You simply put Christ at the helm of your life and say NO!”

- DEALING WITH LUST

Are you a Christian who has started to slip morally? Will you be man or woman enough to deal with it? Completely ?

1). Counteract temptation. Don’t tolerate it. Avoid the things that make you weak. Is a television show? certain movies? magazines? a person? We are told to “flee” fornication, not to flirt with it. You are a fool if you know what weakens you and you feed on it anyway. Read Genesis 39. What did Joseph do?

2). Remind yourself that the final pain will soon erase the temporary pleasure.

3). Control your thought life by saturating your mind with God's Word.

- DEALING WITH COVETOUSNESS

The way to conquer covetousness is through contentedness. Memorize Philippians 4:11. Learn to say to God, “Thank you, God, for all You have given me. I don’t want anything else.”

- DEALING WITH THE TEMPER

1). Cultivate honesty in communication. Don’t let anger build up. Obey the Bible and resolve anger quickly (Ephesians 4:26).

2). Get all the facts before you react or form a strong opinion.

3). Learn to ignore petty things. Don’t look for a fight – that’s immaturity in action. Don’t be defensive. It is to your glory to overlook an offense (Proverbs 19:11).

4). If you feel rage coming on, remove yourself from the immediate situation. Take a walk or do something active. Pray and ask God to calm you down.

- DEALING WITH THE TONGUE

What would people conclude from listening to your speech? Conversational cursing is not appropriate for a Christian.

1). Think first. Before your lips start moving, mentally preview your words. Are they kind or cutting? wholesome or vile?

2). Talk less.

3). START TODAY!

**Sermon Notes**  
**“PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST”**  
Colossians 3:12-17

- I. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST PRACTICE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRIST. (vs. 12-14)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- II. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST MAINTAIN THE PEACE OF CHRIST. (vs. 15).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- III. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST LEARN AND LIVE THE WORD OF CHRIST. (vs. 16)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- IV. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY MUST HONOR THE NAME OF CHRIST. (vs. 17)

*THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY  
MUST DISPLAY CHRISTLIKE CHARACTERISTICS*

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**Application**

- GET STARTED AND MAKE AN EFFORT. These virtues are to be adopted and cultivated. C.S. Lewis says that we are ordered to “dress up as Christ” and though it may seem like pretense, it is in fact what we are ordered to do. He writes, “But there is also a good kind (of pretending), where the pretense leads up to the real thing. When you are not feeling particularly friendly but know you ought to be, the best thing you can do, very often, is to put on a friendly manner and behave as if you were a nicer person than you actually are. And in a few minutes as we have all noticed, you will be feeling friendlier than you were. Very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already”.
- Recognize that true compassion goes beyond warm, sentimental feelings - it takes action to meet a need. Read 1 John 3:16-19. When you see a need, ask yourself, “What can I do concretely to help?” Seek opportunities. Go to those who know of needs and find out what you can do. Volunteer.
- If you are guilty of pride and comparison, then recognize it as a gross sin. Memorize Romans 12:3 this week. STOP comparing yourself to other people and ask yourself how you measure up in reflecting the character of Christ. (That should take care of the problem of pride).
- Think of someone you admire for having a patient spirit. Ask that person for advice on how they have developed that virtue.
- Think of all the things God tolerates with you. Think of all the things others tolerate with you. Learn to tolerate other people by reminding yourself of your own imperfections. Focus on God's forgiveness of you when you need to forgive someone else. Who do you need to forgive? Spouse? Parent? Child? Pastor? Fellow Church Member? Someone at Work? at School? DO IT.
- Within the church of Christ, when there are inter-personal problems, begin letting peace within the body be the deciding factor. Reflect on what God says in I Cor. 3:1-3, 16,17.
- How “comfortable” is the Word of Christ in your life? How are you Learning it?  
How much time and effort are you expending in Living it?
- Remind yourself daily that EVERYTHING you do or say either enhances or defames the reputation of Jesus Christ.

**Sermon Notes**  
**“THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE HOME”**  
Colossians 3:18-21

- I. VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION IS APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR FOR CHRISTIAN WIVES. (v. 18)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- II. SACRIFICIAL LOVE AND NOT HARSHNESS IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS. (v. 19)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- III. OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS PLEASES GOD AND IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN CHILDREN. (v. 20)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- IV. PARENTS (ESPECIALLY FATHERS) ARE NOT TO DISCOURAGE THEIR CHILDREN BY PROVOKING THEM. (v. 21)

*THE PILLARS WHICH SUPPORT A CHRISTIAN HOME  
ARE LOVING LEADERSHIP AND RESPECT FOR  
AUTHORITY*

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**WIVES** – If voluntary submission is a problem for you, remind yourself that this is God's order and plan. Submission to your husband is in fact obedience to God and is Christlikeness in action. Is there someone who has impressed you with displaying a submissive spirit? Contact her and ask her what she has done to develop that attitude. When a difference arises between yourself and your husband don't be afraid to offer input regarding a decision, but be willing to allow the final decision to rest on his shoulders. If it fails, don't constantly remind him with an "I told you so" attitude. Isolate the areas where submission is a problem. Talk about it with you husband and assure him that you want to improve in that area. Communicate with each other on how gains can be made.

**HUSBANDS** – Ephesians 5:23-33 gives the pattern for loving our wives. If we aren't loving them like Christ loves the church (sacrificially and devotedly) then we are not fulfilling our role as a loving leader. In what ways do you practically show your wife that you are seeking her best interest: spiritually, mentally, physically? Are you helping her grow in these areas? 1 Corinthians 13 describes what real love acts like. Read that chapter and replace "love" with your name and determine whether or not this accurately describes your action toward your wife. Purchase and read some good books to help improve your marriage. Here are some suggestions: Love Life by Ed Wheat (Zondervan, 1980); Strike the Original Match by Charles Swindoll (Multnomah Press, 1980); What Wives Wished Their Husbands Knew About Women; by James Dobson (Tyndale House Publishers, 1975). Are you harsh with your wife? Remind yourself that harshness is distasteful in any leader, much less a leader who is specifically charged to love.

**CHILDREN** – The command in the Bible to you is simply to obey your parents. Read Proverbs 30:11-17, Romans 1:28-32, 2 Tim. 3:1-5 and see what God thinks of disobedience. Look at Ephesians 6:1-3 and remember that it is to your advantage to obey your parents. You should also bear in mind that you owe your very existence and livelihood to your parents. They deserve your obedience and God demands it. Think of a friend at school that you dislike because they are always taking advantage of people. Don't be guilty of treating your parents this way. Remember your parents love you and they really do have feeling which can be hurt. If you've been disobedient, ask God and your folks to forgive you. Improve!

**FATHERS** – Are you guilty of "turning the reins over" to your wife regarding family discipline and development? As the leader in the home you have that responsibility. If you feel unequipped for the job, then get some help. Read Heaven Help the Home by Howard Hendricks (Victor Books, 1973) or The Measure of a Family by Gene Getz (G/L Publication, 1976). Sit down with your family and discuss family goals and policies. How would you evaluate your discipline of your children? Severe? Inconsistent? In anger? \_\_\_\_\_? If there is a problem, talk with you family about it and work on improving. After all it's only your family that is at stake.

## **How to Irritate Your Kids**

### **1. OVERPROTECTION -**

Don't trust them. Give them nothing but rules. You can promote rebellion by not trusting them.

### **2. FAVORITISM -**

You can irritate them by constantly comparing them with the other children in the family. "Why can't you be like ...?" is a poor thing for parents to say to their kids.

### **3. DEPRECIATION -**

Depreciate his worth. This is done by communicating to the child that he is better "seen and not heard."

### **4. DISCOURAGEMENT -**

Never reward him for anything. Make sure he never feels like he succeeded. Make him think his efforts are "never enough" or "never good enough."

### **5. A LACK OF DEMONSTRATED AFFECTION -**

Don't go out of your way to love them, hug them, kiss them, play with them etc.

### **6. NOT PROVIDING NEEDS -**

Don't provide them with privacy, a place to play clean clothes, good meals.

### **7. LACK OF STANDARDS -**

Don't give them any rules. (When they are left totally on their own they can't handle it).

### **8. CRITICISM -**

Always put them down and belittle them and their efforts. This will teach him to always and others and always

### **9. NEGLECT -**

Be indifferent, ignore them, don't play with them. Make them wonder if they really matter.

### **10. OVERDISCIPLINE -**

Scream and yell all the time. Shut them up in their room for excessive periods of time for minor offenses. Use your superior physical strength to physically hurt them. Discipline them in anger and show them that you can't control yourself.

**Sermon Notes**  
**"THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST AT WORK"**  
Colossians 4:22-41

- I. CHRISTIAN EMPLOYEES MUST WORK WITH INTEGRITY AND REVERENCE FOR CHRIST. (v. 22)
- II. CHRISTIAN EMPLOYEES MUST WORK HARD FOR CHRIST WHO WILL IMPARTIALLY REWARD OR PUNISH. (vs. 23-25)
- III. CHRISTIAN EMPLOYERS MUST TREAT THEIR EMPLOYEES FAIRLY AND REMEMBER THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHRIST. (v. 4:1)

*WORK BECOMES WORSHIP  
WHEN IT IS DONE FOR CHRIST  
WITH INDUSTRY AND INTEGRITY*

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**Application**

- SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH A HARSH EMPLOYER
  - 1). Reflect on 1 Peter 2:18-20.
  - 2). First, look at your own work as objectively as possible. Listen to criticism. Do you need to make improvements?
  - 3). Before you talk to your boss, examine your motives. Do you have a genuine concern for your boss and your working relationship, or do you just want to vent anger and frustration?
  - 4). Pray. Unload your frustration on the Lord and pray for your boss.
  - 5). When you talk to your boss: Be specific. Focus on the issue. Do it in a spirit of love. Assure him/her of your desire to please. Ask for clarification of expectations.
  - 6). If nothing improves, learn to derive pleasure from a job well-done. Shift your focus and see Christ as your boss.
  - 7). If all else fails, you may need to change jobs. (But don't quit until you have tried to make it work)
- Do something extra this week that no one will notice.
- Learn to gain fulfillment from doing excellent work even if it is not noticed or rewarded. This can be done in all areas of life:
  - \* Schoolwork   \* Project at home   \* Occupation   \* Housework
- A WORD TO HOUSEWIVES/HOMEMAKERS

Don't let yourself be influenced by the common belief that the value of work is based on salary level. Your job has great worth and value. Your work is important. Supporting and encouraging productive human beings is a satisfying occupation. Few working people have the opportunity to see others reach their fulfillment as human beings through their efforts.

If you've grown stagnant, here are a few suggestions: \* Schedule your time. Get organized. \* Develop some creative interests and hobbies. \* Develop a ministry. Use your time and home as a base.
- View your work as a platform for ministry. Remember that the workplace is possibly the only place non-Christians may see genuine Christianity in action. Every day, on your way to work, remind yourself that this is your opportunity to be an ambassador for Christ.
- Read Your Job: Survival or Satisfaction? by Jerry and Mary White (Zondervan: 1977) or Secular Work is Full-Time Service by Larry Peabody (Christian Literature Crusade: 1974)

**Sermon Notes**  
“TALKING TO GOD AND UNBELIEVERS”  
Colossians 4:2-6

- I. BELIEVERS SHOULD MAKE PRAYER A PERSISTENT PRIORITY. (v. 2)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- II. EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM REQUIRES PRAYER FOR OPPORTUNITIES. (vs. 3-4)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- III. EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM REQUIRES ADVISE AND OPPORTUNISTIC WALK. (v. 5)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- IV. EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM REQUIRES WHOLESOME AND INTERESTING TALK. (v. 6)

*WINNING THE WORLD REQUIRES  
PRAYERFUL CHRISTIANS WHO  
SEEK AND SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES INSPIRED BY  
THEIR WISE WALK AND WINSOME TALK*

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**Application**

- If you had to choose a word to describe your prayer life, what word would you choose?  
CONVINCED of the necessity, but not active?  
CONSISTENT or infrequent?  
COMMITTED to daily prayer as a priority?  
If you want to make personal prayer a priority in your life, then decide on a personal plan. WHEN do you plan to do it? WHAT do you need to drop so that you can do it (Sleep, T.V. etc)? WHO can you pray with, or get to hold you in accountability? Get a "prayer partner" if it will help
  
- During the coming week PRAY that you will be sensitive to at least one opportunity to share the gospel. THINK about what you want to communicate ahead of time. When the opportunity comes, SPEAK graciously and clearly. Be ready to ASK the person if he or she would like to receive the gift of eternal life. Finally, be willing to SHARE your experience with another supportive Christian.
  
- How familiar are you with the essential elements of the gospel? If you had an opportunity to witness for Christ, could you ACCURATELY and CLEARLY explain to someone, how they could be saved? If so, then seek and seize opportunities to do so. If not, then that is a crucial area for you to be equipped in. Communicate your desire to be trained to present the gospel.

“Do not merely listen to the word,  
and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.”  
JAMES 1:22

**Sermon Notes**  
**“REAL PEOPLE”**  
Colossians 4:7-18

CHRISTIANS SHARING LIVES - vs. 7-9)

I. BELIEVERS WHO STAY FAITHFUL ARE A SOURCE OF GRATITUDE. (vs. 7-11, 14a)

Tychichus - (faithful servant)

Onesimus - (converted slave)

Aristarchus - (devoted companion)

Mark - (recovered friend)

Jesus Justus - (unsung hero)

Luke - (talented specialist)

II. BELIEVERS WHO PRAY FERVENTLY ARE ESSENTIAL TO GROWTH. (vs. 12-13)

Epaphras - (prayer warrior)

III. BELIEVERS WHO STRAY FROM THE FAITH ARE A SOURCE OF GRIEF. (v. 14b)

Demas - (worldly defector)

CHURCHES SHARING LETTERS – (vs. 15-17)

CHAINS AND GRACE – (v. 18)

GOD’S WORK NEEDS  
FAITHFUL AND DIVERSE MINISTRY

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**Application**

- Which one of these personalities do you identify with?  
Tychichus - are you currently involved in a ministry, that you need to stay faithful to?  
Onesimus - Are you certain that you know Christ as your Savior? Has that radically changed your lifestyle? Make a list of how God has changed your life - personal relationships (wife/husband, children, friends, etc.); your speech; personal integrity (remember it's tax time).  
Aristarchus - Can you think of someone in this body that you will stand by through “thick and thin”? Do you have a spirit of committed devotion, or do you disappear when the going gets tough.  
Mark - Maybe you’ve failed in a relationship or an area of ministry. Maybe you've made mistakes others are aware of. Are you willing to put past failures behind you and pick yourself up and look to the present and future and anticipate success.  
Jesus Justus - Are you content to be an “unnoticed necessity” or do you crave attention? Are you not satisfied until others notice you? Does it bother you when others succeed and receive praise?  
Luke - Do you have a true understanding of your gifts and abilities? If not, are you trying to find out? If so, are you placing them at the disposal of Jesus Christ? Epaphras - Praying for people’s spiritual welfare is often overlooked in our prayer times. MacArthur said, “Somewhere along the line we've got to get past praying for broken legs and bodily diseases and get to praying for what really matters. It's fine to pray for physical things, but sometimes that's an excuse for not really laboring about people's spiritual welfare.”  
Demas - Demas had a good start but the pull of the world was too strong for him. Do you find yourself real “fired up” about serving God on Sunday morning but by Tuesday afternoon have you forgotten to even talk to him? That may be an indication that the world has its hook in you.
- Are you thankful and appreciative of the different, gifts, abilities and personalities God has placed in our body? Do you recognize that God works differently with each of us, or do you think everyone needs to be like you? All these different people made up the “Pauline Evangelistic Association” - They worked as a team and needed each other. Recognize we need each other too.

# Colossians

## (A Prison Epistle)

**Theme:** The Preeminence of Jesus Christ

**Author:** The Apostle Paul (1:1)

**Bearer of the Letter:** Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7-9)

**Written from:** Rome

**Written to:** The Church at Colosse (1:2)

**Date of Writing:** c. A.D. 60 – 63

**Occasion:** Arrival of Epaphras with the news about heretical teaching at Colosse (1:7-8). Apparently the heresy was a blending of Judaism and incipient Gnosticism.

**Key Verses:** 1:27; 2:10



# Colossians

## (Christ is Everything)

Personal	Greetings to the Saints (1:1-2)		Greeting
	Thankful for the Growth of the Gospel of Grace (1:3-8)		Prayer
Doctrinal	Paul’s Prayer for a Worthy Walk (1:9-12)		Body
	The Lordship of Jesus Christ (1:13-20)		
	Christ the Reconciler (1:21-23)		
	Christ in You: The Hope of Glory (1:24-29)		
Polemical	Christ: God’s Treasure house (2:1-5)		
	Christ: The Fullness of God in a Body (2:6-15)		
	Christ the Reality Should Result in Rejecting Regulations (2:16-23)		
Practical	Hearts and Minds Seated Above with Christ our Life (3:1-4)		
	Christ is All so Sinful Practices Must Fall (3:5-11)		
	The Well-Dressed Christian (3:12-17)		
	Christian Relationships (3:18-4:1)		
Personal	Prayer and Proclamation (4:2-6)		Closing
	Farewells from Faithful Friends (4:7-18)		

### Key Verse:

**“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” (Col. 2:9-10)**

# Introduction to Colossians

## I. Authorship

This book is one of the four prison letters of Paul (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon) and was unanimously affirmed as authentic by the early church.

Church tradition is in agreement with the epistle's claim of Pauline authorship (Col. 1:1, 23).

Citations by the Church Fathers begins with Irenaeus. The letter was assumed as Pauline until 1838 when critical scholars argued for dependence on Ephesians (which was also rejected as being authentically Pauline) and alleged non-Pauline ideas.

Various views of authorship include:

1. A second century Gnostic work—F. C. Baur.
2. A shorter and genuine Colossians worked over with an anti-Gnostic polemic by a later author—Holtzmann.
3. Genuine with some later interpolations—P.N. Harrison.
4. A non-Pauline work of the Pauline school—Lohse, Schweizer, and many others (Koester).
5. Genuinely Pauline—Bruce, Moule, Guthrie, O'Brien, Martin.

Issues of Authenticity have been discussed under:

1. The language and style of the book

Concerning vocabulary and sentence structure, there are 36 Pauline *hapax legomena* (words with a one-time occurrence), excluding Ephesians and the Pastorals (which many reject), several cumbersome sentences, and the omission of key Pauline concepts.

In reply the following can be noted: the cumbersome style may result from the use of worship materials and the polemical context; the omission of key concepts is not significant since a unique heresy with a Christological problem is present; the *hapax* words are mostly in the traditional material or are compound words that in their simple form do appear in Paul. (Even Galatians has 31

Pauline *hapax* and no one questions it.) Further, various Pauline stylistic characteristics do appear in the letter—the indicative-imperative letter structure and the use of the phrase “in Christ.”

Conclusion: Language and style are not a decisive argument against authenticity. Even Lohse, who denies Pauline authorship, acknowledges this is so.

2. Theological ideas: esp. Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and the authority of tradition

This is a key area of debate.

- a. It is argued that the form of the Gnostic heresy is too late for Paul. (This is an older argument and depends on the heresy being regarded as significantly Gnostic and a developed Gnosticism, which is unlikely. An emphasis on knowledge is possible this early [see 1 Cor. 1:18-3:5] without full-blown Gnosticism being present).
- b. The expression of Pauline Christology differs from Colossians’ Christology. Colossian Christology is cosmic (universal) and comprehensive versus Pauline Christology, which is legal and soteriological. (But cosmic Christology is present elsewhere in Paul: 1 Cor. 2:8, 8:6; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 4:3, 9; Phil. 2:10; Rom. 9:5).
- c. The expression of Pauline ecclesiology differs from Colossians’ ecclesiology. Colossian ecclesiology is universal versus Pauline ecclesiology that is local. Particularly, Christ as head of the body (1:18), is unique. (The cosmic character of ecclesiology and especially Christology is much like the early chapters of the book of Acts, and in its traditional forms it shows that these concepts were available to Paul. Christ as head of the body also has precedents in Rom. 12:4-5; I Cor. 1:13; 12:12, 14; Gal. 3:28).
- d. The expressions of Pauline eschatology differs from Colossians’ eschatology. Colossian eschatology is expressed in present terms and is more cosmic than Pauline eschatology, which is more future looking

and more imminent in emphasis. This emphasis is largely absent in Colossians. An example of this eschatology is Colossians' treatment of hope. (But this idea of "hope" is found in Rom. 5:1-3, 8:24 and Phil. 3:21. Christ as "mystery" is found in 1 Cor. 2:7, 10. Raised with Christ is found in Rom. 6:8.

Imminence is a characteristic mainly of the Thessalonian epistles, though it is mentioned elsewhere in Paul. But the issue in this heresy was not its eschatology, but the way it took present attention away from Christ in realized knowledge, so a present eschatology was needed to deal with it.)

- e. The letter shows excessive dependence on tradition and on apostolic authority, which is unlike Paul. The author uses his opponent's terms rather than rejecting them. He uses tradition without giving Pauline exposition to it as is his style. (Paul is capable of using traditional material without comment: Rom. 1:3-4, Phil. 2:5-11. Paul's focus on his ministry has adequate antecedents in Gal. 1:12-22 and 2 Corinthians. Also, this church was not founded by an apostle, so apostolic endorsement of its message would be important, much like Romans, with its introduction to Paul through an authoritative introduction of the Gospel.)
- f. Treatment of baptism is more comprehensive in Colossians than in Paul (1 Cor. 12:13, Rom. 6:3-5, and Phil. 1:20-21 all have concepts that are parallel to the Colossian ideas).

### 3. Colossians relationship to both Ephesians and Philemon

It is generally regarded that Colossians preceded Ephesians. This is because within the parallelism between the two letters (which are quite extensive), Ephesians is more expanded and developed in its treatment of parallel themes (e.g. the discussion of husband-wives, parents-children, and developed ideas of the church as the body). The exception is the slave-master discussion, but this is because of the Philemon controversy in Colosse. However, no definite conclusion can be made as to which

letter preceded the other. Colossians also is closely connected to Philemon. Many of the figures mentioned in Colossians are mentioned in Philemon. Compare Philemon 23 with Col. 1:7, 4:12-19. This close connection to Philemon is one of the strongest arguments for the letter's authenticity. In contrast, many of the names tied to Philippians are different suggesting some distance between those letters.

Conclusion: The evidence supports the view that the letter is authentic, and that Paul wrote this letter during his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30-31).

## **II. Place of Writing**

Rome is the traditional location. Caesarea and Ephesus also are suggested as possible origins of the letter. The evidence for an Ephesian imprisonment does not really exist and the size of Caesarea makes it unlikely as a missionary center while Paul is in prison, or the center of activity such as Paul's companions undertook while he was imprisoned (Col. 4:3-4). Against Rome is the supposed problem of the 1,200 miles Onesimus must travel to get back to (and escape from) Philemon. The visit to Colosse (Philemon 22) is said to contradict plans to go to Rome (Rom. 15:28). But change in travel plans do occur with Paul (note: 1 Cor. 16:7-9 with 2 Cor. 1:15, 24). The Rome hypothesis is still the best view in light of all the factors that must be considered.

## **III. Date of Writing**

This may be the first of the Prison Epistles: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians (See above on the relation of this letter to Ephesians and Philemon). It would have been written early or in the middle of Paul's Roman imprisonment in A.D. 60-61.

## **IV. The City of Colosse**

Colosse was a comparatively unimportant city; in fact, it was the least significant of the cities to which Paul addressed any of his letters. It was located near two other cities, Laodicea and Hierapolis. All three cities were on the Lycus River in Phrygia, which is in modern South Central

Turkey. On a highway leading east to the Euphrates area, the cities were approximately 100 miles east of Ephesus. Colosse was once an important city, but by the first century it was a market town smaller than both Laodicea and Hierapolis. Wealthy Jewish merchants living in the area would have some impact on the thinking of religious people in the area.

## **V. The Church at Colosse**

The church was not founded by Paul. He writes after hearing of their faith in Christ (1:4, 9). In 2:1 he says they have not seen his face. Evidently the church was founded during Paul's stay at Ephesus (Acts 19:10). It is likely that Epaphras was the founder of the church (cf. 1:7; 4:12-13). It seems that the church was primarily Gentile. Several passages give this impression. In 1:21 Paul refers to them as "formerly alienated and hostile in mind" (cf. Eph. 2:11-19). In 1:27 he speaks of ministering the mystery to Gentiles, evidently an allusion to the Colossians themselves. The sins that are listed in 3:5-7 fit particularly those of pagan Gentiles. There are no OT quotations in this letter.

## **VI. The Heresy at Colosse**

It seems Epaphras had brought a report of the heresy that was threatening the health of the church (cf. 1:7; 4:12-13).

The false doctrine seemed to have two convergent streams: Judaism and incipient Gnosticism. There are a number of allusions to the first of these. There are the references to circumcision in 2:11 and 3:11 (cf. 4:11). Paul also discusses dietary regulations and Jewish holidays in 2:16 (a shadow of coming things). The reference to angel worship also indicates a possible Jewish emphasis (2:18). However, the more prominent false doctrine was incipient Gnosticism. The whole book breathes this heresy.

Gnosticism had two basic premises—(1) matter is intrinsically and essentially inferior or evil, and (2) salvation comes through mystic knowledge. Good is found only in the spirit world. This basic premise led to all sorts of teachings. (1) If matter is evil, the supreme and good God could not have created it. How then did matter come into being? This was explained by saying that God put out a series of emanations. The more distant these were from God, the less they were connected to

(or knew about) Him until finally a distant evil emanation created matter and the world. This is the god of the OT. (2) If matter is evil, then “the Christ” did not have a physical body. He was only a phantom, or the Christ spirit may have come upon the man Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the cross. Of course, this means Jesus Christ ultimately could not save mankind because He did not become flesh and blood. (3) This doctrine also has implications in the realm of morality and ethics. It took its course in two opposite extremes. One side said because matter is evil and our bodies are made of matter, we must be ascetics. The only way to deal with our bodies is to starve, beat and deny them. The opposite view was held by libertines who say the body is evil no matter what we do. Therefore, it does not matter how much we sin. Of course, this led to all sorts of sensual practices.

There also was great stress on mystic knowledge. There was much speculation and philosophizing about such things as emanations and secret knowledge. Salvation became a matter of knowledge and not faith.

Strangely, the rituals of Judaism and the esoteric knowledge of incipient Gnosticism joined forces to produce this bizarre heresy that Paul combats in this epistle. Providentially, this crucially important letter was written to a group of believers in an insignificant town, but it was necessary to check this false doctrine that has much in common with modern New Age teachings.

## **VII. The Occasion of the Epistle**

Evidently while Paul was in prison in Rome, Epaphras brought him news concerning the church at Colosse (4:12-13).

## **VIII. The Bearer of the Letter**

Tychicus carried this letter (Col. 4:7-9) along with Onesimus, and Paul’s private letter to Philemon (Col. 4:9).

# **“The Lordship of Jesus Christ”**

## **Colossians 1:13-20**

- |      |   |                |
|------|---|----------------|
| I.   | <b><u>Jesus is Lord of the Cross (Savior)</u></b><br><b>(This denies universalism/deism/fatalism)</b>       | <b>1:13-14</b> |
|      | 1. God has delivered us from the power of Satan.  | 1:13           |
|      | 2. God has transferred us into the principality of His sovereignty.   | 1:13           |
|      | 3. God has redeemed us through the payment of His Son.  | 1:14           |
| II.  | <b><u>Jesus is Lord of Communication (Revealer)</u></b><br><b>(This denies cultism/atheism/agnosticism)</b> | <b>1:15</b>    |
|      | 1. He is the representation of God (His reflection).  |                |
|      | 2. He is the manifestation of God (His revelation).   |                |
| III. | <b><u>Jesus is Lord of Creation (Creator)</u></b><br><b>(This denies evolution/naturalism)</b>              | <b>1:15-17</b> |
|      | 1. He is Lord because of His sovereignty.   | 1:15           |
|      | 2. He is Lord because of His agency.  | 1:16           |
|      | 3. He is Lord because of His priority.  | 1:17           |
|      | 4. He is Lord because of His consistency.   | 1:17           |
| IV.  | <b><u>Jesus is Lord of the Church (Leader)</u></b><br><b>(This denies individualism)</b>                    | <b>1:18-20</b> |
|      | 1. He is first.   | 1:18           |
|      | a. In position  |                |
|      | b. By resurrection  |                |
|      | 2. He has fullness.   | 1:19           |
|      | 3. He provides forgiveness.   | 1:20           |



\*Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound\*

Colossians 1:1-8

I. We Need To Hear About God's Gifts 1:1-2

1. We have the perspective of a servant. 1:1
2. We have the position of a saint. 1:2
  - a. Holy means we are separated.
  - b. Faithful means we are steadfast.
  - c. In Christ mean we are secure.
3. We have the privilege of sonship. 1:2

II. We Need To Hear About God's Graces 1:3-5

1. There is the grace of faith in the Savior. 1:3-4
2. There is the grace of love for the saints. 1:4
3. There is the grace of hope of our salvation. 1:5

III. We Need To Hear about God's Gospel 1:5-8

1. The gospel truth is to reach the world. 1:5-6
2. The gospel truth should reproduce fruit. 1:6
3. The gospel truth is rooted in grace. 1:6
4. The gospel truth is reported by us. 1:7-8
  - a. We are to be faithful teachers. 1:7
  - b. We are to be faithful ministers. 1:7
  - c. We are to be faithful lovers. 1:8

\*How To Pray For Others\*

Colossians 1:9-12

We Should Pray That Others Will:

I. Know The Will of God 1:9

1. We need to know God's plan (God's Will)
2. We need to know His principles (God's Wisdom)
3. We need to know His perspective (God's Ways)

II. Keep Their Walk With God 1:10-12

1. We maintain our walk by being concerned for the pleasure of God 1:10
2. We maintain our walk by being certain of the purpose of God 1:10
3. We maintain our walk by being controlled by the power of God 1:12
4. We maintain our walk by being consumed with the praise of God 1:12

**Productive Christians**

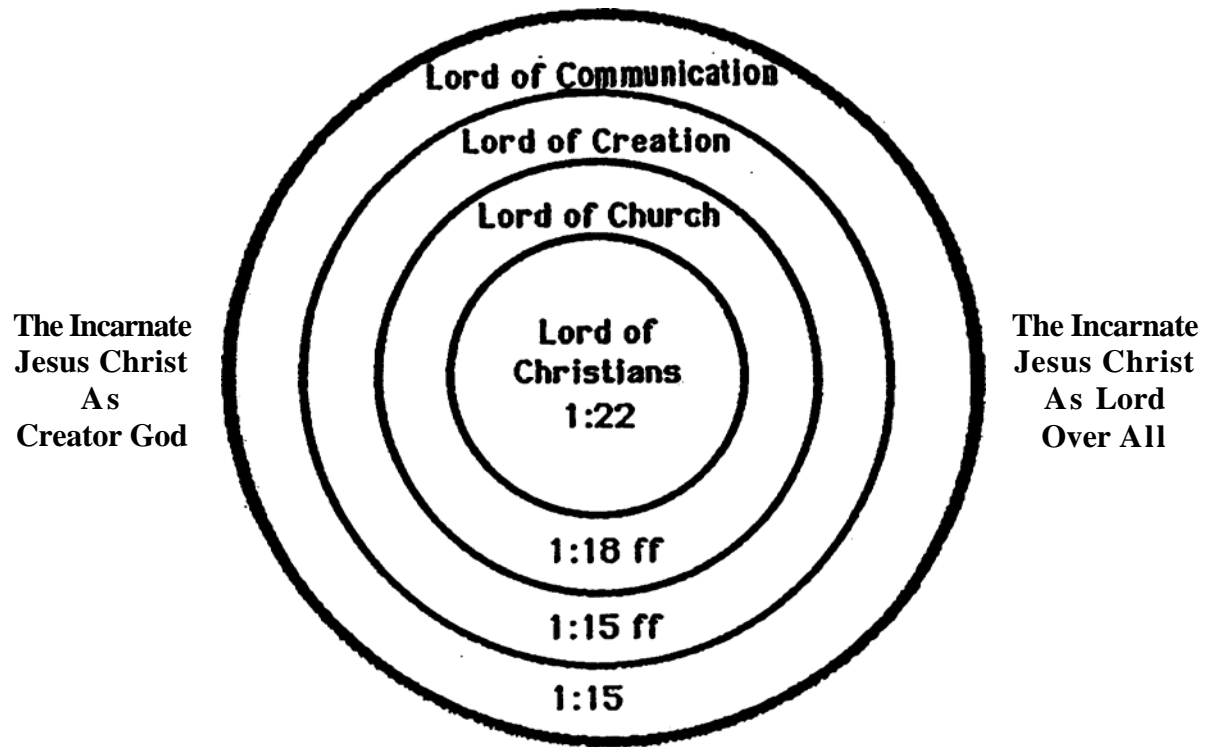
**FAITH** "in Christ" (Colossians 1:4)

**LOVE** "to all the saints" (Colossians 1:4)

**HOPE** "which is laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1:5)

**FRUIT** "bringeth forth fruit" (Colossians 1:6)

**Christology in Colossians 1:15-23  
(His Preeminence over All Things)**



**“Free At Last! Free At Last!”**

Colossians 1: 21-23

I. We Have Been Delivered From The Penalty of Sin 1:21  
(This is regeneration/conversion)

1. In the past we were alienated from God (a foe).
2. In the present we are reconciled to God (Friend/Father).

II. We Will Be Delivered from The Presence of Sin 1:22  
(This will be glorification)

1. We will be pure (holy).
2. We will be perfect (blameless).
2. We will be pardoned (above reproach).

III. We Can Be Delivered from The Power of Sin 1:23  
(This is sanctification)

1. We must be consistent to our walk.
2. We must be convicted in our will.
3. We must be confident in the Word.

**My Heart, Christ's Home**

or

Christ In You, The Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:24-29

When Christ reigns as Lord in our life:

I. We Will Suffer For Him 1:24

- 1) We suffer with joy
- 2) We suffer for His body

II. We Will Serve Under Him 1:25-27

- 1) We have a trust from God 1:25
- 2) We have a truth of grace 1:26
- 3) We have a treasure that is glorious 1:27

III. We Will Share About Him 1:28

- 1) We preach Him to others
- 2) We present others to Him

IV. We Will Strive Through Him 1:29

- 1) We strive for His purpose
- 2) We strive with His power

## **How To Deal With Spiritual Deceivers**

Colossians. 2:1-5

- I. The Church Must Be Encouraged 2:1-2
  - 1) We express concern to those we love 2:1
  - 2) We extend comfort to those we love 2:2
- II. Christ Must Be Expounded 2:2-3
  - 1) We tell of His wealth 2:2
  - 2) We tell of His wisdom 2:3
- III. Christians Must Be Educated
  - 1) We must be warned concerning potential deception 2:4
  - 2) We must be wise concerning spiritual diligence 2:5

## **Exposing The Spiritual Kidnappers**

Colossians 2:6-10

- I. We Must Affirm Christ And His Conduct 2: 6-7
  - 1) We are to follow after Him 2:6
  - 2) We are to be founded In Him 2:7
  - 3) We are to be faithful to Him 2:7
  - 4) We are to be filled with Him 2:7
- II. We Must Accept Christ And His Creed 2:8
  - 1) You can be captive to the wrong philosophy
  - 2) You can be controlled by the wrong people
  - 3) You can be confused by the wrong principles
- III. We Must Acknowledge Christ And His Completeness 2:9-10
  - 1) Christ Is God in His person 2:9
  - 2) Christ is glorious to His people 2:10
    - A. He is our perfecter
    - B. He is our protector

## **Victory In Jesus**

Colossians 2:11-15

- I. In Him We Experience Spiritual Transformation 2:11
  - 1) We have a new position of forgiveness
  - 2) We have a new condition of freedom
- II. In Him We Experience Personal Union 2:12
  - 1) We have died with Him
  - 2) We are alive in Him
- III. In Him We experience Supernatural Resurrection 2:13
  - 1) In the past we were condemned in sin
  - 2) In the present we are cleansed of sin
- IV. In Him We Experience Legal Satisfaction 2:14
  - 1) He has put away our debt to the law
  - 2) He has paid our debt at the cross
- V. In Him We Experience Total Liberation 2:15
  - 1) He has expelled the forces of evil
  - 2) He has exposed the forces of evil
  - 3) He has embarrassed the forces of evil

## **FALSE RELIGION VS. FULFILLING RELATIONSHIP**

Colossians 2:16-23

- I. False Religion Promotes Unspiritual Legalism 2:16-17
  - 1) Legalism is always interested in the superficial 2:16
  - 2) Legalism always ignores the essential 2:17
- II. False Religion Pursues Unprofitable Mysticism 2:18-20
  - 1) Mysticism encourages spiritual elitism 2:18
  - 2) Mysticism will experience spiritual emaciation 2:19
- III. False Religion Preaches Unnecessary Asceticism 2:20-23
  - 1) Asceticism is a form of slavery 2:20
  - 2) Asceticism is a pursuit of futility 2:21-22
  - 3) Asceticism is flawed by inability 2:23

## **BIBLICAL SUICIDE**

Colossians 3:1-11

If we are to die to self:

- I. We Must Pursue The Things of Christ In Our Attitudes 3:1-4
  - 1) Our position in Christ provides motivation 3:1-2
    - a. Being in Christ affects our hearts 3:1
    - b. Being in Christ affects our minds 3:2
  - 2) Our position in Christ provides protection 3:3
  - 3) Our position in Christ provides expectation 3:4
- II. We Must Perform The Things of Christ In Our Actions 3:5-11
  - 1) Toward ourselves we must put to death sinful desires 3:5-7
    - a. Sinful desires may express themselves sexually 3:5
    - b. Sinful desires may express themselves selfishly 3:5
    - c. Sinful desires may express themselves short-sightedly 3:5
    - d. Sinful desires may express themselves shamefully 3:5
  - 2) Toward others we must put to death sinful deeds 3:8-11
    - a. Sinful desires may express themselves emotionally 3:8
    - b. Sinful desires may express themselves verbally 3:8-9
    - c. Sinful desires may express themselves inconsistently 3:9-10
    - d. Sinful desires may express themselves racially 3:11
    - e. Sinful desires may express themselves socially 3:11

## **THE WELL DRESSED CHRISTIAN**

Colossians 3:12-17

- I. He Will Clothe Himself With Love 3:12-14
  - 1) There are reasons for our clothing 3:12
    - a) We have been selected by God
    - b) We have been set apart by God
    - c) We have become special to God
  - 2) There are resource for our clothing 3:12
  - 3) There are results from our clothing 3:13-14
    - a) We will be longsuffering 3:13
    - b) We will be forgiving 3:13
    - c) We will be loving 3:14
- II. He Will Clothe Himself With Peace 3:15
  - 1) We are to be controlled by peace
  - 2) We have been called to peace
- III. He Will Clothe Himself With Thankfulness 3:15
- IV. He Will Clothe Himself With The Word of God 3:16-17
  - 1) It will encourage instruction 3:16
  - 2) It will encourage admonition 3:16
  - 3) It will encourage celebration 3:16
  - 4) It will encourage consecration 3:17
  - 5) It will encourage appreciation 3:17

### **WHEN CHRIST IS LORD OF THE HOME**

Colossians 3:18-21

- I. Wives Will Yield To Their Husbands 3:18
  - 1) Wives will give their submission to their husbands.
  - 2) Wives will give their adoration to the Lord.
- II. Husbands Will Love Their Wives 3:19
  - 1) Husbands will provide the best for their wives.
  - 2) Husbands will avoid bitterness towards their wives.
- III. Children Will Honor Their Parents 3:20
  - 1) Obedient children will bless their earthly parents.
  - 2) Obedient children will please their heavenly Father.
- IV. Parents Will Encourage Their children 3:21
  - 1) Parents should not unfairly demean their children.
  - 2) Parents should not unwisely discourage their children.

### **TAKING JESUS TO THE WORKPLACE**

Colossians 3:22-4:1

- I. Employees Will Be Faithful To Their Employer 3:22-25
  - 1) We serve with the character of our Lord. 3:22
  - 2) We serve with commitment to our Lord. 3:23
  - 3) We serve with confidence In the Lord. 3:24
  - 4) We serve with caution towards our Lord. 3:25
- II. Employers Will Be Fair To Their Employees 4:11
  - 1) There should be integrity in what we do.
  - 2) There should be accountability In what we do.

## **ESSENTIALS FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM**

Colossians 4:2-6

- I. We Must Have A Committed Prayer Life 4:2-4
  - 1) We must pray with intensity. 4:2
  - 2) We must pray in intercession. 4:3
  - 3) We must pray with intent. 4:3-4
- II. We Must Have A Consistent Public Life 4:5-6
  - 1) We must walk in wisdom. 4:5
  - 2) We must talk with wisdom. 4:6
    - a. Controlled by grace.
    - b. Careful in response.
    - c. Concerned for others.

## **FRIENDS WORTH DYING FOR**

Colossians 4:7-18


Friends worth dying for are:

- I. Faithful 4:7-9
  - 1) They are trusted servants. 4:7
  - 2) They are trusted confidants. 4: 8-9
- II. Fellow-laborers 4:10
  - 1) They provide companionship. 4:10
  - 2) They provide comfort. 4:11
- III. Fervent 4: 12-13
  - 1) They are fervent in their calling. 4:12
  - 2) They are fervent in their concern. 4:13
- IV. Family 4:14-15
  - 1) They are special. 4:14
  - 2) They are hospitable. 4:15
- V. Finishers 4:16-17
  - 1) They share encouragement with others.
  - 2) They need encouragement from others.
- VI. Fighters 4:18
  - 1) They remember us in the battle.
  - 2) We remember them in the battle



# PHILEMON

*“From Bondage to Brotherhood”  
Forgiveness and Restitution*

Focus	Prayer of Thanksgiving	Petition for Onesimus	Promise to Philemon
Divisions	Commendation of Philemon’s Love	Intercession for Onesimus	Confidence in Philemon’s Obedience
Topics	Character of Philemon	Conversion of Onesimus	Confidence of Paul
			
Key Phrase	You...have refreshed the hearts of the saints	Refresh my heart in Christ	
	I hear about your faith...and love	I appeal to you on the basis of love	Charge it to me
Place	Rome (Prison)		
Time	A.D. 60-61		

The book of Philemon is about a slave (Onesimus) who ran away from his master (Philemon). Onesimus ran to Rome where he came in contact with Paul and he was saved. Paul now sends Onesimus back to Philemon with a letter which asks the master to forgive his former slave who is now a brother in Christ.

## **INTRODUCTION TO PHILEMON**

This brief 25-verse letter is unique in the corpus of Pauline writings. Though addressed to Philemon of Colossae, it is not, strictly speaking, a private letter as its' content reveals. Yet it is occasioned by a personal problem that the Apostle hopes to resolve. The letter provides an interesting glimpse into the Apostle Paul's strategy in handling personal issues as they impact the lives of his converts. Philemon is one of the five one-chapter books of the Bible, the other four being Obadiah, II and III John, and Jude.

### **I. Authorship**

Paul is the author of this letter (v. 1). Only the most radical and skeptical scholars have questioned its' genuineness. Such critics are usually motivated by the fact that the book strongly supports the authenticity of Colossians which they question or reject. The book, however, was unanimously affirmed by the early church. In spite of its' brevity, the authenticity (that it is Pauline) and canonicity (that it belonged in our N.T. as an inspired writing) of it was never seriously questioned. Style, vocabulary and other internal considerations are consistent with what we know of Paul.

### **II. Date and Location of Writing**

Philemon is a prison epistle and its' date and location of writing is tied to this issue. The traditional view is that the epistle was written from Rome between A.D. 60-63, and the imprisonment is that of his first Roman incarceration as recorded in Acts 28:30-31. Altogether Paul penned four epistles during his first Roman imprisonment Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Ephesians and Colossians are sometimes called twin epistles because of their similar content. Colossians and Philemon are often called sister epistles because of their common recipients and destination.

An alternate theory is that the epistle of Philemon was written either from Caesarea or Ephesus in the mid-50's. The Ephesian hypothesis has especially been attractive to some recent scholars because of its nearer proximity and therefore more convenient location to Colossae (about 100 miles). This theory also makes the return trip by Onesimus and Tychicus to Colossae easier, as well as Paul's intended forthcoming visit (v. 22). It is further argued that this scenario clears up two previously obscure appeals the apostle made in Colossians 4:16-17. Paul requested there that Colossians be read by the church at Laodicea, and of the church at Colossae he asked that "ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (v. 16). If this theory is correct, Philemon is the "lost" letter to the Laodiceans. Then Paul told the church at Colossae to remind Archippus to fulfill the service he received from the Lord (Col. 4:17), i.e., the freeing of Onesimus. Through both appeals Paul invited the church to intercede with the slavemaster to release Onesimus and return him to Paul's service.

Though an attractive alternative, this latter theory is not sufficiently strong to overturn the virtually unanimous testimony of the early church. In addition, though the Roman hypothesis makes correspondence and travel more difficult, it does not make it impossible. It is also questionable whether the Ephesian imprisonment allowed enough time for any correspondence. When all things are considered, a date of A.D. 60-63 from Rome is the most likely.

### **III. Occasion of the Epistle**

This letter is a semi-private and personal appeal by Paul to Philemon asking him to unconditionally forgive and receive back his slave Ones without penalty (v. 17). Before he was a slave, but now he is a beloved brother (v. 16). Paul will personally be responsible for any debts Onesimus has incurred (v. 18). We do not know why Onesimus ran away or if he took anything from his master. All we know about is the conversion of Onesimus and Paul's appeal. Since a slave was subject to severe discipline for running away, even death, Paul's appeal is a kind and gracious act on behalf of Onesimus.

It is also an insightful guide as to how believers might go about the task of mediating conflicts within the family of God. As an instruction manual in resolving personal difficulties between Christians, this short epistle is of great value. Tychicus probably accompanied Onesimus back to Philemon as he returned from Paul with the letter of Colossians (cf. Col. 4:7-9).

#### **IV. Key Personalities in the Epistle**

Philemon means “affectionate.” He was a citizen of Colossae. This point seems to emerge from the fact that Onesimus (Col. 4:9) and Archippus (Col. 4:17) are from Colossae. He was wealthy enough to have slaves and was converted to Christianity by Paul (v. 19). The church in Colossae met in his home (v. 2).

Onesimus means “useful” or “profitable.” There is a play on his name in verse 11. He was Philemon’s slave, who had run away only to come into contact with Paul and become a Christian (vv. 11, 16). He became close to Paul and was regarded as a valuable assistant by him (vv. 13-15).

Apphia means “endearment.” Chrysostom and Theodoret believed she was Philemon’s wife. According to tradition, she died as a martyr.

Archippus means “master of the horse” or perhaps “chief groom.” Many think he was perhaps the son of Philemon and Apphia. He may have even been the pastor of the church meeting in their home (note his description in v. 2 as a “fellow soldier,” also cf. Col 4:17).

Others mentioned in the epistle are Timothy (v. 1), Epaphras (v. 23), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (v. 24, cf. also 2 Tim 4:9-11). There are a total of 11 names that appear in this short letter.

#### **V. Social Impact**

Dealing with a problem arising out of the institution of slavery, this epistle has figured prominently in debate surrounding that issue. It has been confidently appealed to both by those who sanctioned slavery as well as those who advocated its abolition. While it is true that the words of the Apostle here cannot be construed to advocate the abolition of slavery, yet the spirit of the epistle has definitely supported that position. The manner in which Paul treats the problem of Onesimus indicates the way in which Christianity confronted the evils of human society. To have directly denounced the institution of human slavery would have precipitated an immediate conflict between Rome and Christianity. It would have marked Christianity as being anti-social, and would have tamed all the powers of the Empire against it. Instead of making a frontal attack upon the institution of slavery, Christianity inculcated a spirit of love, grace, compassion, and consideration which ultimately meant the death knell of that institution. That anyone claiming the name of Jesus Christ could advocate slavery is simply another indictment of our depravity and wickedness.

#### **VI. Structure and Key Verse**

Philemon is a marvelous example of the use of mitigated exhortation. Indeed, as a type of hortatory (exhortation) discourse, it contains the three salient components of 1) problem, 2) command, and 3) motivation. However, Paul mitigates the command to the final position of the text. This is borne out by the fact that there is not a single imperative in vv. 1-16, but in verse 17 there are three imperatives which rapidly follow one another (a fourth is in v. 22). Verse 17, therefore, is the key to the book where Paul says to Philemon, “Receive him (Onesimus) as you would receive me.” Paul employs psychological tact while at the same time not sacrificing his apostle’s authority.

#### **VII. Points of Interest Concerning Philemon**

- 1) Paul’s shortest epistle (25 verses)
- 2) Only 335 words in the Greek text
- 3) Most private of all of Paul’s epistles

- 4) Presents a beautiful picture of the gospel by way of analogy
  - a) All of us were once like Onesimus, runaways (sinners) from our rightful owner (God).
  - b) Someone on our behalf has pleaded our case, even to the paying of our debt (Jesus Christ) 1 Tim. 2:5
    - \* Substitution v. 17
    - \* Imputation v. 18
  - c) Through our advocate we can be restored, even to the adoption of sons!

What is accountability? Charles Swindoll defines it this way: “a willingness to explain one's actions, the ability to answer for one's life and to supply the reasons why.” That seems to be a hard thing to do for American Christians. Very few people are actually accountable to another person. But the fact that it is not often practiced does not excuse us. Sure it's threatening - but it's good for us. Accountability encourages growth And it's biblical.

We know very well that the Bible tells us that we are accountable to God but the Bible also tells us that we should be accountable to one another as well - at least if we are wise. Let's just look at some passages which speak to this issue.

Proverbs 13:10: “Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”

Proverbs 13:18: “He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored.”

Proverbs 15:31: “He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.”

Proverbs 27:9: “Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.”

Proverbs 27:17: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Romans 15:14: “I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one Another.”

All these passages tell us that we should be accountable to one another. Accountability is good for us. By being accountable we are less likely to stumble into a trap. By being accountable we don't get away with unwise and sinful action. It's good for us.

## **PHILEMON**

### **Paul's Greeting to Philemon      vv. 1-3**

### **Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer      vv. 4-7**

Paul is always thankful      v. 4a

When is Paul thankful      v. 4b

When he mentions them in prayer.

Reason for thanksgiving v. 5

Because he heard of their

1) faith in Christ

2) love for the saints

Content of the prayer      v. 6

For an effective sharing from faith in the context of a full knowledge of God's will for us in Christ

Reason for Paul's joy and comfort      v. 7

Because of Philemon's love that refreshed the saints

### **Paul's Approach to the Request      vv. 8-12**

A possible basis of the request      v. 8

Paul could request the proper response on the ground of his authority (i.e., as an apostle)

The proper basis of Paul's request      v. 9a

For love's sake he appeals, he does not command

The humble condition of the one who requests      v. 9b

An aged man who is now a prisoner

The subject of the request      vv. 10-12

Onesimus

1) Paul's son

2) converted while Paul was in chains

3) formerly useless but now useful to Paul and Philemon

4) the one sent to Philemon is to be received as if he were Paul

### **The Context of the Request      vv. 13-14**

Paul's original desire      v. 13

To keep Onesimus as Philemon's minister to him

Why Paul refused his desire      v. 14a

He did not wish to act without Philemon's consent.

The reason Paul wanted Philemon's input      v. 14b

So that Philemon would act voluntarily

**Paul's View of the Situation      vv. 15-16**

Paul's explanation of the separation and why he cannot keep Onesimus

v. 15

That Philemon might receive back Onesimus for eternity

Paul's view of Onesimus that Philemon should share

v. 16

Regard him as a brother, not as a slave. As he has been to Paul, may he be so much more to Philemon.

**Paul's Request      vv. 17-20**

Paul's request

v. 17

Receive Onesimus as you would me.

Paul's offer

vv. 18-19a

Any obligation should be credited to Paul. He will pay it back.

Reminder about the offer of Paul

v. 19b

Paul could remind Philemon he owes Paul his life (spiritual).

Paul's request for himself

v. 20

Give Paul this benefit and refresh his affection in Christ.

**Paul's Confidence    vv. 21-22**

Paul's knowledge

v. 21

Paul writes knowing Philemon will do what Paul requests.

Paul's hope

v. 22

Philemon is to prepare a guest room, for Paul hope to visit him because of answered prayer.

**Paul's Final Greetings and Benediction**

**vv. 21-22**

**PHILEMON**  
**A CALL TO FORGIVENESS AND FELLOWSHIP**

- I. Paul's Greeting to Philemon and the Christian Community - vv. 1-3
  - 1) Paul addresses Philemon as an equal in anticipation of his appeal. v.1
  - 2) Others are greeted and affirmed within the community, promoting a joint awareness about the problem which will be addressed in the letter (accountability). v.2
  - 3) A Christian greeting is extended which recognizes the need for God to be with them in what they are about to consider. v. 3
- II. Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer for Philemon's Love and Faith - vv. 4-7
  - 1) Love and faith are the energizers of the spiritual life as the vertical relationship translates into horizontal relationships. vv. 4-5
  - 2) The basis of faith's action is Christ Jesus. v. 6
  - 3) Praise for the care of others and the good appeal to past action will be an encouragement to many. v. 7
  - 4) We should not assume that past action guarantees a present proper response. (implied) w. 7-8
- III. Paul's Plea for Onesimus - vv. 8-20
  - 1) The appeal is made on the basis of a filial relationship, not an authoritative one (non-use of a personal right). v. 9
  - 2) Love has the capacity to change the dynamic in relationships. v. 9
  - 3) Love exhibits tasteful gentleness in defending a brother in the wrong. vv. 10-11
  - 4) Faith has the ability to see benefits in the midst of difficulties. vv. 10-11
  - 5) God's wondrous transformation of a slave into a brother and a bad situation into a good one demonstrates God's ability to triumph over a disaster. vv. 12-13
  - 6) Paul is courteous as he addresses Philemon. v.14
  - 7) The value of "free will" motivation rather than forced authority is apparent. v.15
  - 8) God transforms not only a person's position, but his relationships with others. v. 16
  - 9) Paul provides a marvelous example (substitution) of an appeal to reconciliation among Christians. v. 17

- 10) Paul as the third party proposes to deal with any debt to help created a climate for reconciliation (The mediator goes beyond what is required). vs. 18-19
- 11) Paul looks forward to the encouragement that comes from the kind treatment of one's brother (How we treat one another does matter not only to God, but also to others). vs. 20

### III. Paul's Declaration of His Confidence and His Desire to Visit Soon - vs. 21-22

- 1) Paul is an encourager. vs. 21
- 2) Paul is hopeful of personal fellowship: People are brothers, not tools for ministry. vs. 22

### V. Paul's Final Greetings - vs. 23-24

- 1) Paul conveys the good wishes of others. vs. 23-24
- 2) Paul commends them all to the grace of God found in Christ Jesus. vs. 25



## EXEGETICAL INSIGHTS IN PHILEMON

### I. KEY WORDS AND THEIR OCCURRENCE.

- A) *Lord* (6 times: vs.3,5,16,20,20,25)
- B) *Jesus* (5 times: vs.1,3,5,6,25)
- C) *Christ* (7 times: vs.1,3,6,8,9,23,25)
- D) *Love* (agape in some form; 5 times: vs.1,5,7,9,16)
- E) *Heart* (bowels, innermost being; 3 times: vs.7,12,20)
- F) *Prisoner* (sometimes translated “chains;” 5 times: vs.1,9,10,13; also “fellow prisoner” in vs.23, but there it is a different Greek word.)

\*In Greek there are three (possibly four) key words for love:

- 1) *Eros* - from which we derive our word erotic. It speaks of sensual, physical, desire for something.
- 2) *Phileo* - which speaks of brotherly (or friendship) love one for another.
- 3) *Agape* - a word uniquely developed in the N.T. It speaks of a sacrificial giving for the ultimate good of another. This love is not emotional or sensual, it is volitional.
- 4) *Storge* - familial or family love.

It has been said by one that:

Eros is the take kind of love.

Phileo is the give and take kind of love.

Agape is the give kind of love.

### II. A KEY IDEA.

The house church - There is no evidence for church buildings of any magnitude until the third century. Interestingly, without elaborate buildings, budgets, programs, and in some cases gross opulence, the early church took the gospel message literally across the world with tremendous success via the hand of God. There are numerous references in the N.T. to house churches and their hosts:

Gaius at Rome (Rom. 16:23)

Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus (1Cor. 16:19)

Aquila and Priscilla at Rome (Rom. 16:3,5)

Lydia at Philippi (Acts 16:15,40)

Nympha at Laodicea (Col.4:15)

Philemon at Colossae (Philemon 2)

Mary at Jerusalem (Acts 12:12)

Jason at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-6)

## **THE PARAMETERS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN**

### ***Philemon 1-3***

- I. A believer is a prisoner of the Lord Jesus. (vs.1)
  - A) His condition is one of divine confinement (a prisoner).
  - B) His companions should be those of “delightful encouragement (a brother).”
- II. A believer has partners through the Lord Jesus. (vs.1-2)
  - A) Philemon: the embodiment of a fellow worker. (vs.1)
  - B) Apphia: the embodiment of a faithful sister. (vs.2)
  - C) Acchippus: the embodiment of a fellow soldier. (vs.2)
  - D) The church: the embodiment of a faithful equipper. (vs.2)
- III. A believer experiences privileges in the Lord Jesus. (vs.3)
  - A) He is blessed by the Father. (cf. Eph. 1:3-6)
  - B) He is blessed by the Son. (cf. Rom. 5:1; 8:1, Eph. 1:7-12)

## “GOD'S SUPERLATIVE SERVANT”

(Philemon 4-7)

### I. He gives cause for thanksgiving to God      vv. 4-5

- 1) He has faith in God's Son
- 2) He has love for God's saints

(v. 5 is a chiasmus      Love      Faith      cf. Col. 1:4)  
                                  Christ      Saints

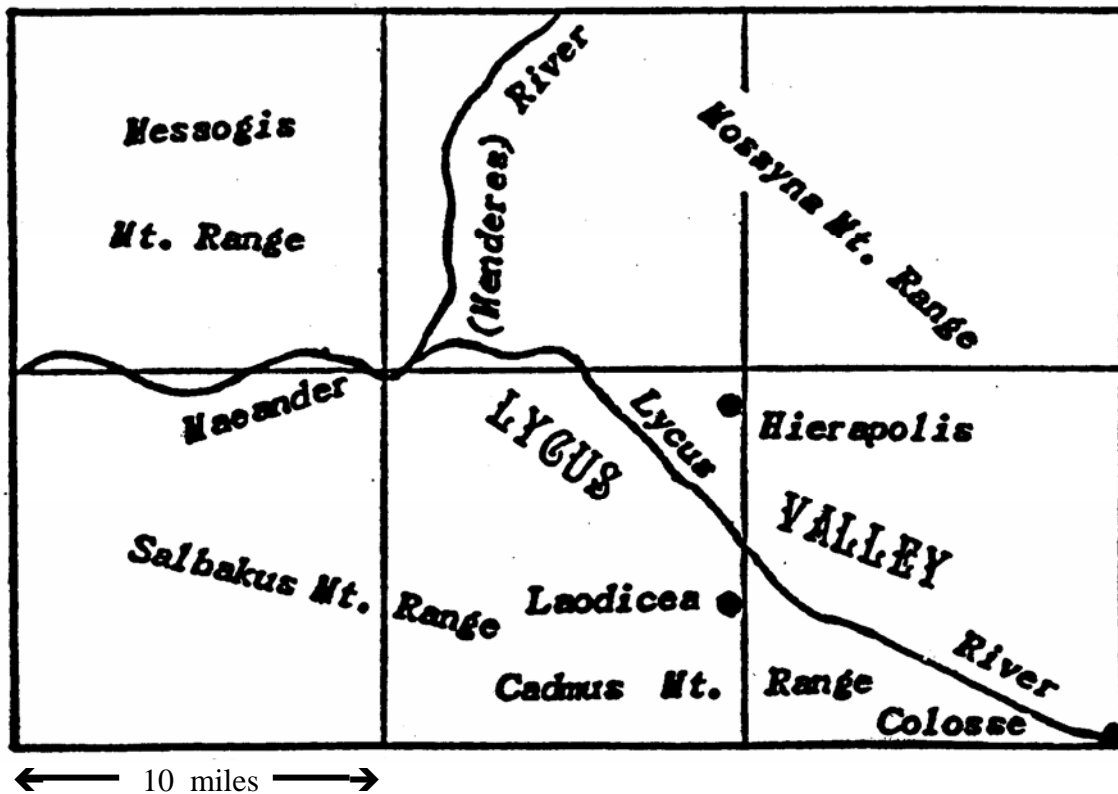
### II. He grows in understanding of God      v. 6

- 1) He is active in sharing his faith with the saints.
- 2) He is active in knowing his blessings from the Son.

### III. He generates the blessings of God.      v. 7

- 1) He is a source of joy.
- 2) He is a source of encouragement.
- 3) He is a source of refreshment.

### Sketch of the Lycus Valley



**“HOW TO ASK A FAVOR”  
(Philemon 8-16)**

- I. **Remember the principle of humility** vv. 8-9
  - 1) Do not take advantage of a higher position v. 8
  - 2) Do make the appeal from a proper motivation v. 9
- II. **Remember the principle of sensitivity.** vv. 10-11
  - 1) Be hopeful v. 10
  - 2) Be honest v. 11
- III. **Remember the principle of integrity** vv. 12-13
  - 1) Let others see your sincerity (show yourself faithful) v. 12
  - 2) Let others know where you stand (share all the facts) v. 13
- IV. **Remember the principle of accountability** v. 14
  - 1) Know who is responsible
  - 2) Know what is right
- V. **Remember the principle of sovereignty** vv. 15-16
  - 1) God’s goals are eternal not temporal v. 15
  - 2) God’s goals are spiritual not carnal v. 16

**“THE GRACE OF GENTLE ARM-TWISTING”**  
**A Marvelous Model of Tact**  
**(Philemon 17-25)**

### **I. Choose the right words**

**vv. 17-20**

- 1) Receive - Love him as you love me (substitution) v. 17
- 2) Reckon - If a wrong needs to be corrected lay it to my account (satisfaction) vv. 18-19
- 3) Refresh - Do what you should for Christ's sake (reconciliation) v. 20  
(note the 3 imperatives in vv. 17, 18, 20 and the way in which Paul softens their sting)

## **II. Communicate with reaffirming wisdom, vv. 21-22**

- 1) Express your confidence as to their action v. 21
  - 2) Express your confidence as to your reception v. 22
- (A fourth imperative is in v. 22. It also is conveyed in a gentle and gracious manner.)

### **III. Covenant with respected witnesses**

VV. 22-23

- 1) There should be earthly confirmation vv. 23-24
- 2) There should be heavenly confirmation v. 25

\* Remember: “Friends are no good unless you can use them.” Jim Parker

\* Also remember: “When you use a friend use him good.”

### **Ten Characteristics of Paul's Masterpiece of Tactful Pleading**

- 1) Listen to me, that is, to Paul, a man who has grown old in the service of his Lord ( v. 9).
- 2) I am now a prisoner of Christ Jesus (vv. 1, 9). Surely, compared to the hardships of my imprisonment how small is the favor I am asking of you.
- 3) Besides, I am your friend, who loves you, and admires you for the manner in which you have again and again refreshed the hearts of the saints (vv. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 20).
- 4) We are in debt to God for all his goodness shown to us (v. 6). Also, you: are in debt to me. In fact, you owe me your very life (v. 19).
- 5) Onesimus is my child, my very heart, a brother beloved (vv. 10, 12, 16).
- 6) It is to your advantage to grant my request that you accept Onesimus, for the once useless one has become useful. I, for one, surely so regard him (vv. 11, 13, 14).
- 7) Favorable action on your part would be in line with God's providential direction, which we should gratefully acknowledge (vv. 15, 22b).
- 8) The fellowship of all believers in Christ demands this, for not only you and I are included in this but so is Onesimus (v. 17).
- 9) I have confidence in your obedience (v. 21).
- 10) I want you to prepare a guest room for me, for I hope, in answer to the prayers of God's children, to be granted to you (v. 22b). Surely, you would not wish to disappoint me.

William Hendriksen

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The book of Philemon is one which emphasizes the dual track of accountability and sensitivity. It is indeed a “model of tact.”

Proverbs tell us that the wise man will make a good choice of the words he uses when he speaks. The right word at the right time to the right version is an effective and beautiful thing. Note the following verses:

Proverbs 10:32 “The lips of the righteous know what is fitting, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.”

Proverbs 12:18 “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”

Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Proverbs 15:23 “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-and how good is a timely word!”

Proverbs 15:28 “The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.”

Proverbs 16:24 “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Proverbs 25:11 “A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”

Proverbs 26:4-5 “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.”

Again, the right word at the right time to the right person is a wonderful thing, a beautiful thing, a sweet thing, a pleasant thing, even a joyful thing.

However, this doesn't mean that the facts are not considered. Tact is honest. It involves no sacrifice of honesty or candor. The tactful person does not shirk his duty even when he is convinced that he must admonish or rebuke. But he has learned the art of doing this without being rude. Paul told the truth about Onesimus and set forth an honest case. He admitted that the runaway slave had been useless. But Paul notes that there had been a radical change in the man. He was honest, but he was kind. He was tactful. He leaves us a marvelous pattern to follow. Therefore, may all remember the following:

A careless word may kindle strife;  
A cruel word may wreck a life;  
A bitter word may smite and kill;  
A brutal word will accomplish nil;  
A gracious word may smooth the way;  
A joyous word may light the way;  
A timely word may lessen stress;  
A loving word may heal and bless.

**HERMENEUTICS**  
**BOOK TWO**

**Table of Contents**

Section

15	Titus: A Test Case for Interpreting the Text
16	The History of Interpretation
17	Old Testament Narrative and Poetry
18	Proverbs and Prophecy
19	The Gospels and Parables
20	Acts, Epistles and Revelation
21	Doing Greek Word Studies
22	Theological Systems and Hermeneutics
23	The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics
24	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
25	Luther's Instructions for Studying as a Biblical Hermeneutical Method
26	Melanchthon as Interpreter of the New Testament
27	Resources for the Preaching/Teaching Ministry
28	Filing and Saving Your Work



## **SECTION 15**

**Titus: A Test Case for Interpreting the Text**

# Titus

## “A Call to Sound Doctrine and Good Works”

**Theme:** Balancing Theology and Good Works

**Author:** The Apostle Paul (1:1)

**Recipient:** Titus: my true child in our common faith (1:4) who was at Crete (1:5)

**Date of Writing:** c. A.D. 66

**Place of Writing:** Asia Minor (modern Turkey) ?

### Major Emphases:

1. God as Savior
2. Qualifications for Leaders
3. Sound Doctrine
4. Silencing False Teachers
5. Roles of Men and Women
6. Coming of Christ
7. Doctrine of Regeneration
8. Good Works

# Titus

Introduction 1:1-4	Maintain Sound Doctrine and Good Works				Conclusion 3:15
	Church Leadership	False Teachers	Specific Groups	Everyday Life	
	God's Word Has Appeared		God's Grace Has Appeared	God's Kindness and Love Has Appeared	
	Commitments (1:5-6)	The Divisive (1:10-11)	Older Men (2:1-2)	In the Community (3:1-8)	
	Conduct (1:7)	The Deceived (1:12-14)	Older Women (2:3-4)	In the Church (3:9-11)	
	Character (1:8)	The Defiled (1:15-16)	Younger Women (2:4-5)	In our Conduct (3:12-14)	
	Convictions (1:9)		Younger Men (2:6-8)		
			Slaves (2:9-10)		
			All Persons (2:11-15)		
	Leaders	Enemies	Followers		
	1:5	1:9	1:10	1:16	2:1
			2:15	3:1	3:15

**Purpose Statement:** Paul wrote to Titus, his son in the faith, in order to instruct him in establishing churches that would be properly governed and active in maintaining sound doctrine and good works.

**Key Words:** Faith(ful); Good Works; Sound Doctrine; Savior

# **Introduction to Titus**

## **“A Call to Sound Doctrine and Good Works”**

### **I. Author**

The author of Titus is Paul the apostle. This conclusion is supported by the text itself (1:1), the internal evidence of theology and language, and the external testimony of the overwhelming majority of the Church Fathers. Arguments against Pauline authorship of this book are the same as those marshaled against the other two pastoral epistles (e.g. 1 and 2 Timothy). There are differences between these three letters and the other Pauline epistles. Those differences, however, are adequately explained by the fact that the other letters are written to churches, whereas the pastorals (and Philemon) are personal letters written to associates. Linguistic differences are probably due to the use of an amanuensis (secretary), possibly Luke (c.f. 2 Tim. 4:11) and/or the difference of subject matter being addressed. The extremely personal nature of this letter further supports its genuineness as the work of the apostle Paul.

### **II. Date and Place of Writing**

The historical references of this book fall outside the Book of Acts and between Paul's two Roman imprisonments (Acts 28:30-31; 2 Timothy). The events between these two imprisonments may be reconstructed from various information throughout the pastoral epistles.

1. Paul was released from his first imprisonment c. A.D. 62-63 (Acts 28:30).
2. He then journeyed to Asia Minor, visiting Ephesus and Colossae in the spring and autumn of the same year (1 Tim. 1:3, Philemon 22)
3. After leaving Timothy in Ephesus, he traveled to Macedonia where he spent the winter (1 Tim. 1:3, Phil. 2:24)
4. In A.D. 64 he revisited Asia Minor on his way to Spain (Rom. 15:28)

5. He returned from Spain in A.D. 65-66 and spent some time on Crete.
6. Sometime later he departed for Asia Minor, leaving Titus (A.D. 66).
7. Shortly after his arrival in Asia Minor, Paul wrote a personal letter to Titus (A.D. 66).
8. Paul spent the winter of A.D. 66/67 in Macedonia in the city of Nicopolis where Titus was to rejoin him (2 Tim. 4:13, Titus 3:12).
9. Paul was re-arrested in A.D. 66-67 and sent to Rome.
10. Near the time of his death under Nero's reign in c. A.D. 67-68, Paul's last letter was written (2 Tim. 4:20).

From this brief chronology we can project that Paul wrote Titus from Asia Minor perhaps in the summer or autumn of c. A.D. 66.

### **III. Destination**

This epistle from Paul was written to Titus (1:4) who was laboring to organize the local assemblies of believers on the island of Crete (1:5) in the Mediterranean Sea. Crete was an island 146 miles long immersed in pagan philosophy. Located in the Mediterranean near the Aegean Sea, it was the mythical birthplace of Zeus and the legendary Minotaur, a half-bull, half-human monster.

### **IV. Occasion and Purpose**

Apparently Titus was appointed by the apostle to organize the churches in Crete. Paul seems to have evangelized the island, but could not stay long enough to develop local leadership. Because this was lacking (1:5) and false teachers were infiltrating the scattered flocks (1:10-16), Titus was summoned to temporarily remain on Crete to "set in order the things which are lacking and ordain elders in every city." In the midst of little, if any, local

leadership and the encroachment of false teachers, Paul and Titus apparently discussed the task of organizing the churches when they were together (1:5), but the letter affirmed Paul's instructions telling Titus both what to do (1:5-16) and what to say (2:1 – 3:11).

## **V. Recipient**

Though he does not appear by name in Acts, Titus is mentioned thirteen times in the New Testament (2 Cor. 2:13, 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16; 12:18 twice; Gal. 2:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:10; and Titus 1:4). Titus was a convert from a non-Jewish heritage early in Paul's ministry. Titus first appears with Paul at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:1, 3) where he is the apostle's proof that one does not need to become a Jew to be a Christian. Later, Titus' work is related to the Corinthians as he appears as an emissary to Paul concerning the Corinthian's reaction to 1 Corinthians (2 Cor. 7:16) and as the bearer of the second epistle to them. We do know that Titus has a specific burden for the spiritual welfare of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:16). There is little information in the New Testament with respect to Titus between A.D. 56 (when he delivered 2 Corinthians to Corinth) and A.D. 66 (when we find him laboring on Crete). The most distinct biographical note concerning Titus was written by Paul when he said that they "walked in the same spirit and in the same steps" (2 Cor. 12:18; c.f. also 8:23). Titus may have rejoined Paul in Nicopolis where they spent the winter of A.D. 66-67 (Titus 3:12), and accompanied Paul to Rome (2 Tim. 4:10). The final biographical entry notes that Titus was in Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10).

## **VI. Purpose**

It is likely that the church on Crete suffered from two sources: (1) visiting Judaizers who mixed law and grace and (2) ignorant Christians who abused the grace of God and turned it into license. Paul had several purposes in mind when he wrote: (1) to remind Titus of his work of re-organizing the church and appointing elders; (2) to warn him about false teachers; (3) to encourage him in pastoring the different kinds of people in the church; (4) to emphasize the true meaning of grace in the life of the Christian; (5) to explain how to deal with church troublemakers; and (6) to encourage believers to look for the coming of Christ.

## **VII. Emphasis**

Several words are repeated in this brief letter, helping us to understand the burden that was on Paul's heart. Savior occurs six times (1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6). Good works is a major emphasis (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 5, 8, 14). Saved by grace means saved unto good works. Christian doctrine and Christian living are to be sound (1:9, 13; 2:1-2, 8). There ought to be a life of godliness (1:1 and 2:12), not worldliness. God's grace leads a person to live a godly life (1:4; 2:11ff; 3:7, 15). The key verse of the book is probably 3:8 – “. . . they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works.”

### **VIII. Theme**

The theme of Titus is a call to sound doctrine and good works for the church of the Lord Jesus. Passages occur in this short epistle concerning the qualifications and responsibilities of pastors (1:5-9), the ethics of the believer (2:1-10), the return of Christ (2:11-14), and the nature of salvation (3:3-7).



# An Outline of Titus

## “A Call to Sound Doctrine”

I.	<u>Sound doctrine and the church’s leadership</u>	1:1-9
	1. Greeting	1:1-4
	2. The selection and qualification of elders	1:5-9
II.	<u>Sound doctrine and false worship</u>	1:10-16
	1. The divisive	1:10-11
	2. The deceived	1:12-14
	3. The defiled	1:15-16
III.	<u>Sound doctrine in the lives of certain groups</u>	2:1-15
	1. Different age groups	2:1-8
	a. Older men	2:1-2
	b. Older women	2:3-4
	c. Younger women	2:4-5
	d. Younger men	2:6-8
	2. Slaves	2:9-10
	3. All persons	2:11-15
	a. Proper teaching	2:11-12
	b. Proper looking	2:13
	c. Proper living	2:14-15
IV.	<u>Sound doctrine in everyday life</u>	3:1-15
	1. In the community	3:1-8
	2. In the church	3:9-11
	3. In our conduct	3:12-14
	4. Conclusion	3:15

## SAVED TO SERVE

### Titus 1:1-4

- |      |  |       |
|------|--|-------|
| I.   | <u>We are servants of our Lord.</u>    | 1:1   |
| 1.   | We are slaves. (humility)              |       |
| 2.   | We are sent. (authority)               |       |
| 3.   | We are selected. (ministry)            |       |
| 4.   | We are sanctified. (spiritually)       |       |
| II.  | <u>We are secure in our Lord.</u>      | 1:2-3 |
| 1.   | We have His witness.                   | 1:2   |
| 2.   | We have His word.                      | 1:3   |
| III. | <u>We are separated unto the Lord.</u> | 1:4   |
| 1.   | We share a common faith.               |       |
| 2.   | We are in God's family.                |       |

## **QUALIFICATIONS OF A GODLY LEADER**

### **Titus 1:5-9**

- I. He is a man with godly commitments. 1:5-6
  - 1. He is faithful to the church. 1:5
  - 2. He is faithful to others. 1:6
  - 3. He is faithful to his wife. 1:6
  - 4. He is faithful to his children. 1:6
  
- II. He is a man of godly conduct. 1:7
  - 1. He understands the need of a good reputation.
  - 2. He understands the nature of his calling.
  - 3. He understands the necessity of a balanced life.
  
- III. He is a man of godly character. 1:8
  - 1. He pursues the right priorities.
  - 2. He possesses the right perspective.
  - 3. He produces the right pattern.
  - 4. He promotes the right passion.
  
- IV. He is a man with godly convictions. 1:9
  - 1. He is devoted to the truth.
  - 2. He is diligent to teach.

**THE MINISTRY OF CONFRONTATION**  
**Titus 1:10-16**

- |      |   |         |
|------|---|---------|
| I.   | <u>We must confront the divisive.</u>       | 1:10-11 |
| 1.   | They are destitute in how they talk.        | 1:10    |
| 2.   | They are dangerous in what they think.      | 1:10-11 |
| 3.   | They are dishonest in why they teach.       | 1:11    |
| II.  | <u>We must confront the deceived.</u>       | 1:12-14 |
| 1.   | Who they are is clear.                      | 1:12-13 |
| 2.   | What they believe must be confronted.       | 1:13-14 |
| III. | <u>We must confront the defiled.</u>        | 1:15-16 |
| 1.   | They lack purity (the inside).              | 1:15    |
| 2.   | They lie in their profession (the outside). | 1:16    |
| a.   | They are detestable.                        |         |
| b.   | They are disobedient.                       |         |
| c.   | They are disqualified.                      |         |

**THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**  
**Titus 2:1-8**

**I. Pursue God's Assignment As An Older Man. 2:1-2**

- |    |                        |     |
|----|------------------------|-----|
| 1. | Be a teacher.          | 2:1 |
| 2. | Be sober.              | 2:2 |
| 3. | Be reverent.           | 2:2 |
| 4. | Be self-controlled.    | 2:2 |
| 5. | Be sound in the faith. | 2:2 |
| 6. | Be loving.             | 2:2 |
| 7. | Be patient.            | 2:2 |

**II. Pursue God's Assignment As An Older Woman. 2:3**

- |    |               |
|----|---------------|
| 1. | Be reverent.  |
| 2. | Be truthful.  |
| 3. | Be sober.     |
| 4. | Be a teacher. |

**III. Pursue God's Assignment As A Younger Woman. 2:4-5**

- |    |                             |     |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. | Love your husband.          | 2:4 |
| 2. | Love your children.         | 2:4 |
| 3. | Be self-controlled.         | 2:5 |
| 4. | Be pure.                    | 2:5 |
| 5. | Be a homemaker.             | 2:5 |
| 6. | Be good.                    | 2:5 |
| 7. | Be subject to your husband. | 2:5 |

**IV. Pursue God's Assignment As A Younger Man. 2:6-8**

- |    |                       |     |
|----|-----------------------|-----|
| 1. | Be sober.             | 2:6 |
| 2. | Be a good example.    | 2:7 |
| 3. | Be sound in doctrine. | 2:7 |
| 4. | Be sound in speech.   | 2:8 |

**Servant Evangelism: A Biblical Perspective On Slavery**  
**Titus 2:9-10**

- I.    Be productive for your superior.                      2:9
  
- II.   Be pleasing in your spirit.                                2:9
  
- III. Be polite in your speech.                                 2:9
  
- IV. Be principled in your service.                         2:10
  
- V.   Be public in your sincerity.                             2:10
  
- VI. Be praiseworthy for your Savior.                       2:10

**THE AMAZING GRACE OF GOD**  
**Titus 2:11-15**

- I.    God's grace teaches us how we should live.                      2:11-12
  - 1.     God's grace has come to us.                      2:11
  - 2.     God's grace must change us.                      2:12
  
- II.   God's grace teaches us where we should look.                      2:13
  - 1.     We know what to look for: His coming.
  - 2.     We know who to look for: Our Savior.
  
- III. God's grace teaches us who is Lord.                                      2:14
  - 1.     Jesus paid for us.
  - 2.     Jesus purifies us.
  - 3.     Jesus possesses us.
  - 4.     Jesus prepares us.
  
- IV.  God's grace teaches us what we should learn.                      2:15
  - 1.     Learn doctrine.
  - 2.     Learn duty.
  - 3.     Learn discernment.
  - 4.     Learn dedication.

# NEW BIRTH FOR A NEW LIFE

## Titus 3:1-8

I. We must be ready for good works . 3:1-3

1. In the present we can help others. 3:1-2
  - a. We submit obediently. 3:1
  - b. We serve eagerly. 3:1
  - c. We speak gently. 3:2
  - d. We show humility. 3:2
2. In the past we harmed others. 3:3
  - a. Sin deceives.
  - b. Sin disobeys.
  - c. Sin dictates.
  - d. Sin detests.
  - e. Sin desires.
  - f. Sin destroys.

II. We have been regenerated for good works . 3:4-7

1. God cares for us. 3:4
2. God changes us. 3:5
3. God has come for us. 3:6
4. God comforts us. 3:7

III. We will be rewarded for good works . 3:8

1. We should affirm good works.
2. We should be active in good works.



## GOD'S FORMULA FOR A FRUITFUL LIFE

### Titus 3:9-15

- |      |                                   |         |
|------|-----------------------------------|---------|
| I.   | <u>Avoid the foolish.</u>         | 3:9     |
| 1.   | They are unwise.                  |         |
| 2.   | They are unprofitable.            |         |
| II.  | <u>Reject the divisive.</u>       | 3:10-11 |
| 1.   | They must be disciplined.         | 3:10    |
| 2.   | They are dangerous.               | 3:11    |
| 3.   | They are destructive.             | 3:11    |
| III. | <u>Follow the leader.</u>         | 3:12-13 |
| 1.   | Listen to their advise.           | 3:12    |
| 2.   | Lend your assistance.             | 3:13    |
| IV.  | <u>Maintain good works.</u>       | 3:14    |
| 1.   | Good works must not be neglected. |         |
| 2.   | Good works do meet needs.         |         |
| V.   | <u>Welcome the faithful.</u>      | 3:15    |
| 1.   | Express the love we share.        |         |
| 2.   | Pray for the grace we need.       |         |

## **“Church Discipline: A Missing Essential In The Life Of The Contemporary Church”**

### **Titus 3:9-15**

- I. Avoid the Foolish. 3:9
  - 1) They are unwise.
  - 2) They are unprofitable.
  
- II. Reject the Divisive. 3:10-11
  - 1) They must be disciplined.
  - 2) They can be dangerous.
  - 3) They are destructive.
  
- III. Follow the Leader. 3:12-13
  - 1) Listen to their advice.
  - 2) Lend your assistance.
  
- IV. Maintain Good Works. 3:14
  - 1) Good works must not be neglected.
  - 2) Good works do meet needs.
  
- V. Enlist the Faithful. 3:15
  - 1) Express the love we share.
  - 2) Pray for the grace we need.

## **SECTION 16**

### **The History of Interpretation**

# THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1. Ancient Jewish Interpretation
2. Use of the O.T.
3. Patristic Interpretation
4. Medieval Interpretation
5. Reformation Interpretation
6. Post-Reformation Interpretation
7. Modern Interpretation

## A. ANCIENT JEWISH INTERPRETATION

1. The ministry of Ezra - Nehemiah 8:8 – “And they read from the book, from the Law of God, translating (explaining) to give the sense so that they (the people) understood the reading.”
2. At the time of Christ - 4 main types of Jewish interpretation existed:
  - Literal - (*peshat*)
  - Midrash - Rabbinic expositional commentary on the OT. Rabbi Hillel - developed basic rules of Rabbinic interpretation
  - Peshet - (Hebrew for “commentary”) - unique form of Midrash found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Noted by the phrase “This is that” - meaning “this present phenomenon is a fulfillment of that ancient prophecy.”
  - Allegorical - true meaning lies beneath the literal meaning (symbolic interpretation) Philo of Alexandria (c.20BC - 50AD) was a leading exponent. Often led to fanciful interpretation.
3. Post-apostolic developments among Jewish interpreters
  - Mishnah – authoritative compilation of Jewish oral tradition grouped into topical collections of legal rulings, completed at the end of the second century AD, compiled by Rabbi Judah.
  - Talmud – The Mishnah in addition to later rabbinic commentary (Gemara). The Palestinian Talmud was completed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, AD. The Babylonian Talmud was completed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, AD, and is about three times the length of its Palestinian counterpart.
  - Josephus (37 – 100 AD) – A Jewish historian whose writings are especially important for Jewish and Roman political history during his lifetime and the two centuries beforehand.
  - Philo (20 BC – AD 50) – An Alexandrian Jew whose writings represent a synthesis between Greek philosophical thinking and Jewish traditions.

## SUMMARY -

1. Literal employed in areas of judicial and practical concerns
2. Mostly employed Midrashic methods
3. Most used allegory to some extent

## B. N.T. USE OF THE O.T.

Approximately 10% of the NT is OT quotation, paraphrase, or allusion. Of the 39 OT books, only 9 are not referred to in the NT.

1. Jesus’ use of the OT

- Jesus accepted the entire OT as Word of God and completely true (Matt. 5:17-18)
  - Normal, literal interpretation as opposed to allegorical was His method.
  - Historical narratives of OT were accepted as straightforward records of fact.
2. Apostles' use of the OT
- Following Jesus, they viewed Scripture as the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21)
  - When quoting the OT, the apostles sometimes modify the wording.
  - Several Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek versions were circulating.
  - It is not necessary to quote the OT verbatim. (Remember the translation principle: Faithfulness not exactness is the issue.)
  - Freedom from verbatim quotation is a sign of mastery of the material.
  - Mostly they interpreted the OT literally - history as history, poetry as poetry, Symbols as symbols, etc. (Literally here = “normally” or “naturally” in its historical-grammatical sense.)

### C. PATRISTIC (CHURCH FATHERS) INTERPRETATION (AD 100-500)

\*Allegorical method dominated

\*2 Major schools of interpretation develop: Alexandria (allegorical) and Antioch (literal)

1. Alexandrian School - (emp. allegorical interpretation)
  - A. Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c.215)
    1. Scripture hides its true meaning behind the literal words.
    2. Hence, there is a need for allegorical method.
    3. Clement accepted the allegorical method of Plato and applied it to the NT Scriptures.
  - B. Irenaeus (d. ca. 200)
    1. Took interpretation in a typological direction.
    2. Followed the principle that obscure passages should be interpreted in light of clear.
    3. Introduced the idea of authoritative exegesis - true meaning of Scripture invested in church where apostolic authority is preserved. (Led to the Catholic error that true interpretation is what the church leaders say it is rather than in careful study of the Bible. Reformation opposed this error vehemently. Catholic Council of Trent affirmed ecclesiastical infallibility).
  - C. Origen (185-254)
    1. Systematized allegorical method.
    2. Wrote *De Principiis* - deals with inspiration and interpretation
    3. All Scripture has a spiritual meaning, not all has a literal meaning.
    4. His emphasis on scripture having a divine allegorical meaning which was different from the literal meaning set the tone for interpretation through the Middle Ages.
2. Antioch School (emp. literal interpretation)
  1. Defended the grammatical-historical method of interpretation against the allegorizing of the Alexandrian School.
  2. Literal interpretation of Scripture paramount.

3. Spiritual meaning not opposed to the literal but flows out of the literal.
4. Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428) most well known.
5. Laid groundwork for Reformation and modern evangelical hermeneutics.

\*Augustine - (354-430)

1. Wrote *On Christian Doctrine* - outlined rules for interpretation.
2. Tended toward excessive allegorizing.
3. Scripture has a 4-fold sense:
  - Historical
  - Allegorical
  - Tropological - (moral)
  - Anagogical - (spiritual meaning as it relates to the future and the eternal...)

#### D. MEDIEVAL INTERPRETATION - (600-1500)

Augustine's 4-fold sense of Scripture came to dominate Medieval interpretation. The following little verse was used during the time:

***“The letter shows us what God and our fathers did;  
The allegory shows us where our faith is hid;  
The moral meaning give us rules of daily life;  
The anagogy show us where we end our strife.”***

\*William Tyndale (1494-1536) was a forerunner of the Reformation. He aided the return to historical-grammatical interpretation. Addressing this 4-fold approach to Scripture he wrote: “They divide Scripture into four senses, the literal, typological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath made it his profession. He hath partly locked it up with the false and counterfeited keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies; and driveth men from it with violence of sword: for no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, ‘If it shall please the pope.’ ...Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the Scriptures hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave, thou canst never err or go out of the way.” -William Tyndale, “The Observance of a Christian Man” in *Doctrinal Treatises* (Cambridge, 1848, pgs. 303-304)

Example: “Jerusalem” in Galatians 4:22 understood in 4 different ways:

- Historically - literally city of the Jews
  - Allegorically - church of Christ
  - Morally - human soul
  - Analogically - heavenly city
1. 2-fold reason for insistence on multiple meanings of Scripture:
    - A. No adequate theory of the relation of revelation to reason had been worked out.
    - B. Through the Greek Patristics and Augustine, Platonism influenced the Christian

worldview. God's Word and will not overtly expressed in Scripture, but hidden in symbolic meaning behind the literal words. Scripture was like a Medieval Cathedral, which spoke to the people in the language of symbols.

2. Thomas Aquinas - (1225-1274)
  - A. Most influential and important theologian of Middle Ages.
  - B. Principle exponent of the literal sense during the Middle Ages.
  - C. Views expressed in his most famous work, *Summa Theologica*.
  - D. Aquinas made the declaration of independence from the allegorical method.
  - E. Catholic Church viewed as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture.

#### SUMMARY:

1. Late Middle Ages began a return to a study of Hebrew and the production of literal and historical commentaries on the OT.
2. Rejection of the Patristic theological method - theology now divorced from exegesis.
3. This divorce was followed immediately by a remarriage of theology to philosophy.
4. Emphasis on historical studies led to claim of objectivity in interpretive understanding.
5. Heavy emphasis on Rationalism (Aristotleanism).
6. Claim to objectivity would come to fruition in the Modern era of biblical interpretation in a negative way - rejection of inspiration, inerrancy, etc.
7. Throughout Medieval Period, the source of theology is not the Bible alone, but the the Bible as interpreted by the Church and tradition.

#### E. REFORMATION INTERPRETATION - (1500-1600)

##### 2 Watchwords of the Reformation:

*Sola Fide* - "Faith alone"  
*Sola Scriptura* - "Scripture alone"

1. Luther - (1483-1546)
  - Believed Faith and the Spirit's illumination were prerequisites for interpretation.
  - Church should not determine what the Scripture,s teach.
  - Rejected the allegorical method (called it "dirt" and "scum") in favor of a return to the literal method.
  - Affirmed the perspicuity of Scripture - clarity of Bible.
  - All OT and NT points to Christ.
  - Carefully distinguished between Law and Gospel.
  - Scripture is its own best interpreter.
2. John Calvin - (1509-1564)
  - Greatest exegete of the Reformation - *Institutes* and *Commentaries* are must reading.
  - Rejected allegory in favor of literal interpretation.
  - Return to a study of the original languages of Scripture in exegesis.

## SUMMARY:

Reformation period was a return to the Bible alone as the sole rule of faith and practice. Rejection of the authority of the Catholic Church in providing the only true interpretation of Scripture. Priesthood of believer rediscovered in biblical interpretation. Translation of Scripture undertaken by Luther and others.

### F. POST-REFORMATION INTERPRETATION - (1600-1800)

1. Rationalism - intellectual movement - human mind is an independent authority capable of determining truth.
2. Rationalism became a tool of reason used against the Bible (The Enlightenment).
3. Rise of Empiricism - valid knowledge obtained through the five senses.
4. Scripture subjected to the authority of the human mind rather than the other way around.

#### 17th Century Examples:

- Thomas Hobbes - Anglican Philosopher
- Richard Simon - French Catholic Priest
- Bernard Spinoza - Jewish Philosopher

5. Reason rather than revelation is now the key to biblical interpretation. Later, in reaction to a dead rationalistic religion, there will be a turn to experience.

### G. MODERN INTERPRETATION - (1800-PRESENT)

Influenced by Freud, Nietzsche, Darwin and Hegel, the Bible came to be viewed as a record of the evolutionary development of Israel's religious consciousness and an expression of the religious experiences of its authors.

#### 1. 19th Century - Rise of Liberalism

##### A. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) – “father of modern liberalism”

1. Must interpret the Bible like any other book.
2. Confluence of Rationalism with Subjectivism
3. Rejected the absolute authority of Scripture and a supernatural worldview.
4. Pioneer in Hermeneutics - identified 2 sides to understanding texts:
  - a. Grammatical Interpretation - objective side - focus on grammar, words, etc.
  - b. Technical Interpretation - subjective side - focus on attempts to get into the mind of the author.

##### B. Birth of the Historical-Critical Method of interpretation

1. Rationalistic assumption
2. Naturalistic worldview
3. Bible's greatest contribution is its moral emphasis rather than its theological teachings.

##### C. 3 Influential German scholars: F.C. Baur, Julius Wellhausen, and Adolf von Harnack - Harnack's book, *What is Christianity?* (1901), summarized liberal theology as shaped by its biblical interpretation with its evolutionary matrix and antisupernatural worldview.



## 2. 20th Century (Neo-Orthodoxy)

### A. Karl Barth - (1886-1968)

1. Commentary on *Romans* (1919) was a watershed book.
2. Attacked liberalism as inadequate.
3. Reemphasized authority of Scripture.
4. Reemphasized need for personal encounter with God.
5. Multi-volumed *Church Dogmatics* his major work.

### B. Rudolph Bultmann - (1884-1976)

1. Applied method of Form Criticism to Gospel.
2. He sought to “Demythologize” the Bible, strip away the mythical (supernatural) embellishments/framework.

## **BASIC TENETS OF NEO-ORTHODOXY**

1. Words of the Bible cannot convey the knowledge of God as abstract propositions. God can only be known in personal encounter.  
The Bible is not the Word of God but the record of God's involvement in history. The Bible becomes the Word of God to us in existential encounter.
2. A gulf separates God from fallen humanity - myths can bridge this gulf. Neoorthodoxy downplays the historicity of biblical events.
3. Truth is viewed as ultimately paradoxical (dialectical) in nature. There is no underlying rational coherence that binds the diverse ideas of Scripture together.

## A CRASH COURSE IN LINGUISTICS (Language philosophy at the end of the 20th century.)

### A. IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

- **Linguistics** - The study of the structure of language, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
- **Phonology** - The identification and classification of all sounds used in a given language.
- **Morphology** - The study of the structure of words: the classification of word formation including inflection, derivation, prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.
- **Syntax** - The study of the arrangement of words as elements in phrases, clauses, or sentences to show their relationship. Study of phrase, clause and sentence structure.
- **Semantics** - The branch of Linguistics concerned with meaning, its nature, structure, and development.
- **Grammar** - The study of the forms and structure of words (Morphology) and their arrangements in phrases, clauses, and sentences (Syntax). Also, a system of rules relating to morphology and syntax.
- **Translation** - The transfer of meaning from one language to another.
- **Source Language** - The language we are translating - ex. Greek for the NT
- **Receptor Language** - The language we are translating into - ex. the English Bible for us.
- **Surface Structure** - The form of a text which includes phonology, lexicon, and grammar. Words, phrases, clauses, sentences, etc. are a language's surface structure.
- **Semantic Structure** - The content of a text which includes its meaning.
- **Meaning** - All the relevant information that is transmitted by an act of communication (spoken or written). (See under "Types of Meanings" below)

### B. THE HIERARCHY OF LANGUAGE

In all languages words are combined into larger units of meaning: Words - Phrases - Clauses - Sentences - Paragraphs - Discourse

Important principles to remember:

1. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.
2. Language is characterized by the concept of "embedding."  
Example: a sentence may have embedded within it smaller sentences I John 1:5 – "God is light" is embedded within the *oti* clause.
3. Language has "content" words and "function" words.

Example: Content words: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs Function words:  
articles, prepositions, conjunctions

### C. TYPES OF MEANING

1. Referential Meaning: that which is being talked about; the subject matter of a text.
2. Situational Meaning: information pertaining to the participants in a communication act (environment, social status, etc.)
3. Structural Meaning: arrangement of the information in the text itself; the grammar and syntax of a text.

Illustration of the 3 types of meaning in the following sentence:

#### **DAVID OWNS A DODGE PICKUP.**

**Referential Meaning** - David, a pickup truck; a relationship that exists between them, namely, ownership. This sentence is about these things.

If the sentence reads: David owns a Dodge clunker.

**Situational Meaning**: the referents have not changed, but with the substitution of “clunker” for “pickup” we learn something about the attitude of the speaker toward the pickup and possibly toward David. In the first sentence nothing is said about the attitude of the speaker, not so in the second sentence.

If the sentence reads: He owns a Dodge pickup.

**Structural Meaning**: same referents but “he” is linked to another sentence in context not given here. Furthermore, the structure within this sentence is:

He = pronoun functioning as Subject  
owns = verb  
a = indefinite article modifying “pickup”  
Dodge = adjective modifying “pickup” describing kind  
pickup = noun functioning as the object of the verb

### D. KEY ELEMENTS IN LANGUAGE THEORY

***Semiotics*** - Study of human communication as a signaling system.

***Linguistics*** - Study of the structure of human communication (written or verbal)

***Semantics*** - Structure and development of meaning in a text

***Pragmatics*** - Circumstances that accompany communication

## **THE GRAMMATICAL-HISTORICAL APPROACH TO INTERPRETATION**

1. We are to understand the text literally (naturally/normally) not allegorically. Literal - the simple, direct, plain, ordinary meaning We communicate truth in 1 of 2 ways:
  - a. Literal - no figures of speech...explicit assertion of words.
  - b. Figurative literal - interpret using the specific intention of the figure and what that figure connotes.
2. Importance of authorial intent cannot be overstated. We should honor the author's intended meaning as discovered in the text (not his mind. Schleirmacher was wrong).
3. To take the figurative-literal text and interpret it as a plain literal text is to interpret it allegorically.  
Ex. Isaiah 55:12 - Mountains and Fields
4. To take the plain literal and interpret it as figurative-literal is to interpret it allegorically as well.
5. The joint authorship of Scripture must be affirmed (Confluency) - 100% divine, 100% human.
6. Progressive Revelation - a later author will have fuller insight than an earlier author. A later writer may understand a given passage to imply more than the original author understood or applied (sensus plenary - a hotly debated issue!)  
Ex. Matt. 1:23 and Isaiah 7:14 - Matthew infers more from the text than Isaiah understood at the time.

### **GUIDELINES:**

1. Assume a plain literal sense.
2. If plain literal sense involves a contradiction to known literal truth, interpret the passage figuratively. Ex. - Isaiah 55:12
3. If interpreting figuratively, look to the immediate context for the explanation of the figure.  
Ex. - Rev. 20:2 - Dragon = Satan  
(The material on linguistics comes from David Allen of SWBTS)

## Respect for Authorial Intention

**E. D. Hirsch:** “A stable and determinate meaning requires an author’s determining will . . . All valid interpretation of every sort is founded on the re-cognition of what the author meant” (*Validity in Interpretation*, 126).

“the meaning of a text is the author’s meaning.” (p.25)

**David Dockery:** With Hirsch and those emphasizing the primacy of the author in interpretation, we can maintain . . . the plausibility of determining a text’s normative meaning . . . The author’s meaning is only available in the text, not by making contact with the author’s mental patterns (*Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, p. 182)

**William W. Klein,** et al: Though one may never completely understand all dimensions and nuances of a specific message, normally the goal of the recipient in communication is to understand what the author/speaker intended (*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 117).

**Kevin Vanhoozer:** The author’s intention is the real causality that alone accounts for why a text is the way it is . . . A Text must be read in light of its intentional context (*Is There Meaning in This Text?*, 249, 265).

**G. B. Caird:** We have no access to the mind of Jeremiah or Paul except through their recorded words. A fortiori, we have no access to the word of God in the Bible except through the words and minds of those who claim to speak in his name (*The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, 61).

# PREUNDERSTANDING

(Summary form Duvall and Hayes)

Preunderstanding: refers to all our preconceived ideas and understandings that we bring to the text, which have been formulated, both consciously and subconsciously before we actually study the biblical text in detail.

1. Preunderstanding can result from previous encounters with a biblical passage causing us to believe that we already understand the passage.
2. Preunderstanding is influenced by what we have been taught in the past – both the good and the bad.
3. Preunderstanding surfaces when one comes to the text with a theological agenda already formulated. Vanhoozer refers to this as “overstanding” and not “understanding.”
4. Preunderstanding can be the result of familiarity with the biblical text.
5. One of the most powerful, yet subtle, aspects of preunderstanding is that of culture.

## *The Changing Face of Hermeneutics: The New Hermeneutic*

Hermeneutics is the term that has traditionally been applied to the interpretation of texts. But the discipline has gone through some major changes – therefore it is worth pausing and considering some of the ways in which the discipline of interpretation has changed. Three stages may be discerned, however, throughout the process there has been much overlap.

**1.** Hermeneutics was once understood to be the science and the art of biblical interpretation: science because there were important rules and principles that could be applied to the task, and art because there were many calls for mature judgment borne of experience and competence.

The task of the interpreter was to understand what the author meant in the text under consideration. It was assumed that if two interpretation of equal competence understood the rules of interpretation well enough, then in the great majority of cases their understanding of what a passage meant would be the same.

In this approach a great deal of emphasis is paid to grammar, genre, principles for studying words and how to relate biblical themes.

**2.** Hermeneutics became increasingly used to describe an array of literary critical tools: source, form and redaction criticism. Admittedly some gains were made by such approaches, however, there were also many losses by such approaches. Much of the purpose of these techniques was to reconstruct the history and belief-structure of particular believing communities behind the text, rather than to listen to the message of the text.

**3.** Both of these approaches have largely been eclipsed by what is known as the new hermeneutic, or reader-response criticism. Here the important insight that people bring their own biases and limitations to the interpretative task is raised as the controlling thought.

At one level this observation is purely salutary. Everyone does bring his or her own interpretative gird with them to the interpretative process, there is no thing as a totally open-mind (see Bultmann's article).

Many proponents of this method of interpretation argue that since each person interpretation will differ in some measure from everyone else's interpretation, we cannot legitimately speak of "the" meaning of the text (as if it were something objective). Meaning they argue does not reside in the author, or the text, but in the readers, the interpreters of the text. If different interpretations are legitimate then one cannot speak of the correct interpretation; some expressions are nothing more than personal preferences. If no single interpretation is right, then either all interpretation are equally meaningless (deconstruction, hermeneutical nihilism) or all are equally right (all are good or bad insofar as they satisfy, or meet the needs of a particular person or community or culture, or meet certain arbitrary criteria).

In this regard advocates of the new hermeneutic foster different readings of scripture:

- A liberation theology reading
- A gay/lesbian reading
- A white male Anglo-Saxon protestant reading

Aligned with the thought of political correctness this new hermeneutic rules out no interpretation as invalid with the exception of those that claim their interpretation is right and that others are wrong – that interpretation is the only invalid one.

It is important to note that this approach to understanding meaning governs much of the agenda not only in contemporary biblical interpretation but also in the disciplines of history, literature, politics, and much more.

Despite some helpful insights, the new hermeneutic can be challenged at several points.

*1.* There seems to be some wrong with a theory that proposes the relativity of all knowledge gleaned from reading, while producing innumerable books that insist on the rightness of this view. The theory assumes that the author's intent is not reliably expressed in the text. It builds a barrier between the author and the reader and that barrier is the text. The oddity is that these ideas are written by authors who expect their readers to understand what they write, authors who write what they mean and hope the readers will be convinced by their reasoning. One only wishes that they would extend the same courtesy to Isaiah, Paul and John.

*2.* Even if it is admitted that finite human beings cannot attain an exhaustive knowledge of the text, it is difficult to understand why they could not attain a true knowledge.

Doubtless a reader may be largely controlled by personal biases and rigid agendas when first approaching the Scripture, and thus find in the text much that the author did not intend to be there, or, alternately, the interpreter may not see many things that are in fact there. The total mental baggage of the reader, what modern interpreters call the reader's "horizon of understanding," may be so far removed from the horizon of understanding of the author as expressed in the text that great distortions occur.

But it is also possible that the reader will re and re-read the text, learn something of the language and culture of the authors, and gradually discover what his or her baggage must be discarded and gradually fuse his or her horizon of understanding with that of the text. Others speak of the hermeneutical spiral, that is the interpreter spirals in on the text.

**There are a few potential gains with the new hermeneutic:**

*1.* The new hermeneutic reminds us that God's verbal revelation to us in scripture comes to us not only clothed in the language and idiom of particular historical cultures, but to improve our understanding of the objective truth that is thereby disclosed it is necessary to think our way



back into those cultures, as far as possible, to minimize the dangers of interpretative distortion.

2. The new hermeneutic reminds us that even if an individual interpreter gains some significant understanding of the text, none will understand it exhaustively and other interpreters will bring to light insight that is genuinely there in the text that we have missed.

3. Properly applied, some of the insights of the new hermeneutic remind us that human beings bring enormous cultural and conceptual baggage to the Scriptures they claim to interpret and that this allied with our understanding of our own sinfulness and that our sin and self-centeredness seeks to drive us from the light (Jn. 3.19-20) may send us to our knees in recognition that the interpretation of God's word is not merely an intellectual discipline, but turns also on moral and spiritual bearings. We need the aid of the Spirit not only to do the Scripture but in some sense to understand the Scripture to the fullest.

# HERMENEUTICS, EXEGESIS, AND PROCLAMATION.

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Hermeneutics, exegesis, and proclamation form the crucial triad with which every pastor must reckon. A proper biblical hermeneutic provides the philosophical underpinnings which undergird the exegetical task. Likewise, a proper exegetical methodology provides the foundation for the sermon. Then, of course, proper sermon delivery is necessary to carry home God's truth to the hearer. This article will attempt a discussion of these three aspects in both a descriptive and evaluative manner. Hermeneutics as a philosophical base for exegesis will comprise section one. Section two of the article will suggest a methodology for exegesis from the field of Text Linguistics as an augment to the traditional method of biblical exegesis. Finally, in section three, the matter of proclamation will be briefly discussed.

## ***I. Philosophical Basis of Exegesis***

A discussion of the principles and practice of biblical exegesis would not be complete without mention, however brief, of the philosophical arena in which these issues stand today. The field of hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, has undergone tremendous upheaval in recent years. A host of new questions about the nature of meaning are being asked. In the first section of this article, we offer some tentative answers to the following questions which must be addressed by the biblical exegete, since they will invariably affect his exegetical method.

- 1) What is the difference between traditional hermeneutics and modern hermeneutics?
- 2) How does our understanding of the subject/object distinction affect our theory and practice of Interpretation?
- 3) What is the difference between what a text meant historically and what it means today?
- 4) Is authorial intention a valid criterion for biblical interpretation?
- 5) Is the distinction between "meaning" and "significance" a valid distinction for the biblical exegete?
- 8) Does a text have one primary meaning or are multiple meanings of equal validity possible?
- 7) How do the horizons of the interpreter affect exegesis?
- 8) What presuppositions about language and its nature inform one's theory and practice of exegesis?

In an effort to offer some workable answers to these questions, the first part of the article will attempt to outline some of the changes which have taken place in hermeneutics since 1800. It is an apodictical fact that the field of biblical interpretation has radically

changed, especially from the time of F. Schleiermacher onwards. Traditional hermeneutics involved the formulation and implementation of proper rules for interpretation. Primary attention was paid to the linguistic aspects of textual Interpretation, including grammar, syntax, vocabulary, etc. Meaning was bound up M the text and awaited the Interpreter to dig it out via proper exegesis. Traditional hermeneutics assumed that a text contained a determinate meaning which with the proper exegetical method could be discerned by an interpreter.

Modern hermeneutical theory is characterized by a twofold transition: the shift from a special/regional hermeneutical approach to that of general hermeneutics, and the shift from a primarily epistemological outlook to an ontological one. The former was inaugurated by the advent of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics while the latter shift occurred with the advent of M. Heidegger's *Being and Time*.<sup>1</sup> In general, we may say that traditional hermeneutics focused on the text, while sometimes neglecting the role of the interpreter, and modern hermeneutics focuses on the reader/interpreter, while sometimes neglecting the role of the text. It is our contention that a balanced theory of interpretation must give advertence to both of these aspects as in play every time interpretation takes place. Such a position seems to be represented by men like P. Ricoeur in his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*<sup>2</sup> and E. D. Hirsch in his *Validity in Interpretation*.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Hermeneutical Theory Since 1800: an Historical Assessment*

No discussion of hermeneutics would be complete without mention of the father of modern hermeneutics, F. Schleiermacher. He argued that interpretation consisted of two categories: grammatical and technical or psychological.<sup>4</sup> Grammatical interpretation focused on the text itself and dealt with such matters as grammar, syntax, etc. while technical interpretation focused on the mind of the author in an attempt to reconstruct his psyche in order to determine his mental process that led him to write what he did. Schleiermacher defines authorial intention in a way which most, if not all, would agree today is untenable for the simple reason that we cannot get into the author's psyche. This problem is particularly acute when considering ancient texts. The only hint at authorial intention we have is what the author has deposited in his text. We cannot get behind the text to the author's thought processes.

<sup>1</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Blackwell: Oxford, IM)

<sup>2</sup> P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus at Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven & London: Yale University, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscript*, ed. H. Kimmerle, trans. J. Duke and H. J. Forstman (Missoula: Scholars, 1977), 67-88.

For our purposes, we note two important features of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics. He emphasized that interpretation involved both objective and subjective factors. Furthermore, he did not attempt to dissolve the subject/object distinction as many later theoreticians have attempted to do. Schleiermacher's recognition that interpretation involved both objective and subjective factors should be a vital part of a balanced theory of interpretation. If we inject the notion of the interpreter's own horizons playing an integral part in meaning determination coupled with a more workable definition of authorial intention (see below), then Schleiermacher's basic scheme proves to be a valuable hermeneutical method.

From Schleiermacher the history of modern hermeneutical theory followed the trail of W. Dilthey to C. Frege to E. Husserl to M. Heidegger to H. Gadamer. Space does not permit an analysis of the contributions and insights of Dilthey, Frege, and Husserl. Yet it is important to note that Heidegger was a student of Husserl and could not agree with his mentor that objective knowledge was possible. This point is crucial for it was Heidegger who ushered in the ontological revolution in hermeneutics. With it came an increasing skepticism towards the possibility of achieving determinate meaning in textual interpretation. Hence, we may say that Schleiermacher, Frege and Husserl are representative of the school of thought that determinate meaning and objectivity are possible in interpretation while Heidegger and his student Gadamer are representative of the view that there can be no determinate meaning and objectivity in textual interpretation.

Heidegger has had a profound influence on contemporary hermeneutical theory in his two works *Being and Time*<sup>5</sup> and *On the Way to Language*<sup>6</sup>. It is to Heidegger that we owe the valuable insight of hermeneutics as embracing the whole of man's existence. Heidegger is an ontologist who posited "interpretation" as one of the fundamental modes of man's being. However, Heidegger's theory concerning the historicity of all understanding forced him and his followers to exaggerate the difference between past and present into a denial of any continuity of meaning at all. In Heidegger, the shift is made from the primacy of the text to the primacy of the interpreter. Indeed, for Heidegger the interpreter is himself the source of meaning. Reality for the interpreter is "disclosed" via his understanding. Heidegger seems to disallow the cognoscibility of any objectively valid and determinate meaning.

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Our critique of Heidegger must be brief at this point. It is not our purpose to critique captiously those with whom we disagree. Suffice it to say that from our perspective he has overemphasized the role of the interpreter in creating meaning by not allowing the text to communicate determinate meaning. His theory assumes the collapse of the subject/object dichotomy and therefore the impossibility of objective textual meaning. R. Bultmann may be the most influential figure in NT studies in this century. While teaching at the University of Marburg, Bultmann found the philosophical framework for his approach to scripture, from his colleague, Heidegger. It is primarily through Bultmann that Heidegger's philosophical existentialism has found its way into biblical studies. Bultmann's excellent article, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" should be read by all who practice exegesis. Bultmann has accurately emphasized the fact that one cannot come to any text from a totally objective standpoint. The interpreter always brings his own conceptual grid to the text. His first paragraph is worth quoting:

The question whether exegesis without presuppositions is possible must be answered affirmatively if "without presuppositions" means "without presupposing the results of the exegesis." In this sense, exegesis without presuppositions is not only possible but demanded. In another sense, however, no exegesis is without presuppositions, inasmuch as the exegete is not a tabula rasa, but on the contrary, approaches the text with specific questions or with a specific way of raising questions and thus has a certain idea of the subject matter with which the text is concerned<sup>7</sup>

Yet Bultmann, following Heidegger, exaggerates this notion of presuppositions and subjectivity by arguing that the text of the Bible is not intended to be interpreted objectively but rather is to be a "Subject" that determines the interpreter's existence. While we can agree that the Scriptures do "speak" to us in a sense as subject to object, we must reject the notion that with each approach to the text, there is no valid or permanent meaning to be identified. By de-emphasizing the cognitive aspects of textual meaning, and unduly exalting the ontological notion of interpretation as "encounter," Bultmann injects into the main arteries of biblical exegesis an overdose of Heideggerian ontology and existentialism.

<sup>7</sup> R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?" *Existence and Faith*, ed. S. M. Ogden (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961), 289-96.

We can all agree that interpretation does not involve a totally passive subject who stands wholly apart from his text and interprets it without any input from his own subjectivity. Like F. Kant, we have all been awakened from our Cartesian dogmatic slumbers. Whatever Insights Heidegger, Bultmann and the like may press upon us in this vein, we are the better for it. However, we must argue that meaning is not a construct of the interpreter's subjectivity alone. It must be forcefully stated in opposition to the correlation of interpretation with ontology by Heidegger and Bultmann that they are doing nothing more in the end than suggesting that the interpreter projects his own subjectivity. Unless we maintain the otherness or objectivity of textual meaning, then we must face squarely the fact that we could not interpret at all. Heidegger's scheme ineluctably results in the complete breakdown of the subject/object dichotomy, and it is this fact which causes his "method," along with Bultmann's, to be methodologically inadequate in biblical exegesis.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The so-called "New Hermeneutic" school of interpretation is one example of exegesis which has followed the lead of Heidegger and Bultmann. For a critique of the New Hermeneutic, see A. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 352-56, and "The New Hermeneutic," *New Testament Interpretation- Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 308-33.

Like Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Gadamer's monumental work *Truth and Method*<sup>9</sup> must be reckoned with by evangelical exegetes. It contains some crucial insights which should not be ignored by those of us interested in text interpretation. Particularly helpful is his emphasis that interpreters come to a given text with their own worldview, presuppositions, or "horizon" as Gadamer uses the term, which is different from that of the text. What is necessary is a "fusion of horizons" for interpretation to take place.

However, Gadamer's system is not without its philosophical and methodological flaws. Gadamer continues the attack on objective textual interpretation by emphasizing that meaning is not to be identified with authorial intention. Furthermore, exegesis has no foundational "methods" to be used in eliciting meaning from a given text. According to Gadamer, our historicity eliminates the possibility of discovering any determinate textual meaning and therefore objective meaning is not possible.

Yet Gadamer does not want to proffer relativism in text interpretation and hence he falls back on three concepts in an attempt to extricate himself from ultimate hermeneutical nihilism. These are 1) tradition, 2) meaning repetition, and 3) fusion of horizons. The role of tradition, as Gadamer sees it, is to enlarge the horizons of the text for each passing generation such that tradition serves as a bridge between the past and the present. The problem here is of course how to mediate between two conflicting traditional interpretations. By eliminating the possibility of objective textual meaning, Gadamer also eliminates the criterion needed to make a choice between conflicting interpretations and he is again left with relativism.

Gadamer seems to argue that a text does represent a repeatable meaning and yet in the same paragraph turns around and suggests that this is "not repetition of something past, but participation in a present meaning."<sup>10</sup> This creates confusion in that Gadamer seems to be saying first that meaning is repeatable and then that it isn't. Such reasoning leads Hirsch to point out: "This kind of reasoning stands as eloquent testimony to the difficulties and self-contradictions that confront Gadamer's theory as soon as one asks the simple question: what constitutes a valid interpretation?"<sup>11</sup> While we can profit greatly from Gadamer's statements about pre-understanding and "fusion of horizons," we must reject his basic thesis that a text contains no determinate meaning.

<sup>9</sup> H. C. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>11</sup> Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 252.

In Heidegger and Gadamer, the notion of understanding is not conceived as a way of knowing but rather as a mode of being. Somehow they never quite get around to answering the epistemological questions which were left in the wake of the ontological revolution. What we need is a hermeneutical system which strikes a proper balance between epistemology and ontology.

Hirsch of the University of Virginia has countered the relativism of Heidegger and Gadamer by arguing for the stability of textual meaning in two important works: *Validity in Interpretation* and *The Aims of Interpretation*.<sup>12</sup> One of Hirsch's most important contributions is his emphasis on the distinction between "meaning" and "significance." Drawing on A. Boeckh's division of his *Encyclopaedie*<sup>13</sup> into the two sections labeled "Interpretation" and "Criticism," Hirsch points out that "the object of interpretation is textual meaning in and for itself and may be called the 'meaning' of the text." Conversely, the object of criticism is textual meaning as it bears on something else. This object is what Hirsch refers to as the "significance" of the text.<sup>14</sup>

Roughly speaking, such a division corresponds to the exegesis of a text which seeks to determine the text's meaning and the application of that meaning (as, for example, in preaching) to point out its significance/application for today. Both meaning and significance or interpretation and application are two foci which the exegete must constantly keep in mind. Furthermore, because they tend to happen concurrently, it is probably not wise to argue that in practice these two foci can remain completely separated, although for the sake of discussion, we may separate them for the purpose of investigation and analysis.

Hirsch's categories of "meaning" and "significance" are important and helpful for us. When the biblical exegete comes to a text of Scripture, he can proceed on the premise that there is a determinate meaning there. His job is to discover this meaning through exegesis. Having done this, there remains the further task of applying this meaning to modern day man.

Hirsch has also made a solid contribution in that his writings stand as perhaps the best critique of Gadamerian hermeneutics. His most telling criticism of the weaknesses of Gadamer's theory can be found in Appendix H of his *Validity in Interpretation*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> E. Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago. 1978).

<sup>12</sup> A. Boeckh, *Encyclopaedie end Methodologie der Philologischen Wissenschaften* (ed. E. Bratuscheck; Leipzig, 1888).

<sup>13</sup> Hirsch, *Aims*, 445-64.

<sup>14</sup> Hirsch, *Validity*, 210-11.

A third valuable contribution of Hirsch to the contemporary hermeneutical scene is his insistence upon authorial intention as a criterion of validity in text Interpretation. What do we mean by the term "authorial intention" It may be helpful to outline what we do not



mean. By this term, we do not mean the psychological experience of the author for such is inaccessible. We do not mean the relation between mental acts and mental objects as in Husserl's theory. We do not mean the hoped for consequences of the author's writings. Authorial intention is to be identified with textual meaning, with the "sense of the whole" by which the author constructs, arranges and relates each particular meaning of his work.<sup>16</sup>

We propose then that a text has one primary meaning with multiple significances or applications of that meaning. Generally speaking, a text will not have multiple meanings of equal validity.<sup>17</sup> The key phrase here is "of equal validity" because some method and norms are necessary to adjudicate meaning possibilities. Hirsch has argued for such norms in his works. By way of illustration, we may say that the one primary meaning of a text is like an iceberg. The tip protrudes above water and is analogous to "meaning," but further investigation continues to yield fuller and deeper "meaning" just as the bulk of the iceberg is underwater. It is the same iceberg and hence the same meaning. Various disciplines approach the "meaning"/ iceberg in different ways. For example, a photographer would analyze the iceberg from the standpoint of its aesthetic value. An oceanographer would analyze it to obtain its scientific value, while a ship's captain may analyze it so as to avoid any damage to his ship. It is the same iceberg that all are analyzing, but it yields for each different aspects of meaning. At no time do any of these "interpreters" interpret the iceberg as a whale! The iceberg itself furnishes the constraints which guide and limit the interpreters potential elicitation of meaning. The kind of meaning we find in a text depends to some extent on the kind of meaning for which we are looking. Sometimes interpreters differ on a given text because they are looking for different kinds of meaning and from different perspectives. But it is the iceberg/text which determines the meaning capable of being drawn out, not the interpreters themselves, although they contribute to it.

<sup>16</sup> See the excellent article by E. Johnson, "Authors Intention and Biblical Interpretation." *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*, eds. E. Radmacher and R. Preus (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984) 409-29. His definition of authorial intention, which we have used here, is found on p. 414.

<sup>17</sup> One exception to this would be the notion of *sensus plenior*. For a good discussion of this topic, see D. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, eds. D. A. Carson and J. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1986), 179-211. As A. Thiselton says: "For there is an ongoing process of dialogue with the text in which the text itself progressively corrects and reshapes the interpreter's own questions and assumptions."<sup>18</sup>

Ricoeur, the French phenomenologist, is considered by many today to be on the cutting edge in the field of hermeneutics. His work has caught the attention of us all. In an

important work entitled *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*,<sup>19</sup> Ricoeur defines discourse as a dialectic between event and meaning. Discourse occurs as an event (conversation, the writing of a text, etc.) but as soon as the conversation ceases or the text is written, the event ceases. Yet the text as propositional content remains and this is the meaning which can be reidentified. Written discourse awaits reactualization as event by a reader.

A second dialectic which Ricoeur describes is that of Distanciation and Appropriation.<sup>20</sup> The Scriptures, for example, are distanced from us historically and culturally in the sense that they were written centuries ago by authors who are no longer around to tell us what they mean. Furthermore, our own cultural horizons serve as a barrier between us and the world of the text. The aim of all hermeneutics is to struggle against cultural distance-and historical alienation. This goal is attained only insofar as interpretation actualizes the meaning of a text for the present reader, a notion which Ricoeur calls “appropriation.”

A crucial point in Ricoeur’s theory is the fact that texts do have determinate meaning which can be appropriated by a reader. He has synthesized many of the insights of Gadamer into his theory without coming under the spell of Gadamer’s “cognitive atheism” in interpretation, as Hirsch would call it.

What we have said to this point is that the crucial difference between the two competing hermeneutical schools of thought is whether a text has a determinate meaning or not. Heidegger, Gadamer, Bultmann and company argue that it does not, while Hirsch, Ricoeur, and company argue that it does. Evangelical exegetes must be aware of the debate and its implications for our exegetical task.

### Philosophical Conception of Language

Another crucial consideration for the biblical exegete is the nature of language. Much discussion has occurred on this subject in recent years which has a direct bearing

<sup>18</sup> Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, 439.

<sup>19</sup> Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 8-12.

<sup>20</sup> I. B. Thompson, ed., Petit Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (London: Cambridge University, 1981) 131-44, 182-93.

on biblical exegesis. When considering the language of the Bible, in our opinion the following presuppositions are necessary: 1) language has a cognitive function; 2) language can interpret reality; 3) language both expresses and interprets ultimate reality by serving as a means of God's revelation to man.

The rise of analytic philosophy and logical positivism led to the notion that the only reality which philosophy was to investigate is language. Interestingly, this idea was long ago anticipated by Aristotle and criticized in his *Metaphysics*. Failing to recognize that language actually provides windows into reality, analytic philosophy has tended to investigate language itself rather than any reality about which language may speak.

Truth is a property of the sentence/proposition and the biblical revelation is a propositional revelation where God has conveyed truth about himself to us. The task of the exegete is to interpret accurately these truth-bearing propositions which have been placed in linguistic form. There is an ultimate referent beyond language (God) about which language may speak.

Most of the non-evangelical and some of the neo-evangelical theologian-exegetes have disallowed the propositional nature of God's revelation in Scripture. One need only read the writings of K. Barth, E. Brunner, Bultmann, and H. and R. Niebuhr along with a host of others to see that this is the case. The modern biblical exegete must be aware of the philosophical and theological one-sidedness of such an approach to scripture. Revelation is both propositional and personal. We may accept one aspect of revelation as being "encounter" and use phenomenological categories in describing it. But, we must also recognize the cognitive aspect of revelation as well.<sup>21</sup>

When we interpret a text from the Bible, we are seeking to interpret the very words of God conveyed through human instrumentality and language. Such a mode of disclosure does not obviate divine revelation. As R. Longacre so aptly puts it: "I think the moral of the story is that rather than language and its categories veiling reality, they are windows into it."<sup>22</sup> It is our foundational principle that God has so constructed language that it can be used by man to describe reality, and; by God to reveal reality, even such ultimate reality as the nature and person of God himself.

We have attempted in this brief sketch to offer some tentative answers to the eight questions at the beginning of this article. The field of hermeneutics can be seen to be of

<sup>21</sup> For an excellent discussion of this subject, see C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* (6 vols.; Waco: Word, 1976-1983) 3.429-81.

<sup>22</sup> R. Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983) 345.

great importance to the exegesis of the biblical text. Evangelical theologians have shown a willingness to engage the competing hermeneutical schools of thought in dialogue, and as a result biblical exegesis from an evangelical standpoint has been enhanced. The interested reader should pursue Thiselton's *The Two Horizons*,<sup>23</sup> *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*,<sup>24</sup> edited by E. Radmacher and R. Preus, and *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*,<sup>25</sup> edited by I. H. Marshall, to name just three of many outstanding works available from an evangelical perspective. We as biblical exegetes must maintain a dialogue with not only the state of our own discipline, but with what is taking place in other fields as well, especially when it may relate specifically to the discipline of biblical studies.

## II. Exegetical Methodology

Theory without practice is useless and practice without theory is unserviceable and unproductive. The previous discussion on hermeneutical theory was dedicated to the above maxim. One's approach to biblical exegesis rests upon certain theoretical considerations which are foundational to that approach. While it is not necessary to be a thorough student of hermeneutical theory since Schleiermacher to engage in exegesis, one should at least be acquainted with the present state of the discussion.

The purpose of exegesis is to "lead out" the meaning which has been deposited in the biblical text by the writer. Exegesis is of crucial importance because it is the foundation for theology and preaching. We cannot communicate the meaning of God's word via preaching until we have understood it ourselves.

We will argue in the second part of this article that exegesis is more than meaning determination which is arrived at only from a combination of word studies with syntactical analysis on a sentence level. Unfortunately, it is probably true that a great deal of exegesis that goes on in the average pastors study is little more than this. The average pastor, plundered by an already too busy daily schedule, resorts to an uncritical method of exegesis which results in an all too shoddy interpretation of a given biblical text. He may look at a sentence in his Greek NT, parse what he considers to be the key

<sup>23</sup> Cf. n. 8 above.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. n. 16 above.

<sup>25</sup> I. H. Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

verbs, do word studies on key words, and then from this material fashion a sermon. All of this is, of course, well and good as far as it goes. The problem is that it does not go far enough.

### *Text Linguistics and Exegesis*

We are thoroughly convinced that contemporary linguistic theory has a great deal to offer the biblical exegete in terms of both theory and method. The rise of Semantic analysis from the Chomskyan revolution onwards has already found its way into biblical studies. The field of discourse grammar (Text Linguistics as it is called in Europe) has much to offer those who interpret the Scripture. Discourse analysis is already proving to be a fruitful method in Bible translation. By and large, however, the insights of contemporary linguistic theory, discourse analysis, and the like have found their way into biblical exegesis only in a limited way. This is evidenced by the very few commentaries written from a discourse perspective rather than the traditional sentence level or verse by verse perspective. Many seminary professors, pastors and seminary students have little or no knowledge of what is taking place in the field of discourse grammar and its place in biblical studies.<sup>26</sup>

The question may be asked, "Is discourse grammar necessary in text interpretation, especially in the study of the Scriptures?" We believe that it is. Over a decade ago, Longacre was involved in workshops which concentrated on the discourse structure of a number of languages in Columbia and Panama. He argued that it was impossible to analyze correctly the grammar of a language without accounting for its discourse level features. In earlier work, discourse analysis was regarded as an option open to the student of a language provided that he was interested, and provided that he had a good start on the structure of lower levels (word, phrase, clause). But early in the first workshop it was seen that all work on lower levels is lacking in perspective and meets inevitable frustration when the higher levels—especially discourse and paragraph—have not been analyzed ... discourse analysis emerges not as an option or as a luxury for the serious student of a language but as a necessity.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> We have here in mind the work of J. Beekman, J. Callow, and M. Kopesec, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981) as well as the application of this model to Bible translation. Furthermore, the work of Longacre in various articles, his most recent book *The Grammar of Discourse* (New York: Plenum, 1983) and a forthcoming volume on the Joseph story in Genesis is proving to be fruitful in analysis of both OT and NT texts.

<sup>27</sup> R. Longacre, ed., *Discourse Grammar: Studies In Indigenous Languages of Columbia, Panama, and Ecuador*. Part 1 (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics and University of Texas at Arlington, 1976), 2.

It is our hope that this article can contribute to biblical exegesis by integrating concepts and principles discovered by Beekman and Callow, Longacre, and others in the field of discourse grammar and applying them to a method of biblical exegesis. We are keenly aware of

the many fine books and articles of recent vintage which have been written on the subject of exegesis.. The reader will profit from consulting them. The approach taken in this article is of course dependent upon the time honored principles which have guided biblical exegetes for centuries. Yet in some respects, our method will describe features of text analysis not usually discussed in books and articles on biblical, exegesis. With this in mind, the following seven linguistic features of texts are offered in an attempt to guide the exegete into a more thorough and fruitful analysis of sacred discourse.

### *Discourse Genre*

There are four major discourse types, all of which appear in Scripture. They are: Narrative, Procedural, Expository, and Hortatory. Narrative discourse primarily tells a story or narrates a series of events. Participants and events combine in a sequential chronological framework in narrative discourse. The book of Genesis, the Gospels and Acts are examples of narrative discourse. Procedural discourse answers the question, “How is something done?” Again there is a sequential chronological framework in this discourse type. An example of this type would be certain sections of the Pentateuch where specific instructions are given by God to Moses regarding the building of the tabernacle, the priesthood, etc.

Expository discourse is different from the previous two types in that it is set in a logical framework rather than a sequential chronological one. Expository discourse primarily explains or defines in some way and is probably the most frequently employed discourse type. Many of the Pauline epistles are said to be of this discourse type although we have come to believe that most, if not all, of the expository material in the Scripture is really hortatory in its semantic structure since truth is unto holiness. Nevertheless, there are large sections of embedded exposition in the Scriptures.

Hortatory discourse may be defined as an attempt to prescribe a course of action through a command, request, suggestion, etc. It tends to answer the question, “What should be done?” Hebrews is an example of hortatory discourse in the NT although it is usually defined as expository in most commentaries. Recognizing in which discourse genre an exegete is working is crucial to his exegesis.

This aspect of text analysis is somewhat analogous to Genre Criticism. This leads to a crucial question which must be answered by those who engage in biblical interpretation.

What is the value and role of higher criticism for biblical exegesis? There has been wide disagreement concerning the viability of higher criticism as a method of biblical interpretation. The Meier-Stulmacher debate illustrates the point. The problem resides not so much in the methodology as with the presuppositions of many who practice higher criticism. Pentateuchal criticism is illustrative of this point. It is commonplace to pick up a commentary or an article on some aspect of pentateuchal studies and observe that the author assumes at the outset some form of the Documentary Hypothesis. Multiple redactors and traditions are employed to explain textual phenomena all in a very subjective way. Would it not be better to assume the unity and integrity of the text until proven otherwise? Linguistically, there are other explanations for these textual phenomena which are just as valid and which are, in fact, predicated on textual phenomena rather than the suggestion of some elusive redactor. Linguist E. Wendland expresses the matter quite well when he says:

I feel, for example, that some scholars suffer from a certain degree of “linguo-centrism”; in other words, they often have difficulty in appreciating the distinctiveness and genius of a language and literature that lies outside of the Indo-European family of which they are so familiar. Thus, when encountering a text such as the Hebrew Old Testament which allegedly contains so many “problems,” they quickly propose that the text is, in fact, a patchwork, composed of fragments from sources J, E, D, P, X, Y, and Z, rather than recognizing the possibility that they may simply be dealing with a narrative style that is quite different from what they are used to.<sup>28</sup>

D. A. Carson sounds a much needed warning regarding the use of higher critical methodology when he says that

the situation is worsened by the fact that these ‘hermeneutical principles’ are frequently handled, outside believing circles, as if they enable us to practise our interpretive skills with such objective distance that we never come under the authority of the Cod whose Word is being interpreted, and never consider other personal, moral and spiritual factors which have no less ‘hermeneutical’ influence in our attempts to interpret the text.<sup>29</sup>

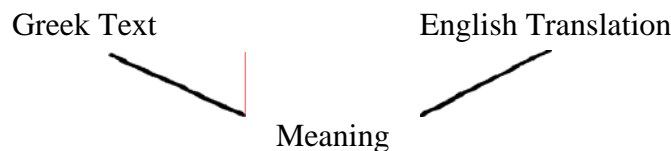
<sup>28</sup>E. Wendland, “Biblical Hebrew Narrative Structure,” *Selected Technical Articles Related to Translation* 10 (1984): 35-36.

<sup>29</sup>D. A. Carson, “Hermeneutics: A Brief Assessment of some Recent Trends,” *Themelios* 5 (1980): 14.

### *Language as a Form-Meaning Composite*

Language is a form/meaning composite which contains surface structure=form and semantic/notional structure=meaning. By “form” we mean the phonological, lexical, and grammatical structure of a language. This is what has traditionally been called “grammar.” The notion of meaning is, like form, multidimensional. It contains three aspects: referential, situational, and structural. Referential meaning refers to the subject matter of the discourse, i.e., what the text is about. Situational meaning refers to the participants and the situation in which communication takes place. By participants here we mean author/speaker and reader/hearer rather than the participants who may be a part of the referential content of the discourse itself. When an exegete studies the background and provenance of a given biblical text, he is engaged in analysis on this particular level. Structural meaning refers to how the information in a discourse is “packaged” and how these units of meaning relate to one another in the discourse. Traditional grammatical analysis is subsumed in this category.

Meaning is communicated via surface structure. As we approach the Bible, we must decode the meaning from the surface structure of Hebrew or Greek and then encode that meaning in another surface structure, namely, English. This is what takes place every time the Bible is translated. Therefore, all translation is an interpretation. The following diagram illustrates the process.



The key here is that the form of the source language and the form of the receptor language are not totally congruent, yet the meaning is capable of being understood, preserved and re-expressed in the receptor language. This is crucial in that exegesis attempts to understand the meaning of the source text and then re-express that meaning in an English text (translation, essay, commentary, or sermon). In this view, meaning has priority over form.

### *Contextual Exegesis*

Exegesis must be practiced contextually. Sentence level grammars, while valid, are not sufficiently descriptive of all the structural phenomena of a text. Following Longacre,

<sup>30</sup> Beekman, Callow, and Kopeseck, *The Semantic Structure*, 8-13.



we accept three basic building blocks of communication: sentence, paragraph, and discourse. Sentences combine to form paragraphs and paragraphs combine to form discourses. A discourse is always greater than the sum of its parts and hence one's textual analysis cannot remain solely on the sentence level. Just as there is a grammar of the sentence, there is also a grammar of the paragraph and discourse as well.<sup>31</sup>

Most if not all of the Creek grammars appearing before 1965 view Koine Creek discourse with the presupposition that the suprasentence structure (paragraph and discourse) is basically non-linguistic. Features of paragraphs and whole discourses seem not to have been treated in any way. J. H. Moulton's famous three-volume *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*<sup>32</sup> appeared over a fifty-seven year span with N. Turner authoring the third volume, *Syntax*, in 1963.<sup>33</sup> In this entire three-volume work, the supra-sentence level of Creek discourse is never mentioned. A. T. Robertson's monumental *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*<sup>34</sup> appeared in 1923. His discussion of grammar and syntax focuses solely on the clause and sentence level. Blass-Debrunner-Funk's *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* was first published in 1896 and passed through ten editions before being translated by Funk into English.<sup>35</sup> While the notes by Funk are important contributions to the work, the basic principles are the same as outlined by Blass and Debrunner. A concluding chapter entitled "Sentence Structure" occasionally touches upon matters relative to discourse features, but only in a tertiary way.

Of course, Text Linguistics as a discipline was not in existence when these grammars were written. From a sentence level perspective, they are excellent treatments of the subject. We are simply pointing out that the biblical exegete must acknowledge the fact that a great deal is happening in the text above the sentence level and, furthermore, his exegetical methodology must provide the tools to investigate meaning beyond that level.

<sup>31</sup> For evidence of paragraph grammatically see Longacre, "The Paragraph as a Grammatical Unit," *Discourse and Syntax (Syntax and Semantics)*; 18 vols.; ed. Talmy Givon; New York: Academic, 1979), 12.115-33.

<sup>32</sup> J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3rd ed.; 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908).

<sup>33</sup> J. H. Moulton and N. Turner, *Syntax*, vol. 3 In *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963).

<sup>34</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 4th ed. (Nashville: Broadman, 1934).

<sup>35</sup> F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. R. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961).

### *The Hierarchical Structure of Texts*

Texts are hierarchically structured such that the organizing principle of surface structure in discourse is the notion of hierarchy. The following illustrates the levels of communication found in texts.

- 1) Who: discourse-highest level of language
  - 2) Paragraph-viewed as a structural unit
  - 3) Sentence
  - 4) Clause
  - 5) Phrase
  - 6) Word
  - 7) Stem
  - 8) Morpheme
- levels 4-8 are usually called "grammar"

These textual units of meaning may embed lower levels within them in such a way that a text is characterized by recursive embedding. A given discourse may embed discourses and paragraphs, a paragraph may embed paragraphs and sentences, and so on down the line. For example, the book of Acts is an example of narrative discourse, but it contains chunks of embedded expository and hortatory discourse. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 functions in the text of Acts as an embedded expository discourse in the surface structure form of a speech/sermon. This notion of recursive embedding is important for the biblical exegete and the homiletician in that its recognition will allow one to better analyze and outline a text accurately.

Most of the biblical exegesis in vogue today is intra-sentential, i.e., the exegete spends most of his time studying the syntax of the text from the clause level on down. What those of us in discourse grammar are advocating for biblical studies is that we also take into consideration the upper levels of communication as well including the sentence, paragraph, and discourse. In other words, biblical exegesis should not be limited to intra-sentential analysis, but must be expanded to include inter-sentential analysis as well.

Consider the following two sentences. S<sub>1</sub> "He slept for seventeen hours." S<sub>2</sub> "He was dead tired." These two sentences share a semantic level relationship of result-reason. S<sub>2</sub> is the reason for S<sub>1</sub>. The same kind of relationship could have been expressed in a single sentence: "He slept for seventeen hours because he was dead tired." Here, the reason-proposition is subordinated in a causal clause. Thus, semantic level relationships exist intra-sententially as well as inter-sententially. Furthermore, the same kind of semantic relationship could exist between two paragraphs such that a given paragraph P<sub>2</sub> could be the reason for paragraph P<sub>1</sub>. The point in all of this for the exegete is the fact that we must consider the overall context of sentence, paragraph, and discourse in the

text interpretation, as well as paying attention to the semantic relationships that exist between sentences, paragraphs and even embedded discourses in a given text. A finite network of communication relations is suggested in Beekman and Callow's *Semantic Structure of Written Communication*.<sup>36</sup> A text can be propositionalized according to these semantic level relationships to determine the propositional relationships.

Paying special attention to paragraph boundaries in the text is crucial to a proper analysis. The exegete should become aware of the ways in which paragraph onset is marked in Hebrew and Greek discourse structure. In Greek, a number of particles and conjunctions can mark paragraph onset. Back reference or certain characteristic constituents at the beginning of a paragraph are used as well. For example, the vocative in Greek often marks the beginning of a new paragraph. In the epistle of James, eleven of the fourteen vocatives function as devices to mark paragraph onset. Tense spans can also serve to mark paragraph boundaries. For example, a string of present tense verbs may be interrupted with tense shift and such change may mark paragraph onset. Such an analysis serves the exegete well in his attempt to find a valid structure to the text. All of the features mentioned so far are surface structure features. There is a semantic level feature as well which identifies paragraphs in a given text. Thematic unity often aids in marking the onset or the conclusion of a paragraph. Each paragraph is constructed around a particular theme or participant. Usually a change in theme or participant engenders a change in paragraph as well.

#### *Main Line Information vs. Ancillary Information*

It is crucial for the exegete to recognize that a written discourse contains main line information as well as ancillary information. Information which is on the event line of a narrative discourse or the theme line of an expository discourse is more salient than that which appears in the supportive material. Longacre has suggested the notion of verb ranking as a means whereby the exegete can determine what is main line material and what is not. For example, in English, the simple past tense is used in narrative discourse to tell a story. By extracting the verbs in past tense, one gets the backbone or event line of the story. Sentences containing other verb tenses or verbals such as participles and infinitives are usually supportive material. In the Hebrew of the OT, for example, the *waw* consecutive plus the imperfect (preterite) is used to carry on the event line in narrative discourse. This tense form is always verb initial in its clause and can not

<sup>36</sup>Beekman and Callow, *Semantic Structure*, 112.

have a noun phrase or negative preceding it. Characteristically, clauses which begin in this way (with the preterite) are expressive of the story line in the narrative. By extracting these verbs and placing them in order one gets a usually well-formed outline of the story.<sup>37</sup>

The book of Hebrews is an example of hortatory discourse with sections of embedded exposition. The most salient verb forms are the imperatives and hortatory subjunctives. The main thrust of the book is centered around the clauses containing these verb forms. Yet, Hebrews is usually analyzed by exegetes as an expository discourse and the thematic material centered around the embedded sections of exposition such as the atonement or the High Priesthood of Christ, both concepts of which are important to the book, but neither of which constitutes its main theme. The point here is that the entire verbal system of a language needs to be evaluated to determine what part each tense form plays in the overall discourses.

The main line material of any text will be the material which is most important to the exegete and preacher if he wants to stay true to the emphasis placed by the text itself. On the other hand, the supportive material will be viewed as just that, material which supports the main theme or story line of a given discourse. If the exegete/pastor analyzes a text and assigns the theme to supportive material, he has misplaced the emphasis which the text itself has marked. Thus, when he preaches the text, the subordinate material becomes the primary thrust of his message and he has missed the emphasis altogether.

#### *Macrostructure in Texts*

Every text contains a macrostructure, an overall theme or point of the text: The exegete must determine what this overall thrust is because then he can more readily see how all of the units of the text fit together to achieve this overall theme. Careful consideration of the verb structure of a discourse will aid in determining the macrostructure.

#### *Peak Structure in Texts*

Sometimes a text contains what Longacre calls peak. This textual phenomenon is quite common in discourse and its recognition will aid the biblical exegete in his analysis of a given text. Longacre defines peak as a “zone of turbulence” In the overall flow of the discourse. At Peak, routine features of the event line may be distorted or phased

<sup>37</sup> R. Longacre, “Verb Ranking and the Constituent Structure of Discourse,” *Journal of the Linguistic Association of the Southwest* 8 (1962): 177-202.  
out. In short, Peak is any episode-like unit set apart by special surface structure features and corresponding to the climax or denouement in the notional/semantic structure.<sup>38</sup>

Longacre notes several surface structure features which can be used to mark Peak. The employment of extra words at the important point of the story via paraphrase, parallelism and tautologies may be used to mark the Peak of a discourse. The effect of such devices slows down the story so that this part does not go by too fast. Another feature is a concentration of participants at a given point resulting in the “crowded stage” effect. Heightened vividness may be used to mark Peak by a shift in the nominal/verbal balance, tense shift, or a shift to a more specific person as from third person to second or first person. This kind of marking usually occurs in narrative discourse. Change of pace may be used to mark Peak as in a shift to short, crisp sentences or a shift to long run-on type sentences.<sup>39</sup>

An example of this phenomenon occurs in the Flood narrative in Gen 6:9-9:17 where Longacre posits 2 peaks: an action peak in 7:17-24 where the destructiveness of the flood reaches its apex, and a didactic peak in 9:1-17 where the covenant concept comes into primary focus.<sup>40</sup> The action peak describes the ever-mounting flood waters until finally the tops of mountains are covered. The author uses a great deal of paraphrase and paraphrase within paraphrase at this point in the story. Longacre notes that much of this paraphrase, which would normally be collateral material in the discourse, is presented with event line verbs. These are not normally used in backgrounded material such as paraphrase. Here, however, at the action peak of the story, the event line tense is extended to backgrounded material. The effect created is analogous to the use of slow motion at the high point of a film.

In the book of Philemon, the peak of the book is found in the third major paragraph (vv 17-20). Philemon is an example of hortatory discourse where Paul desires Philemon to receive the runaway slave Onesimus back into his home. Up until v17 there is not a single imperatival verb form. Yet when we come to this paragraph there are three imperatives which occur, the first being προσλαβου, “receive him. . . .” In the preceding paragraph there are seventeen verb forms and five of these are verbals. In this paragraph, however, there is a total of eleven verbs and not one of them is a verbal. There is a wide

<sup>38</sup> Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse*, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 25-38.

<sup>40</sup> R. Longacre, "Interpreting Biblical Stories," *Discourse and Literature*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1965): 169-85.

range of mode shift in the verbs of these four verses as well, including the imperative, the indicative, and the optative. Tense shift is also well represented as the present, aorist, and future tenses all occur. The sentence structure of this paragraph is quite different from the rest of the book in that Paul shifts to short almost staccato sentences with very little

preposed and postposed material. This added “punch” is further magnified by the increase in finite verb forms. All of these features combine to mark vv 17-20 as the hortatory peak of Philemon. Notice also how v 17, which contains the first imperative of the book functions as a good statement of Philemon's macrostructure: “Receive him as you would receive me.”

### *Summary Methodology*

In summary fashion, we are suggesting that biblical exegetes should acknowledge the contribution that contemporary linguistic theory is making to the field of biblical interpretation. In terms of method, we suggest that text analysis begin with the original text. A preliminary translation should be made at the outset. This translation will serve as a guide and will be modified perhaps several times until the conclusion of the exegetical process when a final translation can be made. Several readings of the text should be made to get a sense of the whole before breaking it down into its constituent parts. Take the telescopic view before subjecting the text to your exegetical microscope. A text is always more than the sum of its parts and the parts cannot be interpreted except in light of the whole. Analyze the hierarchical structure of the text making tentative paragraph breaks. These may be modified upon further investigation. Analyze the verbal structure to get an idea of the event line or theme line of the text. Pay close attention to material that is thematic and determine how the subordinating ideas support it. Watch for features that may be marking Peak, especially in a narrative discourse. Determine the macrostructure and analyze how the constituent structure of the text contributes to it. Take note of participant reference in narrative discourse. Observe how participants are introduced and integrated into the overall discourse as well as how they are phased out. At this point, the groundwork has been laid for a microscopic view of the text. Dig into the clause level structure, making grammatical decisions aided by your telescopic view. Any necessary word studies should be done but always paying close attention to context since words are defined by context.

Propositionalizing the text as in the Beekman-Callow model will aid the exegete in determining the semantic level relationships that exist in inter-clausal connections.<sup>41</sup> In this way intra-sentential, intersentential and inter-clausal relationships can be identified and one can better see the meaning being communicated.

A recognition of these features of language and discourse will aid the exegete to achieve a more fruitful analysis of his text. They are not offered in any attempt to be exhaustive as a methodology, nor are they offered as a replacement for the standard exegetical methods which have been used for centuries. It is our hope that these insights from contemporary linguistic theory and practice can subsidize biblical exegesis as it is normally practiced.

### III. *From Exegesis to Proclamation*

Sermon delivery is the counterpart of exegesis. However, the bridge from exegesis to proclamation is not easily built. Many pastors complete their exegetical work, fashion it into a well-organized sermon, and then enter the pulpit only to see their sermon die in the delivery process. Without a good delivery much of the sermon, as well as the meaning and significance of the biblical text, is lost as far as the audience is concerned.

If preaching is to be truly communicative, five aspects of delivery must be mastered by the preacher. 1. The first crucial area of delivery is what may be called the mechanical aspects. This includes such matters as breathing, articulating, pitch, inflection, vocal variation, etc. 2. Mental aspects of sermon delivery take us behind the spoken word to the mental dynamics that produce them. Communication is enhanced when a speaker learns to see what he says before he says it. 3. A third aspect of sermon delivery is the psychological aspect. Here the preacher-audience dynamic is the central focus. 4. The rhetorical aspect of sermon delivery focuses on the use of words and sentences effectively and persuasively. One cannot effectively communicate without carefully considering his audience. 5. The fifth aspect of sermon delivery is the spiritual aspect which emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit who vitalizes a sermon in the life of the preacher and audience.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Aristotle's Rhetorical Triad*

One of the best frameworks for analyzing the total communication situation as described in these five aspects of sermon delivery (excepting the spiritual aspect) is that

<sup>41</sup>Beekman and Callow, *Semantic Structure*, for the list of communication relations which undergird all discourse and the methodology for analyzing the semantic propositional structure of a text.

<sup>42</sup>J. Vines, *A Guide to Effective Sermon Delivery* (Chicago: Moody, 1986).

which Aristotle formulated centuries ago in his *Rhetoric* under the rubrics of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. If we could place any one textbook on the required reading list in all of the homiletics courses in seminaries today, it would be Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

By *logos*, Aristotle referred to the use of logic and formal methods of persuasion. The use of induction and deduction are fundamental modes of rhetorical persuasion and should be used by the Christian persuader. The Pauline epistles are filled with material of an inductive and deductive nature.

*Ethos* refers to the impression which the preacher himself makes upon the audience. As far as the audience is concerned, the validity of what the preacher says will be proportional to the integrity which his audience perceives him to display.

*Pathos* describes the appeal to the emotions in an audience by means of the speakers rhetorical technique. Although some preachers disparage the use of any emotion in a sermon, and others absolutely abuse it, we must recognize that there is a valid use of the emotional appeal in preaching.

Aristotle defines the function of rhetoric as not only the art of persuasion, but also “to discover the available means of persuasion in a given case.”<sup>43</sup> His rhetorical triad of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* are the means of persuasion in any spoken or written discourse.

### *Preaching as Persuasion*

Preaching is a form of persuasion. Every sermon should have a hortatory purpose as its underlying base. The simple reason for this is that we do not preach for the sake of preaching or even just to communicate truths, but we preach for a verdict. The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that truth is unto holiness. However, it seems to us that some have lost sight of the fact that preaching should be geared to persuading people to respond. Some sermons are little more than a rehearsal of Bible history with no clear attempt to persuade the listener to any course of action. Other sermons are didactic in nature and while they contain excellent information, they never are persuasive because the preacher fails to tie the teaching to a prescribed course of action.

There are of course those who question the validity of the use of persuasion in preaching at all. Perhaps this is so because some within the ranks of the Christian ministry have become more like manipulators rather than persuaders. They have taken the philosophical stance of Utilitarianism with its characteristic maxim “the end justifies the means.”

<sup>43</sup> *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, ed. and tr. Lane Cooper (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1932), 7.



### *Biblical Basis for Preaching as Persuasion*

Yet we must say that there is an adequate biblical basis for persuasion in preaching. A study of Paul's preaching ministry will reveal that he was a persuader in the finest sense of that term. For example, in Acts 13:43, we are told that Paul, in speaking to Christians, "persuaded them to continue in the grace of God." Acts 18:4 records the fact that Paul preached in Corinth on the Sabbath and "persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." 2 Cor 5:11 is perhaps the clearest passage where Paul mentions his attempt to persuade men as well as one of his motivations: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. . . ." The particular word for "persuade" in this verse means to persuade or to induce one by words to believe.

The appeal to fear is not altogether an unworthy one. Of course, there should be no unreasonable or excessive use of fear in preaching. Scare tactics for the sake of fear are totally unwarranted. Yet fear is a genuine emotion of the human psyche. A doctor who wishes to cause his patient to abstain from smoking does not hesitate to make an appeal to fear. The Scriptures speak of the reality of entering eternity unprepared to meet God in the most fearful terms. Preachers should not hesitate to sermonize about that which God himself has revealed in his word.

Paul summarizes the preacher's attitude toward the subject of persuasion in preaching in 1 Thess 2:3-8 when he says,

For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of Cod to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men but Cod, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; Cod is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of Cod only, but also our own souls because ye were dear unto us (KJV).

There is an extreme to which some preachers go which must be avoided. It is possible to be too persuasive in one's sermon delivery. We have all heard sermons from well-meaning preachers who bombarded the congregation with one imperative after another. Such a concatenation of command forms bunched together in a sermon are not usually persuasive. They give the impression that the preacher is God's legislator who angrily barks forth "thou shalt nots." Such a preacher's motive was pure, namely to persuade the

people to do what the Bible says they should do. However, his technique did not take into account the psychological and rhetorical aspects of sermon delivery and audience reception.

### *Mitigation in Preaching*

In further development of this point, we should like to discuss briefly the notion of *mitigation* in discourse. No one likes to be told that a particular course of action they have chosen is wrong. Further more, no one likes to be told to do things. The wise preacher will learn to employ mitigation in his preaching.

For example, suppose a teacher is lecturing his class and the room temperature is too warm. He has at his disposal any number of ways of communicating to someone in the class that he prefers them to open a door. He may say to someone, "Bill, open the door." Or he could say, "Bill, would you please open the door?" The first form of address is harsh and direct, employing an imperatival form. The second form of address is somewhat mitigated with the employment of the word "please" and the Interrogative "would you." There are other ways even more mitigated in which he could communicate his desire for the door to be opened. He could say, "Would someone please open the door?" Here the shift from a specific person to the general "someone" mitigates the request even further. Another option available to the teacher would be to say, "I wish that door were open so it would be cooler in here." Here, there is no imperative or interrogative, but a simple declarative statement. Chances are someone would open the door after hearing such a statement. Or take the statement, "It's warm in here." The surface structure is one of a declarative sentence with no mention whatsoever of the word "door." Yet the underlying notional structure of this statement (given the context in which we have placed it) might be one of command in the sense that we could add the unstated sentence, "Open the door." All of this goes to show that there are any number of ways a speaker may mitigate his commands to an audience.

Preachers need to learn to make wise use of mitigation in their preaching. The NT writers employed a variety of mitigated forms of expression in an attempt to persuade their readers to a particular course of action.

In short, effective communication from the pulpit must be informed by Aristotle's rhetorical triad of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. This involves a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and here is where there is no substitute for thorough exegesis. It involves a thorough knowledge of the speaker-audience dynamic such that the preacher must speak

from integrity and his audience must know of his sincerity and genuineness. Finally, it involves a knowledge of people and how they respond to the spoken word.

R. Roberts summarizes the triad of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in words that every preacher needs to hear and heed.

Be logical. Think clearly, Reason cogently. Remember that "argument" Is the life and soul of persuasion. Study human nature. Observe the characters and emotions of your audience, as well as your own character and emotions. Attend to delivery. Use language rightly. Arrange your material well. End crisply.<sup>44</sup>

### *Conclusion*

A well-rounded approach to biblical interpretation involves three things. First, a recognition of the foundational hermeneutical principles necessary to inform a productive methodology. Foundational to one's biblical hermeneutic is the notion that a text has a determinate meaning. Second, a recognition of and implementation of exegetical methods which employ, along with traditional methodology, insights and methods from contemporary linguistic theory. Third, a recognition of Aristotle's rhetorical categories of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* and how they inform good homiletical theory and practice. The bridge from hermeneutics to exegesis to proclamation is not easily built, but it must be built, and once built, ceaselessly traversed by us all.

<sup>44</sup> R. Roberts, *Greek Rhetoric and Literary Criticism* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1928), 50.

## **SECTION 17**

### **Old Testament Narrative and Poetry**

# WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN READING A PARAGRAPH

1. Look for that which is *General* and that which is *Specific*.
2. Look for the author's use of *Questions* and *Answers*.
3. Examine the flow of *Dialogue* and ask the appropriate questions of the *Dialogue*.
4. Observe the use of *Emotional* terms.
5. What is the *Tone* of the passage?

# **CLUES FOR INTERPRETING NARRATIVE**

## **CONTEXT**

Any individual narrative should be interpreted in light of the whole account, i.e., Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted in light of Mark 1:1-16:8.

## **AUTHORIAL/EDITORIAL/NARRATOR COMMENTS**

The author or narrator gives clues to his reader of how to interpret a text.

Examples:

- (1) Mark 5:1-20 should be interpreted by such editorial comments as: Mark 1:1, 34; 3:11-12.
- (2) 1 Kings 15:5-6; 22:43; 2 Kings 14:3-4; 2 Chronicles 33:2-8
- (3) 1 Kings 12:15, 15:29; 16:12, 34; 2 Kings 1:17; 23:16; 24:2

## **THEMATIC STATEMENTS**

The author or narrator sometimes provides a thematic statement which reveals the theme of his work: Cf. Acts. 1:8 with 6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20; 28:31. (How do Peter and Paul fit into this?)

## **REPETITION**

Cf. Judges 3:7-9; 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25

# Interpreting Old Testament Narratives<sup>1</sup>

1. Follow many of the same principles used in the interpretation of New Testament narratives.
2. Examine each section to see what it is teaching and then ask why the author has strung together the stories in the larger context.
3. Ask what the passage is teaching about God. He is the central figure in Old Testament narratives as Jesus is the central figure in the Gospels.
4. Look for story shifts (breaks and pivots) in the narrative.
5. Observe the literary device of interchange, which involves contrasting or comparing two stories at the same time.
6. Note that theology is (normally) taught implicitly rather than explicitly in Old Testament (as well as in the NT) narratives.
7. One significant difference between Old Testament narratives and narratives in the Gospels is the Old Testament narratives are usually much longer (i.e. Joseph, Abraham, David)

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<sup>1</sup> This material comes from Fee and Stuart

# Common Errors in the Interpretation of Old Testament Narratives

1. Beware of allegorizing Old Testament narratives. Focus on the clear meaning of the text.

2. Beware of reading things into narratives that are not really there. Why do people sometimes read things into narratives that are not really there?

- Desperate people are truly hurting and in need of help are looking for anything that might address their situation.
- Sometimes sincere believers are impatient and want an immediate answer from God rather than waiting patiently and praying for God's guidance.
- We sometimes wrongly believe that everything in the Bible applies *directly* to us.
- Sincere believers can be prone to decontextualizing a passage.



## Poetic Literature

### The Difference Between Prose and Poetry

Judges 4 (prose) and 5 (poetry)

Exodus 14 (prose) and 15 (poetry)

Poetic License

## THE FORM OF HEBREW POETRY

1. Metrical Patterns
2. Parallelism
  - a. Synonymous Parallelism
  - b. Synthetic Parallelism
  - c. Antithetical Parallelism
  - d. Non-Parallelism
3. Poetic Language and Imagery
  - (a) Paronomasia
  - (b) Alliteration
  - (c) Acrostics
  - (d) Assonance
  - (e) Figurative Language

## HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Note the strophic (stanza) patterns of the poem or hymn.
2. Group parallel lines.
3. Study the metaphorical language.

# INTERPRETING POETRY

- What is the difference between commissive and referential language?
- Over one-third of the Bible is comprised of Poetry.
- Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Lamentations – almost all of these books are poetry.
- Prophetic books embody poetry as a major literary feature.
- Poetry can also be found in many Old testament narratives (Judges 4-5; Exodus 14-15)
- The teaching of Jesus in the Gospels contains a significant amount of poetic/commissive language.

# Elements of Hebrew Poetry

## 1. Terseness

## 2. A high degree of structure – Parallelism

- Synonymous
- Developmental/Step/Climatic
- Antithetical/Contrastive
- Chiastic

## 3. Figurative Language

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Indirect analogy
- Hyperbole
- Personification/Anthropomorphism/  
Zoomorphism

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF PSALMS

Psalms of Zion	48, 84
Royal Psalms	2, 8, 72, 110
Hymns to God	19, 24
Wisdom Psalms	1, 127-128
Penitential Psalms	6, 32
Imprecatory Psalms	58, 137
Praise Psalms	106, 111-113
Lament Psalms	13, 142

# Songs in the Bible

## Introductory Information:

## Different Kinds of Songs in the Bible:

Much of the following outline is directly dependent on Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. Not all quoted material appears in quotations.

### (1) War Songs

- (a) Exodus 17:16
- (b) Judges 7:18, 20
- (c) Numbers 10:35-36
- (d) Exodus 15:1-18 [victory song of Moses – among best known]
- (e) Judges 5 [victory song of Deborah – among best known]
- (f) Numbers 21:27-30 [victory song over Moabites]
- (g) 1 Samuel 18:7; 21:11; 29:5 ["Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands"]

Osborne: "[Most of these songs] dwell rapturously upon the hand of God stretched out against the enemies of Israel. The glory belongs to Yahweh, who shares the spoils and the honor with his people."

### (2) Love Songs

- (a) Song of Solomon, 5 different interpretations
  1. Judaism and the early church – allegory of the mystical love of God for his people or Christ for the church.
  2. Some modern scholars – a postexilic midrash on divine love (similar to #1)
  3. A drama of a maiden and her lover
  4. Most modern critics – see no structural development – it is a collection of secular love songs, perhaps modeled on praise hymns
  5. The book uses love imagery for purposes of cultic ritual and was used in the festivals of Israel.
- (I favor option #3) – literal maiden and lover. Solomon and lover. image of rustic shepherd and king relate to David and by extension to Solomon as well.

### (3) The Psalms

Overview of psalms. Largest “book” of Bible. 5 different books.

**Psalms 1-41**, ends in verse 13 with doxology

**Psalms 42-72**, ends with benediction in verses 18-19

**Psalms 73-89**, ends with benediction in verse 52

**Psalms 90-106**, verse 48 benediction

**Psalms 107-150**, ends with 150<sup>th</sup> Psalm

There are titles affixed to some of psalms

73 explicitly by David

12 by Asaph

11 by the sons of Korah

2 by Solomon

#### **Lament Psalms.**

- (a) The most common type of psalm.
- (b) Songs that agonize over a particular situation and petition God for help
- (c) Individual laments (Pss 3; 5-7; 13; 17; 22; 25-28; 31; 38-40; 42-43; 51; 54-57; 69-71; 120; 139; 142)
- (d) Corporate laments (Pss 9; 12; 44; 58; 60; 74; 79-80; 94; 137)
- (e) Two by David outside the Psalms – 2 Samuel 1:17-27 for Saul and Jonathan; 2 Sam 3:33-34 for Abner.
- (f) Seven Common themes in the structure of a lament noted by Hayes (Stein text lists 5, extra two have a \*)
  - 1. **Address to God** – Ps 22:1 “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” often with a confession of faith, Ps 71:1, “In you, O Yahweh, I have taken refuge; may I never be put to shame.
  - 2. **Description of Distress**, often highly figurative (57:4, I am in the midst of lions ... whose teeth are spears and arrows”, at times presented as concern regarding himself (69:2, “I sink in the miry depths” or even as a complaint against God (44:9, “yet you have rejected and humiliated us”)
  - 3. **Plea for Redemption**, both for deliverance (3:7a, “Arise, O LORD! Deliver me, O my God!”) and the defeat of his enemies (3:7b, “For you have struck all my enemies on the jaw; you have broken the teeth of the wicked”)

4. **Statement of Confidence or Trust in Yahweh** (12:7, “O Yahweh, you will preserve us; you will protect us from this generation forever”)
5. **\*Confession of Sin** (25:11b, Pardon my guilt, for it is great”) or affirmation of innocence (17:3-5, “you have tested me and found nothing . . . I have avoided the paths of the violent . . . my feet have not slipped”)
6. **A Vow or Pledge** to do certain things if God grants the request (56:12, “I must present vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you”, often involving a reminder to God of his covenant commitments (74:18, “Remember this, O Lord”)
7. **\*Conclusion**, which may be in the form of praise (57:11, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth”) or restatement of the request (80:19, “Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved”)

Few psalms contain ALL these elements. Nevertheless, these do constitute the basic lament.

Osborne: “The value of such psalms for every believer is obvious. Whether one is ill (Ps. 6; 13; 31; 38; 39; 88; 102), beset by enemies (3; 9; 10; 13; 35; 52-57; 62; 69; 86; 109; 120; 139) or aware of sin (25; 38; 39; 41; 51), the lament psalms offer not only encouragement but models for prayer. Many have claimed that one should pray them directly; I agree but prefer to meditate, contextualize and then pray these psalms as they reflect upon my situation.”

**Hymns or Praise Songs.** Directly celebrate the joy of worshipping YHWH.

1. Calling upon YHWH (Ps 139:1, “O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.”)
2. A call to worship (111:1, “I will extol the Lord with all my heart”)
3. A motivation clause praising YHWH and giving the reasons for worship, often centering upon God’s attributes and deeds (111:2, “Glorious and majestic are his deeds”)
4. A conclusion repeating the call to praise, often including a series of blessings (111:10, “to him belongs eternal praise”)

Fee and Stuart note 3 specific kinds of hymns:

1. Yahweh is praised as Creator (Ps. 8; 19; 104; 148)
2. Yahweh is praised as protector and benefactor of Israel (66; 100; 111; 114; 149)
3. Yahweh is praised as Lord of history (33; 103; 113; 117; 145-47)

Other hymns:

- (1) Some go into detail regarding God as in control of history by recapitulating the great salvation events in the life of Israel (78; 105-6; 135-36).
- (2) The Hallel psalms (113-18) formed a special part of the Passover celebration and were also a regular part of the synagogue service.

**Thanksgiving Hymns** – Thanking God for answers to specific prayers. If the lament is the “before” of spiritual trust songs, the thanksgiving hymn is the “after” – like 2 bookends. Like the lament, we have individual thanksgiving hymns (18; 30; 32; 34; 40; 66; 92; 103; 116; 118; 138) and corporate (65; 67; 75; 107; 124; 136). Another example – after Jonah’s deliverance (Jonah 2:2-9).

1. In addition to thanking God for his deliverance, such psalms regularly pledge future fidelity and worship to God (18:49, “Therefore I will praise you among the nations, O Yahweh”) and specifically give the glory to Yahweh for the defeat of the psalmist’s enemies (18:39, “You gave me strength for battle; you subdued my adversaries”) or his recovery from illness (30:3, “O Lord, you raised my soul from Sheol; you rescued me from those who descend to the grave). 6 structural elements to a Thanksgiving song.
  - a. Invitation to give thanks or to praise YHWH , Ps 30:1, 4
  - b. Account of trouble and salvation, Ps 18:3-19
  - c. Praises of Yahweh, acknowledging his saving work, Ps 18:46-48
  - d. Offertory formula at the presentation of sacrifice (Ps 118:21)
  - e. Blessings over participants in the ceremony (Ps 22:26)
  - f. Exhortation (Ps 32:8-9)

**Songs of Celebration and Affirmation** – several types of hymns that celebrate God’s covenant relationship with the king and the nation.

1. **Royal Psalms.** The coronation psalms (2; 72; 101; 110) and enthronement psalms (24; 29; 47; 93; 95-99) were written to depict the implications of the accession to the throne, with its ritual crowning, swearing in before Yahweh, anointing with oil and receiving the homage of the people. The enthronement psalms may have gone beyond the single coronation to encompass an annual ceremony celebrating the kingship.



2. **Songs of Zion** – praises God for his gift of Jerusalem, the Holy City.

**Wisdom and Didactic Psalms** (1; 36; 37; 49; 73; 119; 127; 128; 133) parallel Proverbs in the celebration of wisdom as God's great gift to his people and its connection to the inscripturated Word and Torah.

**Imprecatory Psalms** (12; 35; 52; 57-59; 60; 69; 70; 83; 109; 137; 140) lament psalms where the writer's anger and desire for vindication are especially prominent.

**Penitential Psalms** – Psalms of repentance where the psalmist comes to God in repentance of his sin. Pss 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130

Label the Psalm:

1 –

13 –

21 –

48 –

51 –

95-

137 -

**Suggestions for interpreting the Psalms:**

1. Note the sub-genre of the psalm, consider the original setting (as best as one can determine).
2. Be aware of figurative language (poetry)
3. Be aware the psalm may give general guidance or only part of the story (proverbs)

## **SECTION 18**

### **Proverbs and Prophecy**

# TYPES OF PROVERBS

1. *Descriptive Proverbs* make a simple observation about life without dealing with exceptions or applications (11.24; 15.23)
2. *Prescriptive Proverbs* state a truth with the goal of influencing behavior (19.17; 14.31; 15.33)
3. *Antithetical Proverbs* are the most common and dominate chapters 10-15. (15.18; 12.12)
4. *Numerical Sayings* usually contain a number and/or a list (cf. 30).
5. *Paradoxical Proverbs* cause the reader to ponder more complex levels of thought.

## ***PROVERBS ON MONEY: WEALTH AND POVERTY***

1. God blesses the righteous with financial security. (3.9-10; 3.15-16; 10.22; 10.15-16a)

2. The behavior of fools can result in poverty. (26.13-15; 10.4-5; 6.6-11; 21.17; 22.16; 11.24)

3. A fool's wealth is temporal. (11.18; 13.11; 21.6; 22.16; 11.4; 23.4-5)

4. Some are impoverished as a result of injustice and oppression. (13.23; 16.8; 22.2)

5. Those who have money should be generous with the poor. (29.7, 14; 28.27; 11.24; 6.1-5; 3.27-28)

6. It is better to be wise than to be wealthy. (15.16,17; 16.8, 16; 17.1; 22.1; 28.6)

7. Financial riches are of limited value. (11.4; 13.8; 19.10; 14.20; 30.7-9)

## *Proverbs on the Tongue/Words*

1. Words are a reflection of the heart (12.23; 16.23; 18.4; 10.20; 26.23-26)

2. Words are a reflection of reality (12.17, 19; 18.13, 17)

3. Evil speech takes many forms (10.6; 12.6; 22.10)

- Lies (14.5, 25; 13.5; 25.18)
- Argumentative (26.17, 21)
- Insult and Slander (10.18; 20.20)
- Gossip and Rumors (11.13; 18.8)

4. The words of the wise (8.7-9; 10.11; 13.3; 17.28; 15.4; 16.24; 27.5)

5. One's speech has consequences (18.13, 21; 12.13; 14.3; 13.2-3a)

# Prophecy

## Stein: Chapter 16

Introduction: For many people the term prophecy is a synonym for prediction. As a result many people think of the prophetic books of the Bible as just a long list of predictions concerning future events. Yet when one reads these books it is clear that much of the material is proclamation and narrative material. This can be seen that in the Hebrew canon the books of Joshu-2 Kings are called the Former Prophets.

### ***1. Judgment Prophecies***

- Jonah 3.4 (cf. 3.5-10)
- Judgment prophecies in the ancient world carried the understanding that destruction could be avoided if the people repented from their sins.
- The principle stated: Jeremiah 18.7-8 (vv. 9-10; cf. Ezek. 33.13-15)
- Another example of this rule is found in Micah 3.12. In Jeremiah 26.16-19 this prophecy is quoted and its lack of fulfillment noted. However, Micah was not considered a false prophet.
- Another example of a judgment prophecy averted is in 1 Kings 21.0-29.
- All of this is part of the “norms of language” concerning judgment prophecies.

### ***2. The Language of Prophecy***

- Isaiah 13.9-11 (cf. 13.1, 19) – This prophecy was fulfilled with the rise and rule of the Persian Empire
- Isa. 24.23
- Jer. 4.28; 13.16; 15.9
- Ezek. 32.7-8
- Joel 2.10, 31; 3.15
- Amos 8.9
- Hab. 3.11
- Matt. 24.29; Mk. 13.24-25; Lk. 21.25
- Rev. 6.12
- Acts 2.14-21

### ***3. The Figurative Nature of Prophetic Language***

A clear example of a “nonliteral” prophecy is found in Isa. 11.6-9 and 35.8-10. In describing the peace and prosperity of the millennial/messianic age the author writes what appears to be contradictory descriptions. If interpreted literally there is a conflict, however, the willed meaning of the author is that the messianic age will be one of peace and security.

Luke 3.4-6: This is a quote from Isaiah 40.3-5 and is found in each of the gospels (Mk. 1.3; Matt. 3.3; John 1.23) but only Luke includes the topographical/geographical references. Obviously he is speaking of the proud being humbled and the humble being exalted (a theme in Luke’s Gospel; cf. Mary’s Magnificat).

## Revelation 21: The description of the New Jerusalem.

- The walls are described as 144 cubits thick (note the symbolism 12 x 12 (v. 17) [cf. also 7.4-8; 21.12]. The thickness indicates the safety and security of the city, but notice as well the gates are never shut. What good re thick walls if the gates are never closed. Once again the prophet has used imagery that appears contradictory, but the open gates communicate the concept of safety as well, there is no need to close the gates.
- Other example of figurative terminology in prophecy – Isa. 3.24-4.1; 34.1-17; Jer. 4.23-31; 15.8-9; Nah. 1.4-5; Hab. 1.6-9; Mk. 13.14-16.

### ***4. The Sensus or “Fuller” Meaning of the Text***

There are times when a prophetic text appears to have a fulfillment other than what the prophet himself apparently expected. Some frequently cited examples are:

- Matt. 1.22-23; 2.15, 17-18; Jn. 12.15; 1 Cor. 10.3-4

The thought would be that this fuller sense could only be known after the fact since the prophet himself did not envision it.

Stein prefers to see it as an implication of the author’s conscious meaning.

Much OT prophecy was future to the prophet and his audience but is past as far as we are concerned; however, there are still some prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled. Stein lists the following:

Prophetic predictions that have been fulfilled:

- The fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah, Ezekiel)
- The judgment of Samaria (Hosea, Amos, Micah)
- Babylon (Isa. 13-14, 21, 47; Jer. 50-51, Daniel)
- Edom (Obadiah)
- Moab (Isa. 15-16); Damascus (Isa. 17); Ethiopia (Isa. 18); Egypt (Isa. 19); Tyre (Isa. 23)
- Nineveh (Nahum, Zeph. 2)
- Etc.
- The birth, ministry, death, and resurrection (Isa. 4, 7, 9, 11, 40, 53; Jer. 23, 33; Mic. 5; Zec. 3)
- The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost (Jer. 31, Joel 2)

There are other prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled

- The great tribulation (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; 2 Thess. 2)
- The glorious appearing of the Son of man (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; 1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 1-2)

By seeking to interpret the willed meaning of the author for the situation in which he wrote, we shall avoid interpreting certain prophecies that have already been fulfilled.

# **Old Testament Prophets:**

## Covenant Mediator Enforcers

Difficulties with reading the prophets (especially the longer prophetic books)

- They are collections of spoken oracles
- The oracles are not always in chronological order.
- There are often no hints as to where one oracle begins and another ends.
- There is often no historical setting provided to interpret the oracle.
- We are so far removed from their religious, historical and cultural context that we can fail to understand the issues being addressed by the prophets.



## *I. The Nature of the OT Prophetic Literature*

The Prophetic books include:

- *The four major prophets*: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel
- *The twelve minor prophets*: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

1. The OT prophetic books primarily contain numerous short spoken or preached messages/oracles, usually proclaimed by the prophet to either the nation of Israel or the nation of Judah.

2. Only a small percentage of OT prophecy deals with events that are still future to us.

3. The prophets use poetry for much of their message, and it is the poetic aspect of their message that is the most foreign to us.

4. The prophetic books are primarily anthologies.

Amos 5.1-27

5.1-3: a lamentation over Israel's destruction

5.5-6, 14: an invitation to seek God and live

5.7-13: attacks on social injustice

5.16-17: a description of miseries

5.18-20: a description of the day of the Lord

5.21-24: a rebuke of hypocritical worship

5.25-27: a brief review of Israel's sinful history culminating in a prediction of exile.

## *II. The Historical-Cultural and Theological Context*

### THE LARGER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**760-460:** The 16 prophetic books come from a rather narrow span of time in Israelite history (ca. 760-460 B.C.).

The reason for this concentrated time between Amos (ca. 760), the earliest of the writing prophets, and Malachi (ca. 460) is that this period of time called for covenant enforcement mediation.

***Israel - NORTHERN KINGDOM: ANNOUNCING IMPENDING JUDGMENT*** - in the northern kingdom disobedience to the covenant went far beyond anything yet known in Judah and was slated for destruction by God because of her sin. Amos (ca. 760) and Hosea (ca. 755) announced impending destruction. The northern kingdom fell to the superpower Assyria in 722 B.C.

***Judah – SOUTHERN KINGDOM: INCREASING SINFULNESS OF JUDAH AND RISE OF BABYLON-*** Thereafter the increasing sinfulness of Judah and the rise of another superpower, Babylon, constitutes the subject of several prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Obadiah probably fits in here). Judah was destroyed for her disobedience in 587 B.C.

***After 587:*** Afterward Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi announced God's will for the restoration of his people (beginning with a return from exile in 538 B.C.)

### *III. The Basic Prophetic Message: Covenant Enforcement Mediators*

1. Repent for you have broken the covenant.

- Idolatry
- Social Injustice
- Religious Ritualism

2. God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.

- The blessing of faithfulness: Lev. 26.1-13; Deut. 4.32-40; 28.1-14
- The punishment for disobedience: Lev. 26.14-29; Deut. 4.15-28; 28.15-32

Categories of Corporate Blessings: Life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect and safety.

Categories of Corporate Punishments: Death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, defeat, deportation, destitution and disgrace.

3. There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

# SUMMARY: Interpreting the Prophets

1. The prophets were God's spokespersons.
2. The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.
3. The prophet's message was not original (for the most part).
4. Understanding the historical context is very important to understanding the prophet's message.
5. It is important to isolate the various forms of oracles/messages.
6. The prophetic message can be summarized under the three ideas:
  - You have sinned against God - repent
  - God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.
  - There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.
7. When teaching and preaching the prophets look for similarities in settings (greed, injustice, etc.)
8. Understand that the prophets are excellent in teaching a balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

# Old Testament Prophets: Covenant Enforcers<sup>1</sup>

Introduction: The OT Prophetic books contain some of the most inspiring passages in the Bible:

- Isaiah 40.28-31
- Isaiah 53.1-6

The prophets also contain their share of obscure and difficult verses:

- The rather gruesome text from Amos 3.12
- Passages very insulting to their original audience – Jer. 2.23b-24
- As well as strong passages of judgment – Jer. 15.1-2

## **Difficulties with reading the prophets (specially the longer prophetic books)**

- They are collections of spoken oracles
- The oracles are not always in chronological order.
- There are often no hints as to where one oracle begins and another ends.
- There is often no historical setting provided to interpret the oracle.
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The term major and minor have nothing to do with importance but only with the length of the books.

The writing prophets take up about as much space in the Bible as the entire New Testament.

Yet of all the genre types in the Bible the prophetic literature may be the most difficult to understand because we really have nothing similar to it in the English language.

***1. The OT prophetic books contain primarily numerous short spoken or preached messages/oracles, usually proclaimed by the prophet to either the nation of Israel or the nation of Judah.*** They also contain visions from God as well as short narrative sections and symbolic acts.

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<sup>1</sup> This material is a summation of Duvall and Hayes

**2. Only a small percentage of OT prophecy deals with events that are still future to us.**

Douglas Stuart says,

- Less than 2% of OT prophecy is messianic
- Less than 5% specifically describes the new covenant age
- Less than 1% concerns events that are still yet to come.

The role of the prophets was to proclaim that as a result of disobedience of Israel and/or Judah that they were in danger of imminent judgment.

**3. The prophets use poetry for much of their message, and it is the poetic aspect of their message that is the most foreign to us.** The prophet's use of poetry by makes their message even more powerful and gripping.

- Amos does not just say, "God is angry." Rather, he proclaims, "The Lion has roared."
- Isaiah does not analytically contrast the awfulness of sin and the amazing wonder of forgiveness; he uses figurative language, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."
- Jeremiah is disgusted with Judah's unfaithful attitude toward God and wants to convey the pain the Lord feels because Judah has left him for idols. Thus throughout the book he compares Judah to an unfaithful wife who has become a prostitute. "You have lived as a prostitute with many lovers."

The power of poetry is its ability to affect the emotions of the reader or listener.

The prophets also use parallelism to communicate their message.

- Synonymous parallelism: The second or subsequent line repeats or reinforces the sense of the first line, as in Isaiah 44.22
  - A: I have swept away your offenses like a cloud/B: your sins like the morning mist.
- Antithetical Parallelism: The second or subsequent line contrasts the thought of the first, as in Hosea 7.14
  - A: They do not cry out to me from their hearts,/B: but wail upon their beds.
- Synthetic Parallelism: The second or subsequent line adds to the first line in a manner which provides further information, as in Obadiah 21:
  - A: Deliverers will go up from Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau/B: And the kingdom will be the Lord's.

**4. The prophetic books are primarily anthologies.**

By this we mean that the prophetic books are collections of shorter units, usually oral messages that the prophets have proclaimed publicly to the people. Other literary units such as narrative, and visions are mixed in.

It is important to note the collective nature of the books. Like a contemporary collection of a writer's poetry, the prophetic books contain primarily independent, shorter units. These units are not normally arranged chronologically and often do not have any thematic order as well. Occasionally a broad overall theme (judgment, deliverance) will unite a large unit of material, but for the most part tight, thematic unity is absent. Because of this aspect it is almost impossible to outline a prophetic book as one would outline an epistle or gospel.

When one comes to the actual study or informed-reading of the prophetic books, the first thing to do is to think oracles (much as one will think in paragraphs when reading the epistles). This is not always an easy task but it can be very helpful in gaining a better understanding of the prophets. Some prophecies are dated, notably Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

#### Ezekiel: Oracles Against Egypt

1. 29.1-2: First Oracle against Egypt - Jan 7. 587 B.C. (this is the sixth date in Ezek. [1.2; 8.1; 20.1; 24.1; 26.1].
2. 29.17: Second oracle against Egypt (Apr. 26 571 B.C)
3. 30.1: The third oracle against Egypt Jerusalem was under siege at this time) [probably between January-April 587]
4. 30.20: Fourth – April 29 (587)
5. 31.1: Fifth – June 587
6. 32.1: Sixth Mach 3 585
7. No month is given – the entire year dates from April 13 586 to April 1 585.

However, it is not that easy most of the time. Amos 5 contains what is normally thought to be three oracles. Note the changes in subject in Amos 5:

- 5.1-3: a lamentation over Israel's destruction
- 5.5-6, 14: an invitation to seek God and live
- 5.7-13: attacks on social injustice
- 5.16-17: a description of miseries
- 5.18-20: a description of the day of the Lord
- 5.21-24: a rebuke of hypocritical worship
- 5.25-27: a brief review of Israel's sinful history culminating in a prediction of exile.

Most commentators understand this passage to consist of three oracles

- 5.1-3: forms a single short lament oracle announcing punishment.
- 5.4-17: forms a single (though complex) oracle of invitation to blessing and warning of punishment
- 5.18-27: forms a single (though complex) oracle warning of punishment.

Oracles are isolated according to the known forms. All three oracles in this chapter were given in the reign of King Jeroboam of Israel (793-753) to a people whose relative prosperity caused them to consider it unthinkable that their nation would be devastated as to cease to exist in just a generation.

Forms of Prophetic Oracles:

Lawsuit (Isa. 3.13-26; Hosea 4.1-19)

Woe (Hab. 2.6-8; Mal. 2.1-5; Zeph. 2.5-7)

Promise (Amos 9.11-15; Hosea 2.16-22; Isa. 45.1-7; Jer. 31.1-9)

## ***II. The Historical-Cultural and Theological Context***

One must be careful to interpret the OT prophetic literature within its historical context. This may require the interpreter to seek outside assistance from Bible Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and a Bible Handbook.

1. The prophets primary role is as spokesmen for God. To understand them as primarily predictors of the future is to miss their primary importance as men who spoke for God to their contemporaries.

Of all the OT prophets only 16 were chosen to speak oracles that would be collected and written into books. For example Elijah and Elisha spoke for God but we know more about what they did than what they actually said. Due to their place in narrative literature we know more about their historical context than we do the writing prophets. In the writing prophets we hear from God but we learn little about the prophets themselves.

### THE LARGER HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**760-460:** The 16 prophetic books come from a rather narrow span of time in Israelite history (@760-460 B.C.).

The reason for this concentrated time between Amos (ca. 760), the earliest of the writing prophets, and Malachi (ca. 460) is that this period of time called for covenant enforcement mediation.

Three things characterized those centuries:

1. Unprecedented political, military, economic and social upheaval.
2. An enormous level of religious unfaithfulness and disregard for the original Mosaic covenant.
3. Shifts in populations and national boundaries

Israel - NORTHERN KINGDOM: ANNOUNCING IMPENDING JUDGMENT - in the northern kingdom disobedience to the covenant went far beyond anything yet known in Judah and was slated for destruction by God because of her sin. Amos (ca.760) and Hosea (ca. 755) announced impending destruction. The northern kingdom fell to the superpower Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah – SOUTHERN KINGDOM: INCREASING SINFULNESS OF JUDAH AND RISE OF BABYLON - Thereafter the increasing sinfulness of Judah and the rise of another superpower, Babylon, constitutes the subject of many prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Micah,



Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (Obadiah probably fits in here). Judah was destroyed for her disobedience in 587 B.C.

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SPECIFIC EXAPLES – Fee pages 157-158; How to read the Bible (p. 178 Isaiah 2.6-5.30; Ezekiel's oracles against Egypt (single sheet) includes dates of the oracles.

### ***III. The Basic Prophetic Message: Covenant Enforcement Mediators***

The prophets write in the theological context of Deuteronomy and in the historical context of an imminent invasion by either the Assyrians (against Israel) or the Babylonians (against Judah). What is their message in this context?

The prophets serve as prosecuting attorneys, that is, as covenant enforcers. While there are numerous nuances to their proclamation, their overall message can be boiled down to three basic points.

1. You have broken God's covenant and therefore you must repent.
2. God will judge you if you do not repent.
3. There is still hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.

#### **1. Repent for you have broken the covenant.**

The prophets emphasize how serious the nations covenant violations have become. Evidence of their sin normally falls into three categories: idolatry, social injustice, and religious ritualism.

- a. Idolatry is perhaps the most flagrant violation of the covenant and the prophets preach continuously against it. Israel engages in it from its political beginnings, with the golden calves in Bethel and Dan. But even Judah falls into serious idolatrous worship. The nation sought to maintain some semblance of the worship of the one true God while blending in worship to local pagan deities.

This syncretistic worship climaxes in Ezekiel 8. The Spirit takes Ezekiel on a tour of the temple in Jerusalem. There he sees

- An idol at the entrance to the north gate
- Drawings and carvings of animals on the walls
- Women burning incense to Babylonian god Tammuz
- And the elders with their backs to the presence of the Lord facing east and bowing down to the sun.
- "This the Lord declares will drive me from my sanctuary. Indeed in Ezekiel 10 the glory of the Lord departs from the temple. (The old mosaic covenant as defined in Deuteronomy comes to an end with the departure of the Lord's presence.

Idolatry strikes at the very heart of the relationship between the Lord and his people. The central covenant formula in the OT was the statement by the Lord, “I will be your God; you will be my people, I will dwell in your midst.” Idolatry was rejection of this relationship. The prostitute/unfaithful wife imagery runs throughout Jeremiah and Hosea who has to live it out in his own life. Ezekiel uses the same imagery in chapter 16.

The prophets not only proclaim that idolatry is a violation of their relationship with God but that to worship idols is both irrational and foolish.

- Isaiah 1.22-24
- Jeremiah 10.5

- b. Social Injustice - The covenant in Deuteronomy bound the people to more than just the worship of God. A proper relationship with God required a proper relationship with people. The Lord was concerned with social justice for all people, and he was especially concerned with how weaker individuals in society were treated. The prophets would cite the treatment of orphans and widows as the social failure of the people. The prophets would also state how these violations of the covenant would invalidate the sacrifices offered.

Examples of prophetic condemnation of social injustice:

- Isaiah 1
  - Jeremiah 5.28-29
  - Micah 6.7-8
- c. Religious Ritualism – The prophets denounce the people of God for their religion has become one of ritualism that lacks heart. The ritual has become a replacement for relationship with Almighty God. They think that the ritual will exempt them from their sinful acts involving idolatry and social injustice.
- Isaiah 1.11-13a
  - Isaiah 58.6-7

Even as the prophets proclaim that judgment is imminent they plead for the nation to repent.

**2. God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.**

The prophets announced that if the law was kept blessing would follow and if not punishment would come.

- The blessing of faithfulness: Lev. 26.1-13; Deut. 4.32-40; 28.1-14

- The punishment for disobedience: Lev. 26.14-29; Deut. 4.15-28; 28.15-32

One must remember that the prophets did not invent the blessings and curses they announced. They may have announced them in their own style but their content goes back to Lev. and Deut.

***Categories of Corporate Blessings:*** Life, health, prosperity, agricultural abundance, respect and safety.

***Categories of Corporate Punishments:*** Death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, defeat, deportation, destitution and disgrace.

- Amos 9.11-15
- Hosea 8.14; 9.3

### **3. There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.**

Statistically, a majority of what the prophets announce in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries is curses because the major defeat of the northern kingdom did not take place until 722 B.C. The fall of the southern kingdom of Judah did not take place until 587 B.C. The Israelites were headed toward punishment during these years, so naturally warnings of curses rather than blessings predominate as God seeks to get the people to repent.

After 587 the prophets preached more often of blessings because after the punishment of the nation is complete God resumes his basic plan, which is to show mercy.

- Look for this simple pattern: (1) identification of Israel's sin or of God's love for her. (2) A prediction of curse or blessing depending on the circumstances.

This helps us to understand the prophets' message was not primarily his own. The prophets were inspired by God to present essentially the content of the covenants' warnings and promises of blessing. The newness to the prophetic message was the structure or means by which the prophet's message was delivered. Even the messianic prophecies had their origin in the Law (Deut. 18.18).

## SUMMARY

1. The prophets were God's spokespersons.

2. The prophets were covenant enforcement mediators.
3. The prophet's message was not original (for the most part).
4. Understanding the historical context is very important to understanding the prophet's message.
5. It is important to isolate the various forms of oracles/messages.
6. The prophetic message can be summarized under the three ideas:
  - You have sinned against God - repent
  - God will judge you if you do not repent and will bless you if you live in obedience to the law.
  - There is hope beyond judgment for a glorious, future restoration.
7. When teaching and preaching the prophets look for similarities in settings (greed, injustice, etc.)
8. Understand that the prophets are excellent in teaching a balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

### **Principles for Prophecy not classified “Straightforward Prophetic Prediction”**

(1) In some cases, the NT authors use Old Testament language or images in a rhetorical fashion – without attempting to link the Old Testament language and NT events in a clear logical fashion.

(2) There may be a blending of more than one event in the prophecy. We should look for explicit statements in the original prediction and later progressive revelation to clarify this distinction.

(3) The authors of Scripture had a concept of “Corporate Solidarity.” The individual is often representative of the community and vice versa.

(4) The biblical authors had as a presupposition – the correspondence in historical events – brought about because of God’s divine purposes and sovereignty over history.

### **Three assumptions of typological interpretation in the NT: (Seifrid)**

- a. A continuity of God’s dealings with Israel, so that earlier events foreshadow later ones.
- b. A prospective aspect to God’s dealings with Israel, so that earlier deliverance and judgment is incomplete.
- c. The arrival of salvation and the fulfillment of God’s purposes in Jesus.

(5) The NT authors understood themselves as living in days of eschatological fulfillment.

(6) The NT authors (like most of Judaism) assumed that the Scriptures were Christological.

(7) We need to understand that the range of meaning of the word “fulfill” in the Biblical languages is broader than our modern English usage.

## **SECTION 19**

### **The Gospels and Parables**

# Interpreting the Gospels

## I. WHAT ARE THE GOSPELS?

The term ***gospel*** translates the Greek word *euangelion*, which means “good news.” Prior to the NT this word normally referred to good news of a political or military victory. ***In the NT*** the word denotes the good news proclaimed about Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15.1) or the good news proclaimed by Jesus Christ (Mk. 1.14-15). From this it is easy to see why the early believers referred to the Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the Gospels. But how did the Holy Spirit inspire the authors (often called the evangelists) to present this good news? Correct interpretation in part depends on correct identification of the kind of communication taking place.

### 1. First and foremost the Gospels are stories.

This is a part of what makes the gospels so powerful. The question is what kind of stories are they?

#### ***a. The early church understood the gospels as stories about Jesus from the personal experiences of the apostles.***

Justin Martyr (A. D. 100-165) in his First Apology characterized the gospels as the “memoirs” of the apostles. This sounds like the apostles may have been writing biographies of Jesus. But when you read the gospels you immediately notice that they are different than modern biographies.

- *Note ways that the gospels differ from modern biographies.*

#### ***b. Unlike most biographies the gospels do not cover the whole of Jesus’ life.***

- Note the differences in the gospels presentations of Jesus’ life (*Matthew* and *Luke* jump from the birth and infancy to his adult life, *Mark* focuses a major portion of his gospel on the last week of Jesus’ life. John begins his discussion of the last week of Jesus’ life in chapter 12.)
- There is no serious discussion of his adolescent years, or any people who may have played a major role in his life. We know nothing of his twenties or his relationship with his brothers and sisters.
- The evangelists also devote a rather large amount of space to the final week of Jesus’ life than a typical biography might devote.
  1. Mark 11-16
  2. Matthew 21-28
  3. Luke
  4. John 12-21 (13-19: to the final night of his life through crucifixion and burial)



*c. Often the evangelists arrange the material topically rather than chronologically.*

- Mark 2.1-3.6; Matthew 8-9 (cf. Matt. 4.17; 5-7)

2. The gospels are really four different versions of the same story.

They present a picture that is complementary rather than contradictory; however, for modern people who have a fixation on chronological strictness, the variety of presentation can cause some folks problems.

- Overhead transparencies of the different arrangement of material in the gospels.
- Overhead in variety of wording in the gospels.

As ancient biographers, the evangelists felt free to paraphrase or summarize what Jesus said and to arrange the events according to a particular theme rather than according to strict chronological sequence. The goal of the evangelist was to faithfully tell the story of Jesus in a relevant and persuasive manner for their readers. They are telling their story in order to teach their readers something about the person and mission of Jesus. The evangelists selected and arranged their material about Christ in order to communicate theological truth to their audience. John wrote that if he had told his readers everything Jesus did and said that all the books in the world could not have contained the information.

**CONCLUSION:** Where does all of this lead us? While the gospels are biographies about Jesus, much like other ancient biographies, they are also more than ancient biographies. By focusing on Jesus' life and teaching we may describe the gospels accurately as Christological biographies. This brings us to their primary purpose in writing their gospels.

(1) They have selected and arranged material to tell the story of Jesus.

(2) Through the story of Jesus they are saying something very important to their first readers (and to us). Since the Holy Spirit inspired the evangelists in the way he did, we need to adopt a way of reading the gospels that matches the method used by the evangelists.

## II. HOW SHOULD WE READ THE GOSPELS?

### 1. *The Law of Proportions*

- How much material does an evangelist give to a particular scene or section of Jesus' life?
- The Gospel of Luke – Central Section
- The Gospel of John – Upper Room Discourse

## ***2. Reading the Gospels Vertically***

- Ask what each section is teaching us about Jesus?
- Ask what the evangelist is seeking to communicate by arranging his material the way he does.

### **How to read individual stories (perciope)**

#### **1. Bombard the text with questions:** (see example in Duvall)

- *Who* are the characters?
- *What* is the story line?
- *When* did the event take place?
- *Where* did the event take place?
- *Why* did it take place? (Reason)
- *How did it take place* (Means)

#### **2. Look for interpretative clues provided by the author:** Often the evangelist will provide a clue to the passage in an introductory or closing comment.

- Lk. 14.7
- Matt. 5.1-2
- Matt. 19.30: The Rich Young Ruler – “The first will be last and the last will be first.”
- Mark 7.1-23 (v. 19: declared all food clean)
- John 20.8-9 (“still did not understand from the scriptures . . .”)
- Mark 4: Who is this that even the wind and sea obey him? A form critical designation known as a pronouncement story.

#### **3. Look for repeated words or concepts in a passage.**

- John 15: Abide/fruit
- Matt. 23: Woe
- Matt. 5: You have heard it was said . . .but I say to you
- Matt. 6: Do not worry
- Luke 12.22-34; Do not worry

#### **4. Observe places where the story shifts to direct discourse**

- Matt. 17.5 – Where God speaks directly to the disciples. The question is what are they to listen to him about. Notice that the transfiguration follows his passion prediction.
- Mk. 4.35-39: Notice how the direct discourse tells the story in a nutshell (4.35, 38, 39, 40, 41)
- Although it is in a different genre, notice the majority of direct discourse in the Parable of the Prodigal son is between the father and the older brother.
- In the story of the transfiguration the direct discourse is God speaking to Peter.

**Reading a series of stories:** *Look for connections between passages.*

What is the gospel writer trying to do by the way he strings together a series of stories?

- **Mark 1** – A day in the life of Jesus – Why the crowds are flocking to him and a summary incident on his first tour of Galilee.
- **Mark 2.1-3.6:** Why would anyone want to kill someone that can do all Jesus does?
- Let's search for a connection between what occurs in Mark 4.35-41 and the following passages.
  - Mark 4.35-41: Jesus exerts his power over the sea
  - Mark 5.1-20: Jesus casts out a legion of demons, restores a man to his right mind, and sends him out as a faithful disciple.
  - Mark 5.21-43: The twofold miracle story of Jesus healing a woman with an issue of blood and raising Jairus' daughter from the dead. Notice the combined emphasis on desperation and faith.
  - In this passage we see that because they did not have faith in Jesus they rejected him and he did not perform many miracles (sermon on what to do when the crowd turns against you)
  - The connections between these stories: The difficulties of life – life threatening situations, satanic attack, disease, and death of a loved one. Jesus is sovereign over hostile forces. People in the first century are not that different than we are in many ways and we both have fears and difficulties that upset life. We should trust Christ in the midst of life's difficulties.

1. Mark 4.35-41 – Encountering Storms
2. Mark 5.1-20 –
3. Mark 5.21-43
4. Mark 6.1-6 – When the Crowd Turns Against you

- Luke 1-3: Jesus and John the Baptist – this is an example of interchange
- Luke 4: Genealogy and Jesus' Temptation
- Matt. 8-9: Jesus' power (cf. Matt. 4.17ff)
- Mark 4-5: Jesus' word: Listen to him – nature, demons, sickness, death
- Lk. 8: Jesus heals the woman with the issue of blood and raises Jairus' daughter (Believe/faith)
- Luke 10.25-37 – Luke 10.38-42-Luke 11.1-13
  - 10.25-37: We see that the principle for love for one's neighbor should transcend all human boundaries such as nationality, race, religion, or economic status
  - 10.38-42: Here we discover the principle that doing good things is no substitute for sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His word.
  - Jesus' teaches about how to communicate with God through prayer (11.1-4). This is followed by a parable on prayer (11.5-8) and an exhortation to pray (11.9-13).

**MARK 8.22-26:** *An example of how this helps in the interpretation of a difficult passage.*

1. *Taken by itself this is a very strange passage. Why does Jesus only heal the man partially at first? Why does Jesus ask the man if he can see anything? Does Jesus know or not know that the man can see? Why can the man only see partially? Lets examine the surrounding passages to see if there is any connection and if they can help us to interpret this passage.*

2. *Read the previous and following passage.*

3. *What connections exist between the three passages?*

- All three passages are basically dialogues.
- In all three scenes Jesus asks a question.
- In the first and the third pericopes Jesus' dialogue is primarily with the disciples. In the second it is with the blind man. Thus, two dialogues bracket the second dialogue with the disciples.
- The middle episode mentions "the village" twice (\*.23, 26). The third episode mentions "villages" (8.27).
- Jesus ends the blind-man pericope (8.22-26) by forbidding him to go back into the village. Jesus ends the third pericope by forbidding the disciples to tell anyone about him (8.27-30).
- The middle passage revolves around terms related to seeing (i.e. blind, eyes, seeing, saw, sight, etc: v. 22, 23, 23, 23, 24, 24, 24, 25, 25, 25, 25). In light of the number of terms related to seeing in the blind-man passage, it is interesting to note similar terms used in reference to the disciples in the first passage (8.14-21). This repetition to seeing between the first two scenes is obviously an important connection between them. **In 8.17:** "Do you still not see?" and **in 8.18:** "Do you have eyes but fail to see?"
- Note that seeing in the blind-man passage relates to physical seeing, however, in the first passage it is used figuratively. It carries the idea of understanding (cf. 8.21).
- In light of Peter's comment in 8.29 it seems that he is seeing, but not clearly when we read about his rebuke of Jesus.

One interpretation is that he will not see clearly until the second touch of the resurrection.

This helps us understand that the second passage is an "acted parable." It provides a real-life example of what was happening in the disciples in regards to their understanding of who Jesus is.

### 3. *Reading the Gospels Horizontally*

To think horizontally means that when studying a pericope in any one Gospel, one should be aware of the parallels in the other Gospels. The purpose is not to fill out the story for preaching. We should preach each passage on its own for this is how the Holy Spirit inspired the Gospels. The purpose is to give us an appreciation for the distinctives in each Gospel.

- Luke 4/Matt. 4
- Jn. 18: Jesus' arrest
- Crucifixion Scenes in Gospels – (esp. Mark/Luke/Jn)
- Casting out of demon from little boy after transfiguration

Normally when we preach a passage from a Gospel we should not seek to import much information from another passage. God inspired each Gospel in its present form. That is, each evangelist under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit included what the Spirit wanted him to include and the author omitted what the Holy Spirit wanted him to omit. However, at times it can be helpful to compare one passage with another. This enables us to get a fuller picture of the event.

## **BLOMBERG: Applying the Gospels**

Several important principles come into play when applying Jesus' teaching to our own day that was originally spoken to the disciples,

1. *One needs to distinguish what is explicitly directed only to the Twelve.*
2. *One must distinguish situation-specific commands to the Twelve that were revoked later in the Gospels*
3. *One must observe what may never have been explicitly limited to the Twelve, nor formally revoked, but could not be followed by Christians living in later generations.*
4. *We should be alert to metaphors or other figures of speech not meant to be taken literally.*
5. *Understanding the historical background often proves crucial in determining how literally to apply one of Jesus' commands.*
6. *Individual teachings of Jesus are often embedded in larger sermons or discourses that contain seemingly contradictory teachings.* (In these instances, legitimate application must take both strands of teaching into account.)

## **The Interpretation of Parables**

Definition of “parable”:

The Purpose of parables:

History of Interpretation

(1) Allegorical Interpretation

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Clement of Alexandria

- **Good Samaritan = Neighbor = Christ**
- **Thieves = Rulers of Darkness**
- **Wounds = Fears, Lusts, Passions, Pains, Deceits**
- **Wine = Blood of David's Vine**
- **Oil = Compassion of the Father**
- **Binding of Wounds = Love, Faith, and Hope**

**Origen**

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem from which he is going = Paradise
- Jericho = this world
- Robbers = hostile influences and enemies such as mentioned in John 10:8
- Wounds = disobedience or sins
- Priests = Law
- Levite = Prophets
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two Denarii = Knowledge of the Father and Son

- Innkeeper = Angels in charge of the church
- Return of the Good Samaritan = Second Coming of Christ

#### Augustine

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem from which he was going = City of heavenly peace
- Jericho = the moon which signifies our mortality
- Robbers = Devil and his angels
- Stripping him = Taking away his immortality
- Beating him = Persuading him to sin
- Leaving him half-dead = Due to sin he was half-dead spiritually, but half alive due to his knowledge of God
- Priest = Priesthood of Old Testament (Law)
- Levite = Ministry of the Old Testament (Prophets)
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Binding of wounds = Restraint of sin
- Oil = Comfort of good hope
- Wine = Exhortation to spirited work
- Beast = Body of Christ
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = two commandments of love
- Innkeeper = Apostle Paul
- Return of the Good Samaritan = Christ's Resurrection

#### Luther

- The man going down to Jericho = Adam and all mankind
- Robbers = Devils who robbed and wounded us
- Priests = Fathers (Noah, Abraham) before Moses
- Levite = Priesthood of the Old Testament
- Good Samaritan = Lord Jesus Christ
- Oil/Wine = Whole gospel from beginning to end
- Oil = Grace
- Wine = Cross the Christian is called to bear
- Beast = Christ the Lord
- Inn = Christianity in the World (Church)
- Innkeeper = Preacher of the Word of God

#### Archbishop Trench

- Man going down to Jericho = Adam
- Jerusalem = Heavenly city
- Jericho = Profane city, a city under a curse
- Robbers = Devil and his angels

- Stripping him = Stripping him of his original robe of righteousness
- Leaving him half-dead = Mortal, but having a divine spark
- Priest and the Levite = Inability of the Law to Save
- Good Samaritan = Christ
- Binding of Wounds = Sacraments which heal the soul
- Oil = Anointing of the Holy Spirit
- Wine = Blood of Christ's passion
- Walking along the beast = Christ's became poor on our behalf
- Inn = Church
- Two denarii = All gifts and graces, sacraments, powers of healing or remission of sins
- Whatever more you spend = Reward for righteous service

(2) Adolf Jülicher and the end of Allegorical Interpretation

(3) Dodd and Jeremias – Noting the first century life-setting

(4) Redaction Criticism – How is the parable to be understood in the context of the individual Gospels?



## Parables (Continued)

### 4 periods

Jesus-500

500-1500

Reformation-modern period

1888 – now

- (1) Parables generally teach one main point. Therefore, when investigating the parables one should be content with seeking to understand the one main point of the parable. One should not seek allegorical significance in the details of a parable unless it is absolutely necessary.
- (2) Jesus did not teach his parables to twentieth-century Christians but to first-century Jews. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to understand the situation-in-life in which the parable was uttered.
- (3) The Evangelists were interested in interpreting the parables for their readers. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to understand the situation-in-life of the Evangelist and his unique understanding of the parable.
- (4) The parables as uttered by Jesus and recorded by the Evangelists are the Word of God. Therefore, when investigating the parables, one should seek to ascertain what God is saying today through this parable.
  1. Seek the Main Point of the Parables
  2. Seek to Understand what Jesus Meant
  3. Seek to Understand what the Evangelist meant
  4. Seek to Understand what God is teaching us by the parable today.

Rules for arriving at the main point of the parable:

1. Who are the two main characters (of the parable)?
2. What comes at the end? (the rule of end stress)
3. What occurs in direct discourse?
4. Who/What gets the most press?

How to Detect the Presence of Allegory:

1. Would Jesus audience have attributed meaning to these details?
2. Would the Evangelist's audience have attributed meaning to these details?

# The History of the Interpretation of Parables

## I. THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS (TO 540)

- Irenaeus (ca. 130-200)
- Tertullian (ca. 160-220)
- Origen (ca. 185-224) - The “Threefold” Sense of Scripture
- Augustine (ca. 354-430) – The Parable of the Good Samaritan
- Chrysostom (ca. 347-407)

## II. THE MIDDLE AGES (540-1500)

- A fourth sense is added to Origen’s threefold sense of scripture – Anagogical

### III. THE REFORMATION AND POST-REFORMATION PERIOD (1500-1888)

- Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-64)
- Archbishop R. C. Trench – *Notes on the Parables of Our Lord* (1841)

### IV. THE MODERN PERIOD (1888 TO PRESENT)

- Adolf Julicher (1888) – Showed how parables differed from allegories.
- C. H. Dodd (*The Parables of the Kingdom*) (1935)
- Redaction criticism – Hans Conzelmann and Willi Marxsen (mid-1950's)

## PARABLE

A parable has been called an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The word 'parable' is derived from the Greek *parabolē*, meaning "to throw alongside or "putting things side by side." Mark Bailey defines a parable as "a figurative narrative that is true to life and is designed to convey through analogy some specific spiritual truths usually relative to God's Kingdom program."

A parable therefore, is a form of teaching which presents the listener with interesting illustrations from which can be drawn moral and spiritual truths; often it is designed to inculcate a single truth or answer a single question. The parable was an appropriate form of communication for bringing to men the message of the kingdom of God, since its function is to jolt them into seeing things in a new way. D.A. Carson has written, "[P]arables...in Jesus' hands were often meant to shock and 'interpret' the hearer to himself, as much as to be interpreted by the hearer..." They are means of enlightenment and persuasion, intended to bring the hearers to the point of decision.

It is impossible always to draw a clear-cut distinction between parable and allegory in the stories told by Jesus; some of his stories were clearly intended to illustrate several lessons, as in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). The parables must be understood in their original historical settings within the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

Parables are distinguished from other literary figures in that they are narrative in form but figurative in meaning. Parables use both similes and metaphors to make their analogies. Jesus utilized parables to motivate hearers to make proper spiritual decisions. To Jesus' original audiences the parables both revealed and concealed new truths regarding God's kingdom. Those who rightly responded were called disciples and to them it was granted to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. The same truth was concealed from those who, because of hardened hearts, were unreceptive to the message of Jesus.

The exposition of the parables for today must be based on as careful an understanding of what Jesus meant by the parables as is possible; otherwise we fall back into the error of regarding them as illustrations of general truths. The parables were meant to force people to decide about their attitude to Jesus and his message and thus to bring them into a new relationship with Him and the Kingdom of God.

Roy Zuck suggests nine kinds of occasions or purposes that led to Jesus' parables: parables in answer to questions, parables in answer to requests, parables in answer to complaints, parables given with a stated purpose, parables of the kingdom given because of Israel's rejection of Jesus as Messiah, parables following an exhortation or principle, parables that illustrate a situation, and parables with the purpose implied not stated.

Bob Stein suggests asking seven questions to help identify the main point of a parable.

1. What terms are repeated in the parable? Which are not?

2. Upon what does the parable dwell, i.e., to what or to whom does the parable devote the most space?
3. What is the main contrast found in the parable?
4. What comes at the end of the parable?
5. What is spoken in direct discourse in the parable?
6. What characters appear in the parable? Which are the least important? Which are the two most important characters? (Usually a parable focuses on two characters to establish its main point.)
7. How would you have told the parable? If Jesus told it differently, does this reveal anything?

Craig Blomberg seeks to synthesis our understanding of Jesus' parables under four major ideas:

1. Jesus clearly has three main topics of interest: the graciousness of God, the demands of discipleship and the dangers of disobedience.
2. The central theme uniting all of the lessons of the parables is the kingdom of God. It is both present and future. It includes both a reign and a realm. It involves both personal transformation and social reform.
3. The teaching of the parables raises the question of Jesus' identity. Who is the one who, by his teaching, can claim to forgive sins, pronounce God's blessing on social outcasts and declare that final judgment will be based on the responses people make to him? Christological claims are concealed in the parables. They are not as direct as in some other strands of the Gospel tradition, but they are present nevertheless.
4. Jesus' parables include implicit claims to deity. Jesus associates himself with authority figures in his parables which obviously stand for the God of the Hebrew Scriptures. His audiences must decide whether to accept these claims and worship him or reject them as misguided or even blasphemous. But Jesus' parables leave no neutral ground for casual interest or idle curiosity. They sharply divided their original audiences into disciples and opponents. They must continue to function in the same way today.

Jesus' parables are unique. The parables of other teachers can to some extent be separated from the teachers themselves, but Jesus and his parables are inseparable. To fail to understand him is to fail to understand his parables.

Mark Bailey, "Guidelines for Interesting Jesus Parables," *BibSac* (Jan.-Mar., 1998), 29-38.

Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 326-27.

D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 139.

I. Howard Marshall and R.V.G. Tasker, "Parable," *New Bible Dictionary*, 867-869.

Bob Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables*, 56.

## **SECTION 20**

### **Acts, Epistles and Revelation**

# INTERPRETING ACTS

(Blomberg, 126ff)

## ***1. Pay careful attention to where a practice appears in the development of the church's understanding of the new covenant.***

Many of the difficulties with interpreting and applying the book of Acts has to do with their transitional nature. With the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and God's sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we encounter the shift from the Old Testament age to the New Testament era. What was perfectly appropriate and even mandated for God's people frequently changes from old to new.

- The first generation of believers come to understand that they no longer need to offer animal sacrifices, because Christ is the once for all sacrifice for sin (Acts 13.39).
- The dietary laws are rescinded (Acts 10)
- There is no longer one uniquely holy land or temple (Acts 7) as the ideal place where God's people must worship him.

However, the first believers do not wake up the day after Pentecost and recognize everyone of these changes. The transitions come gradually and mean that not every apostolic action is meant to be imitated.

- The casting of lots to determine Judas' replacement follows a common OT practice but is not found again in the NT.

## ***2. Look for Luke's narrative clues.***

When no direct command is given to believers it is difficult to know whether a story offers models to imitate or avoid.

- Believer's sharing with one another in Acts 2.42-47 and 4.31-5.11 has been cited on the one hand, as an exemplary model and a reason for supporting modern day communism, and on the other hand, as a failed experiment and a practice to avoid! Both perspectives go beyond what the text is explicitly teaching, but it is telling that Luke describes the results of the practice as the caring for the poor.
- The judgment of Ananias and Sapphira (5.1-11), the one strikingly negative result, came not because they did or did not participate in the sharing but because they lied to what the extent they were participating (vv.2-4). So it is best to conclude that the pictures of communal sharing teach the necessity of helping the poor (Note the reasons why this took place in Judean but not in other churches – increased need as a result of Pentecostal conversions).

## ***3. How slavishly must we mimic their models?***

When Acts offers an exemplary model we must ask ourselves how consistently Acts itself reproduces the model? In the case of meeting the needs of the poor, there are three paradigms, all presented as helpful, but each quite different.



- In Acts 6.1-7 a precedent for the later office of deacon is established – no longer do the apostles administer a daily distribution of food or money for the poor. No longer do the apostles administer a common treasury.
- In Acts 11.27-30 a special offering is taken to meet the needs of Christians suffering during a famine.

These two along with the previous section establish three models for helping the poor that were quite different due to the differences in their circumstances.

In addition some models remain unchanged throughout the book. When Paul shares with the Philippian jailer he tells him, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” This is the consistent means of salvation throughout the book (Acts 4.12).

***4. Another key principle in the interpretation and application of Acts has to do with contextualization – couching the gospel in language that best communicates its essence in a specific context.***

Perhaps the main reason why one must look throughout the book to determine which models prove consistent and which ones vary is because the first Christians worked hard to incarnate the gospel in the diverse cultures in which they ministered. The sermons in Acts afford a classic example.

On the one hand there are common elements in almost all of them, irrespective of who the preacher is – an appeal to special or general revelation to establish common ground with the audience, reference to Jesus as the fulfillment of all previous religious aspirations, a focus on his death and resurrection as the heart of the Christian message, and an appeal to repent and believe in Christ for salvation.

On the other hand, no two speeches are identical. Paul, for example, carefully tailors his message to his audience.

- To ***Jews in the synagogue*** he appeals to OT history, and to numerous scriptures that he believes point to Christ (13.16-41).
- To ***pagans in Lystra*** he stresses God’s testimony through nature (14.15-18).
- To ***the philosophically minded Athenians***, he appeals to an unknown God to whom they have erected an altar, quotes a Greek poet, and plays Stoic and Epicurean philosophies against one another (17.22-31).
- And to ***the elders from the church at Ephesus***, he sounds most like the Paul of the Epistles – talking about the centrality of God’s grace, faith in Jesus, his atoning blood, and the danger of false teachers (20.17-35). This is not surprising since Paul’s letters are addressed to Christians.

### ***5. Stress what Luke devotes the most space to in his narrative.***

When one is not primarily giving commands but recounting history, a common device for highlighting the most crucial material involved the use of narrative space.

- Stories that are told in more detail or in a more leisurely manner are usually more important. (The day of Pentecost, Stephen's speech, the conversion of the Samaritans, the conversion of Cornelius),
- Another device is for the narrator to refer back to a particular event more than once. (Paul's conversion)

### ***6. On the flip side of the previous point, often minor details in lengthy narratives are present simply because they better help us understand the central points, move the story along to the next scene, or add artistry or aesthetic delight to the account.***

One needs to be careful therefore and not ascribe too much significance to the more peripheral details of a narrative. The best example in Acts is the lengthy description of Paul's ill-fated journey to Rome and the shipwreck that ensued. The numerous references to the various ports of call and the rich nautical language add reality and historical credibility to the account but we should not attempt to find points of personal application from these details.

Rather the point is that God's purposes will not be thwarted (cf. Acts 19) – neither storm, shipwreck, snakebite or man's devious plans can keep God from accomplishing his will.

# INTERPRETING ACTS

(Duvall, Grasping God's Word)

I. We should thank the Lord for the book of Acts

II. The book of Acts is a Sequel to the Gospel of Luke

Compare the opening passages

Note the significant number of thematic and structural parallels between the two books:

- Prayer
- The work of the Spirit

There is an overlap between the two books as both describe the ascension of Jesus.

III. What kind of book is Acts?

Acts is history, accurately presented with a theological agenda.

IV. How is Acts Organized?

*Guidelines for determining what is descriptive and what is normative:*

***1. Look for what Luke intended to communicate to his original readers.***

When we find the message Luke has intended, we find the normative meaning of the passage.

- Acts 8: There are many good questions of a theological nature that could be asked from the passage but what is Luke's main point. Luke's main thought seems to be that the gospel is spreading beyond Jerusalem and its merely Jewish context.
- Set chapter 8 within its literary context.

***2. Look for positive and negative examples in the characters of the story.***

It makes sense that Luke would want us to imitate the positive example of holy men and women in the book of acts and to avoid the behavior of negative examples in the book. Positive characters like Stephen, Lydia, Silas are there to inspire and instruct. While the negative examples

of Ananias and Sapphira, Simon the Sorcerer, and King Agrippa are also there to instruct but they serve as a warning about what not to do.

### ***3. Read individual passages in light of the overall story of Acts and the rest of the New Testament.***

In some cases the movement of the story will help indicate what is intended by to be normative and what is merely descriptive.

- What about the coming of the Spirit in 2, 8, 10 and 19? (In 19 the disciples of John were not yet Christians)

### ***4. Look to other parts of Acts to clarify what is normative.***

- The selling of possessions

### ***5. Look for repeated patterns and themes.***

- The casting of lots to determine the will of God:

How does God make his will known to believers in Acts? He uses a variety of methods to do this: angels (8.26; 12.7), his Spirit (8.39; 10.19; 16.6-7); visions (9.10-12; 16.9-10); the Scriptures (1.20; 8.30-35; 18.24-26), circumstances (3.1-10; 8.1), prayer (13.1-3), theological discussion (15.1-21), and other believers

# Interpreting the Epistles

- 21 of the 27 NT books are letters (approximately 35% of the entire NT).
- In our NT canon Paul's letters are in their present order by letters to churches (Largest to smallest) and then letters to individuals (largest to smallest). Paul's Epistles are named after the recipients.
- The Catholic Epistles are named after their authors because their recipients are mentioned in only a general way.

## *I. Characteristics of New Testament Letters*

1. Compared to other ancient letters the New Testament Epistles are *typically* longer and more formal in nature.
2. The New Testament Epistles are the authoritative substitute for the author's personal presence.
3. The New Testament Epistles are occasional documents.
4. Ancient letters and the New Testament Epistles in particular were carefully written and delivered.
5. The New Testament Epistles were intended for the Christian Community

## *II. Things to look for when reading the New Testament Epistles*

- These thoughts will apply to all types of biblical literature.
- 1. Observe any for words and thoughts that are repeated.
- 2. Look for contrasts the author draws.
- 3. Detect comparisons the author makes.
- 4. Note any lists that are delineated by the biblical writer.
- 5. Look for cause and effect relationships the author sets forth.
- 6. Seek to interpret any figures of speech the author uses.
- 7. Don't overlook the importance of conjunctions in the author's argument.
- 8. Don't overlook the importance of verbs and pronouns in determining the author's message.

### *III. The Form of New Testament Letters*

#### **1. Introduction**

- Author
- Recipient
- Greeting
- Prayer

#### **2. Body**

**3. Conclusion :** Dr. Schreiner, in his book, *Interpreting Paul*, lists the various aspects included in Paul's concluding words (29-30).

- travel plans (Titus 3.12; Philemon 22)
- commendation (Romans 16.1-2)
- prayer (2 Thessa. 3.16)
- prayer requests (1 Thessa. 5.25)
- greetings (Romans 16.3-16, 21-23)
- final instructions and exhortations (Col. 4.16-17; 1 Tim. 6.20-21a)
- holy kiss (1 Thessa. 4.18; 2 Thessa. 3.17)
- autograph (1 Cor. 16.23-24; Eph. 6.23-24)
- benedictions (Jude 24-25)
- doxology



# **THE FORM OF ANCIENT LETTERS**

## **SALUTATION**

A to B – Greetings (Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1)

Shalom

Grace

## **THANKSGIVING and/or PRAYER**

“I thank my God through Jesus Christ” – Rom. 1:8

“I give thanks to God” – 1 Cor. 1:4

“We give thanks to God always” – 1 Thess. 1:2

## **BODY OF LETTER**

Romans 1:18-11:26

Galatians 1:6-6:10

1 Corinthians 1:10-16:12

## **EXHORTATION AND INSTRUCTION**

Romans 12:1-15:32

Galatians 5:1-6:10

Colossians 3:1-4:6

## **CONCLUSION**

A wish for peace (2 Cor. 13:11); Greeting (1 Cor. 16:1-20a);  
Kiss (Rom 16:16); Concluding Autograph (1 Cor. 16:21);  
Benediction (Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23-24)

#### *IV. How to Interpret New Testament Letters*

1. Read the entire book in one sitting.
2. Seek to understand as much of the original situation as you can from the biblical text.
3. Think in paragraphs.
4. Seek to understand what is to be understood as normative and what is to be interpreted as cultural.

# Applying Paul's Epistles (Summary of Blomberg)

## *Normative or Cultural*

1. Does the immediate context juxtapose a seemingly contradictory command?
  - Romans 12.17ff over against Romans 13.1-7
2. Does the command seem to contradict teaching elsewhere in Paul's writings?
  - 1 Cor. 14.33 over against 1 Cor. 11.2-16
3. Does the rationale for a specific command work equally well in all cultures?
  - 1 Cor. 11 – headcoverings
4. Does a command appeal to the way that God established things in OT times or to the way that he is reestablishing them in NT times?
  - Creation ordinances – 1 Tim 2.13 – male leadership; male leadership in the home Eph. 5.22-33
5. Does the command reflect a broad cross-cultural principle stated explicitly in the text?
  - Romans 3.23 – built on Romans 1.18ff
  - Romans 14.14 – has been abused for the context teaches that the reference is to clean and unclean food
6. Is the command to an individual or the church?
  - 1 Tim. 4.11-16 (v. 13 is applicable to Timothy and other ministers of the gospel but the rest of the passage can be applied more generally./

# Major Interpretative Approaches to Revelation

## 1. Preterist (contemporary historical)

**View** – this approach focuses on the historical setting contemporary with the original author and recipients. It takes seriously the historical context attempting to understand the book the way John's readers would have understood it. This approach tends to devalue the end-times aspect of the book. (contemporary critical scholarship)

## 2. Historicist (continuous historical)

**View** – This approach understands Revelation to be a preview of the entire sweep of church history from the first century until Christ's return. No two proponents of this view are in agreement as to which parts of the book parallel which time in church history (Luther and Calvin)

3. **Idealist** (timeless symbolic) View - Understands Revelation to be a depiction of the ongoing battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. This view correctly sees the relevant timeless principles involved in the spiritual battle between good and evil, but it is not historically rooted (Amill. interpreters)

4. **Extreme Futurist** (eschatological) View — This approach understands the vast bulk of the book to refer almost exclusively to the events still in the future. The view is weak in demonstrating the relevance to original audience. (Robert Thomas)

5. **Modified Futurist** (eclectic) View - This view sees merit in several of the above options. While believing that Revelation clearly teaches about the future, those who hold this position also understand the book to have a message to its first readers, as well as presenting timeless truth (like the need of orthodoxy and forsaking spiritual complacency) for each generation of Christians. (Mounce, Ladd)

# The Millennial Question

*Amillennial* (no [earthly] millennium) view understands the thousand years to be symbolic and refers to a lengthy period of time of unknown duration. The thousand-year reign in Rev. 20:1-6 is a symbol of his present spiritual kingship at the right hand of God in heaven. Many amillennialists understand that the millennium is this present period of world history in which the gospel is boldly proclaimed.

*Postmillennial* (“after” the millennium) view teaches that Christ will come back to the world after the world has been progressively “christianized” by the spread of the gospel (at the conclusion of the millennium) . When that process is complete Christ will return.

*Premillennial* (“before” the millennium) view holds that Christ will return to earth (Rev. 19:11ff) to set up his kingdom for a period of one thousand years (20:4-6).

Dispensational premillennialists suggest that the return of Christ will take place in two stages. The first will take place prior to the tribulation (the Rapture) and the second at the end of the tribulation.

The Historical premillennialists believe that the return of Christ is a single-stage event that will occur at the close of the tribulation but prior to the beginning of the millennium.

## Seven Suggestions for Reading and Studying Revelation<sup>1</sup>

The great John Calvin admitted that he wasn't sure what to do with the book of Revelation and therefore did not write a commentary on it, even though he had completed volumes on almost all of the rest of the New Testament. We today do not have the luxury of avoiding Revelation.

The book of Revelation pulls back the curtain to give God's people a glimpse of his plan for human history. Center stage at this cosmic drama stands Jesus Christ. The historical context was a situation where Christians were increasingly being persecuted for their faith because they refused to join the pagan parade. The pressure to bow the knee to Caesar rather than Christ was spreading, and hope was beginning to fade. In addition, some believers were becoming comfortable in their pagan surroundings and compromising their faithfulness to Christ. Revelation encourages the persecuted and is a warning those who are compromising morally and/or doctrinally.

We might say that the purpose of Revelation is to answer the question, "Who is Lord?" Historian Will Durant, in *The Story of Civilization*, concludes:

There is no greater drama in human record than the sight of a few Christians, scorned and oppressed by a succession of emperors, bearing all trials with a fierce tenacity, multiplying quietly, building order while their enemies generated chaos, fighting the sword with the word, brutality with hope, and at last defeating the strongest state that history has known. Caesar and Christ had met in the arena, and Christ had won. (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization. Part III: Caesar and Christ*)

Revelation answers this question by creating a symbolic world in which readers may find the heavenly perspective they need to endure trying times.

### 1. Read Revelation with humility

We should resist the Revelation made easy approaches. Revelation is not easy! Reading Revelation with a humble mind means that we understand the difficulties involved in reading and preaching the book and being willing to admit that our interpretation could be wrong.

### 2. Try to discover the message to the original readers.

This is the top priority with any book of the Bible. Our tendency with Revelation is to ignore the first Christians and jump directly to God's message for us. We must beware of a "newspaper" approach to Revelation. The newspaper approach assumes that we must be living in the "final days". It also implies that in Revelation God was not really speaking to those to whom the book was written. If Christ does not return for another one thousand years the book still has a message for us.

Therefore a key question to ask is, "What was John trying to communicate to his audience?" If our interpretation would have made no sense to the original audience we probably have missed the meaning of the passage.

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of Duvall and Hayes



### 3. Don't try to discover a strict chronological roadmap of future events.

Revelation does not necessarily advance in a neat linear fashion. The book is filled with prophetic-apocalyptic visions that serve to make a dramatic impact on the reader rather than to present a precise chronological sequence of future events.

For example – the sixth seal (Rev. 6.12-17) takes us to the end of the age. But when the seventh seal is opened, we are given a whole new set of judgments – the trumpets – and the seventh trumpet also takes us to the end of the age.

Then with the first bowl in 16.1-2 we are given another series of judgments. Revelation 19-22 paints another colorful and detailed picture of the end, but this is not the first time the readers have been translated to the end.

On a smaller scale, in Revelation 16.12-16 we are told that the stars fell to the earth . . . The sky receded like a scroll . . . and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” Yet in 7.3 we read the four angels are told not to “harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.” To attempt to force a strict chronological sequence would not make sense. Rather than searching a strict chronological map of future events in Revelation, we should grasp the main message in each vision about living in the here and now.

### 4. Take Revelation seriously but don't always take it literally.

Some who insist that we should interpret Scripture symbolically do so in order to deny the reality of scriptural truth or a historical event. When they say that something is figurative or symbolic they mean that it is not real or that it did not happen. The truth in Revelation is that the picture language with its symbols, images, and figures is capable of conveying literal truth and describing literal events. Apocalyptic imagery is just another way of communicating reality. In my thought, the apocalyptic imagery of Revelation is just another way to emphasize historical reality rather than to deny or diminish it.

A key principle of interpretation is that our methods should match the literary genre used by the author. As a result we should be careful about taking apocalyptic imagery literally. We can actually pervert the author's intended meaning by forcing a literal interpretation on something that the author intended to be understood figuratively.

Example Revelation 17.9 – if we were to take the description of the woman who sits on the seven hills literally we would have to have one very large woman or seven very small hills. But if we interpret it not as a literal woman, we do not deny the reality of scripture at all. First-century readers would naturally have thought of woman as representing Rome, a city built on seven hills. The text probably also looks beyond Rome to powerful pagan enemies opposed to God. We can take the imagery seriously but not necessarily literally.

### 5. Pay attention when John identifies an image.

When John himself provides a clue to the interpretation of an image, we should take notice. For example

- 1.17 – the Son of man is Christ
- 1.20 – the golden lampstands are the churches (cf. 11.3-4)
- 5.5-6 – the Lion is the Lamb
- 12.9 – the dragon is Satan
- 21.9-10 – the heavenly Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb or the church.

However, John also has some fluidity to his imagery. In other words John is not shy about using the same image to refer to different things. For example, the seven stars are the angels to the seven churches (1.16, 20; 2.1; 3.1). But John also uses the image of a star (not the seven stars) to refer to other things, such as God's agents of judgment (8.10-12) or even Jesus himself (22.16). In the same way the image of a woman can be used for a false prophetess (2.20), the messianic community (ch. 12), the harlot city or empire (ch. 17), and the bride of Christ (19.7; 21.9).

Even though John is free to use images to refer to different things, when he identifies an image, we should pay attention.

## 6. Look to the OT and historical context when interpreting images and symbols

Revelation uses language at several different levels:

- Text level: words written on the page
- Vision level: the picture that the words paint
- Referent level: what the vision refers to in real life

One of the most difficult aspects of reading Revelation is knowing what the images and symbols refer to. Even when we understand what is happening at the text and vision levels, we may not know what is going on at the referent level. In other words, we may know what Revelation is saying, but we may not know what it is talking about!

The first two places to go for answers are the first-century historical context and the OT. The historical context would be the final decades of the first century. How Revelation uses the OT is complex. Although there is no explicit OT quotations in Revelation, the book is filled with echoes and allusions to the OT. In fact, Revelation contains more OT references than any other NT book, with the OT appearing in almost 70% of Revelation's verses (Keener, Revelation, 33). Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel make the most important contributions to Revelation.

Example – The background to the vision of Jesus in chapter 1.7; 12-15 (cf. Dan. 7.9, 13-14; 10.5-6). Notice how many words and phrases John uses to depict Jesus as a glorious divine being.

Understanding Daniel helps us to understand Revelation here. John often uses OT language to describe what he has seen and heard.

## 7. Focus on the main idea and don't press all of the details

This is probably the most important guideline. With most literary genres in the Bible, we begin with the details and build our way toward an understanding of the whole. With Revelation, however, we should start with the big picture and work toward an understanding of the details. As we seek to discover theological principles in Revelation, we should focus on the main ideas.

For example, the main idea of revelation 4-5 relates to the ascended and exalted Lord, who alone is worthy to execute divine judgments.

The details of any particular section will heighten the impact on the reader but will not change the main idea. Resist the temptation to focus on the details so that you miss the main idea. Don't let the main point of the section fade from view.

## Revelation 12.1-7

We realize that not everyone will agree with our interpretation but it will serve as a model for the process one can go through to determine points of application.

### ***1. What did the text mean to the original audience.***

This step consists of understanding the context of chapter 12 so we may be able to interpret the symbols ("signs" in 12.1, 3) in light of the context.

- The chapter opens with a woman that is about to give birth to a child. An enormous red dragon is waiting to devour the child. But as soon as the child is born God snatches him up to heaven. God also provides a safe place on earth for the mother.
- The scene then shifts to a great battle in heaven. The dragon is defeated and heaven celebrates the victory with a "song."
- The devil, who has been cast down from heaven, pursues the woman with a vengeance and makes war against the rest of her offspring.

How would the first century audience have understood these characters?

Most likely they would *not* have thought of the woman as Mary, the mother of Jesus (a much later interpretation). They would have likely thought of the woman as the true Israel, the faithful messianic community who gives birth to both the messiah and the church. Both the male child and the offspring serve as keys for identifying the woman. Note that the prophets often portray righteous Israel as a mother and the symbols used in 12.1 confirm this interpretation (cf. Gen. 37.9).

The woman flees to a place of spiritual refuge for a period of 1260 days, the time of persecution between the ascension and exaltation of Christ and his future return (cf. 11.2; 12.14; 13.5).

The dragon is explicitly identified in the passage as the devil or Satan (12.9). This enemy of God attempts to devour the male child and lead the world astray. The detailed description of the dragon as red with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns only adds to the awesomeness of the image

We are told that the male child will rule all nations with an iron scepter (12.5), an allusion to Psalm 2 that is applied even more clearly to Jesus in Revelation 19.5. The male child clearly represents Jesus Christ. After the child is born he is taken up to God. By moving straight from Jesus' birth to his ascension and enthronement, John stresses that Satan's plot has been foiled by Jesus' incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

The original audience would have understood the war in heaven (12.7-12) and the subsequent rage of the devil (12.13-17) as an explanation of two significant realities: (1) God has defeated Satan and his victory is certain. (2) God's people on earth will continue to suffer as victims of the Satan's rage.

This heavenly perspective would help John's readers to understand their hostile environment and encourage them to persevere. They too can appropriate the victory and overcome the devil by the "blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony," that is, by bearing faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ even if it costs them their lives (12.11)

## ***2. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?***

Like the original audience we look back on Jesus' first coming and look forward to his second coming. Both the biblical audience and the contemporary live between the already and the not yet. Because we share this situation with the original audience we can expect to suffer. As offspring of the woman (12.17), we will also encounter the anger of the defeated devil.

Nevertheless, because we live in a different place and time (we are not living under Domitian's Roman empire), our suffering may take different forms and may vary in intensity. In general, churches in North America are not being persecuted in the same degree that churches in Asia Minor were being persecuted though that could change.

We do, however, struggle with many of the same temptations toward complacency and compromise that the churches of Asia Minor faced. Immorality, idolatry, false teaching, materialism, and other such sins are still alive and well in our day. Like our forefathers, we also feel the attack of the devil in our struggle to live holy lives in the midst of a world system opposed to God. We know what it's like to be at war with the evil one. The comment in 12.11 that first century believers overcame him by the blood of the Lamb . . . and did not love their lives even unto death" will pose a strong challenge to North American Christians not accustomed to considering radical sacrifice for the cause of Christ, much less martyrdom.

## ***3. What are the theological principles in the text?***

The theological principles are built on similarities between their situation and ours. There are several principles or truths that emerge from this passage:

1. Spiritual warfare is real. There is a real devil that is opposed to God and bent on deceiving and destroying God's people.
2. Satan has been defeated by the life and redemptive work of Christ.
3. Christians can overcome the devil by living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ faithfully.
4. Christians can expect to suffer for being faithful in their witness to Christ.

## ***4. How can the theological principles in the passage be applied in the lives of believers?***

1. We need first to see how the principles in the text address the original audience. Lets use the third theological principle listed above. There are several common elements in the intersection between the principle and the original audience:
  - They were Christians
  - They experience victory over the devil by living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ
  - They do it even under the threat of death
2. We must discover a parallel situation in a contemporary context. In the original context the satanic attack takes the form of persecution. Consequently, we can say that any time believers suffer for their faith we have a parallel situation.
3. We need to seek to make our application specific. In our passage, persecuted believers overcome the devil by living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ. If the preacher creates a real world scenario to serve as an illustration or as an example of how a person might put the biblical principles into practice he must be certain that it is both faithful to the meaning of the text and relevant to the contemporary audience.

One example might be to come up with a scenario of how to engage the culture with the gospel rather than retreat to avoid persecution.

# THE NATURE OF THE REVELATION

## 1. The Revelation as Apocalypse

- The taproot of apocalyptic is the Old Testament prophetic literature, especially as it is found in Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and parts of Isaiah.
- Unlike most of the prophetic books, apocalypses are literary works from the beginning.
- Most often the “stuff” of apocalyptic is presented in the forms of visions and dreams.
- The images of the apocalyptic are often forms of fantasy, rather than of reality.
- Because they were literary, most of the apocalypses were formally ideally stylized.

## 2. The Revelation as Prophecy

## 3. The Revelation as Epistle

## **The Exegetical Task**

1. The first task of the exegesis of Revelation is to seek the author's (i.e. the Holy Spirit's) original intent.
2. Since Revelation is in part prophetic, one must be open to the possibility of secondary meaning, inspired by the Holy Spirit, but not fully seen by the author or original readers.
3. The interpreter must be careful of overusing "the analogy of Scripture" in the exegesis of Revelation.
4. Be cautious in handling the prophetic/apocalyptic nature of the book.

## **SECTION 21**

### **Doing Greek Word Studies**



## GREEK FOR THE REST OF US: WHAT ARE WORD STUDIES?

William D. Mounce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003)

Chapter 24, pg. 198-215.

<b>SECTION ONE: CHOOSE THE ENGLISH WORD.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SECTION TWO: IDENTIFY THE GREEK WORD.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SECTION THREE: DISCOVER THE SEMANTIC RANGE.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SECTION FOUR: CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SECTION FIVE: SEPTUAGINT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SECTION SIX: COGNATES.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SECTION SEVEN: COMMON MISTAKES.....</b>	<b>4</b>

**Introduction**-In this chapter, Mounce covers simple procedures and techniques to help do effective word studies in the Bible. He also gives helpful tips on what resources to use and how to avoid translation mistakes.

Words have a “semantic range.” “Semantic” refers to a word’s meaning; “semantic range” refers to the range of possible meanings a word possesses. Mounce points out that everyday words can have a large range of meaning, such as the word “run” (i.e., I scored six runs today. My computer runs fast. He runs his mouth. Could you run that by me again?). In describing this concept, Mounce refers to the range of meaning as the word’s “bundle of meanings,” since a word rarely possesses only one meaning.

In the Greek language, the semantic range of some words is very large. Take the preposition *εν* for example. It can be translated to mean one of the following: in, to, with, among, or by. Rarely can one word in one language correspond exactly to another word in another language, especially in its semantic range. The question raised is how do we translate the Bible when we do not have English words that correspond exactly to the Greek? We have to interpret. All translation is interpretive. One example of interpretation is found in translating 1 Timothy 6:13-14. The word *παραγγελλω* can be translated “charge” (RSV), “command” (NLT), and “urge” (NKJV).

If a person wants to know what Paul meant by the word “charge”, he or she cannot look up the English word “charge” because it does not give the full meaning of *παραγγελλω*. One has to discover the full meaning of the Greek word behind the English and learn its semantic range. To do this involves a four step process: decide what word to study, identify the Greek word, discover its semantic range, and look for something in the context that helps determine what the biblical author meant by this word in this particular verse.

## SECTION ONE: CHOOSE THE ENGLISH WORD

- I. Oftentimes, it is difficult to determine which word or words should be researched within a given text. How do we decide what words are most significant, for we cannot research every word because we will run out of time and probably become bored. Mounce gives four suggestions on what words to pick.
- A. Look for *repeated* words
    - 1. This normally indicates a recurring theme, and perhaps the central theme in the passage. This includes the use of synonyms.
  - B. Look for *theological* terms.
    - 1. This will be more obvious in teaching passages (e.g., in Paul) than in narrative (e.g., in the Gospels).
  - C. Sometimes the verse will “*hang*” on a word, which contains the central meaning of the sentence. Without this “hanging” word, the sentence will not make sense. In Romans 10:9, the “hanging” word is “Lord.”
  - D. When comparing translations, you may find a significant word that is translated *differently* among the different translations.

## SECTION TWO: IDENTIFY THE GREEK WORD

- II. This section simply explains how to look up a word in an exhaustive concordance to find its meaning. Mounce recommends the NIV *Exhaustive Concordance*.

## SECTION THREE: DISCOVER ITS SEMANTIC RANGE

- III. As stated before, to discover the full meaning of the word, we must find its “semantic range.” The word that Mounce uses throughout this section is κυριος, which means “Lord.” Mounce points us to a simple process to follow.
- A. Find the word in the NIV *Exhaustive Concordance* and notice its wide range of meaning. For Lord, it might mean “sir” or “master”, even to the idea of “majesty.”
  - B. If using the *The Strongest Strong's*, you can look the word up in the *Greek Dictionary-Index*. Here we see that the word κυριος is the name of God in the Old Testament.
  - C. You can also look at other translations to see how they translated the word. The word for “Lord” will not vary much, but other words will greatly.
  - D. Another tool is “Englishman’s Concordance.” The most recent is titled *The Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament*. With this, you can see every place in the New Testament where the word occurs. The beauty of this concordance is that it will show you all the words that are closely related to the word you are looking up; therefore, regardless of the translation, you will find all the uses of the word you are researching.
  - E. If you want to learn more about the semantic range, you can always go to a Greek lexicon. The standard one is *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.

- F. There are specific books that help you see the semantic range of the word and will tell you more about the word, especially its usage throughout the Bible and other ancient writings. Mounce's favorite choice is Verlyn D. Verbrugge's *The NIV Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Words*. While the discussion in this book is excellent, it is generally too advanced for most people at the "baby Greek" level. Geoffrey W. Bromiley's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume* is much better for those at the "baby Greek" level.
- G. Commentaries can be very helpful in discussing a word's meaning.
- H. If the word is an important theological term, it may be discussed in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell. Mounce thinks this is a marvelous book and everyone should own it.

#### SECTION FOUR: CONTEXT

- IV. In determining the particular meaning of a word in a certain verse, context is very important. Context will often give clues to what the author intended. For discovering the proper context, Mounce uses a diagram of eight circles with the inner most circle being the word itself, the second is the verse, the third is the paragraph, the fourth is the book, the fifth is the books by the same author, the sixth is the New Testament, the seventh is the Bible, and the eighth is extra-biblical sources. In using this diagram, one begins with the verse to find the meaning. If there isn't anything in the verse, move on to the paragraph, and so on. Note that the further you go out from the center, the less assuredness you have that you are defining the word properly. Mounce gives examples of each of the circles.
  - A. *Verse*-In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, the verse helps us realize that God's *will* is for believers to be sanctified.
  - B. *Paragraph*-In 1 Timothy 2:14-15, one may wonder what "saved" means. Is it a spiritual salvation or a physical safety? The context points to a spiritual salvation.
  - C. *Book*- At the end of a list of sins, Paul states in 1 Timothy 1:10 that these are "contrary to *sound* doctrine." What is *sound* doctrine? Most translations miss the fact that the word is a medical metaphor meaning "healthy," and that it contrasts with the heresy being spread in Ephesus, which Paul elsewhere describes as sick and morbid (1 Tim. 6:4), infectious abrasions (1 Tim. 6:5) spreading like gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17). *Sound* doctrine is that which is opposed to the false teaching.
  - D. *New Testament*-In Romans 4:2-3, Paul states that Abraham was not justified by works but by faith; therefore, what does it mean to be justified? James 2:21-24 expands on the meaning of justification and gives us a fuller picture of what Paul meant when discussing justification. Paul is discussing how justification is granted; James is discussing how justification is shown to have occurred.
  - E. *Bible*-In Acts 4:8, we read the Peter was *filled* with the Holy Spirit, but previously in Acts 2:4, Luke already stated that this had happened. How can this be explained? The Old Testament book of Judges gives us insight on this topic. In Judges, the word *filled* is used when the Holy Spirit possesses a person in a powerful yet temporary way. While the Holy Spirit comes in his fullness at a believer's conversion, Luke uses the terminology of Judges to describe a work of the Holy Spirit in which he grips

a person in a special way to enable them to say or do something special. Let us remember, as you continue out to the outer circles of context, be very cautious.

- F. *Word Study on "Lord"*-Using the system in place let us research and determine what Paul meant when he called Jesus "Lord" in Romans 10:9.
1. *Verse*-The connection between the confession and belief in Jesus' resurrection suggests "Lord" means more than "sir."
  2. *Paragraph*-Verse twelve states that Jesus is "Lord of all," asserting his universal lordship.
  3. *Book*-In Romans 1:4, Paul states that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord," connecting Jesus' Lordship with his resurrection as in 10:9 and with his identification as the Son of God.
  4. *New Testament*-Many other verses expand upon the lordship of Jesus including Phil. 2:10-11 and 1 Cor. 12:3.

## SECTION FIVE: SEPTUAGINT

- V. In detailed word studies, you will often see writers referring to the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. When the Septuagint was translated, the translators chose a Greek word for each of these Hebrew words. When defining Greek words in the New Testament, it is the word's background in the Old Testament via the Septuagint that is the most important background in defining the Greek word, not its general usage in the first century.

## SECTION SIX: COGNATES

- VI. A cognate is a word that is related to another and actually shares the same root. In English, the words "prince" and "princess" share the same root. Some cognates have similar meanings; however, at other times there are nuance differences between cognates so they will not have the same meaning. It is best to stick to the lexical forms when possible.

## SECTION SEVEN: COMMON MISTAKES

- VII. Let us example three examples of common mistakes committed in doing word studies.
- A. *Anachronism*-It is always a bad habit to define Greek words using an English word derived from that Greek word. One example occurs when someone talks about the "power" of God, and adds that the word for "power" is δυναμις (from which we get dynamite). It is totally backwards then to state that God's power is dynamite. God's power is never pictured in Scripture as something that blows rocks apart.
  - B. *Etymological Fallacy*-"Etymology" refers to how the word was originally created; however, the etymology, the pieces that were originally used to make up the word, does not define the word today. For example, a "butterfly" is not an animal made of butter that can fly. This type of mistake does occur when people translate words from the Bible. One of the most well known mistakes occurs with the word μετανοεω,

meaning to “repent.” “Meta” implies changing and “nous” refers to the mind; therefore, the word must mean to change one’s mind. Wrong! Mounce argues that “repent” does not only mean to change one’s mind, but also to change one’s behavior. This fuller meaning of repent is given when drawing from the entire Bible’s concept of repentance, especially from the background of conversion in the Old Testament. Mounce points out that *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* makes this mistake. With that said, there are examples that a word carries the meaning of its parts, especially when a preposition exist. The word εἰσερχομαι, meaning, “to go into,” is made up of two parts, εἰς, meaning “into” and ερχομαι, meaning, “to go.” Connected to the etymological fallacy is the fact that words change their meaning over the years. What a word meant when it was first created may be at best irrelevant today. A word’s meaning today is seen in how it is used today, not in how it used to be used. Here are three examples

1. *Hussy* is from the Middle English word *huswife*, meaning *housewife*.
2. *Enthusiasm* meant to be inspired or possessed by a god.
3. *Nice* originally meant *foolish* in the Middle English.

Words have a range of meaning, but that range is not determined by the parts that made up the word or even by how it was used 1,000 years earlier.

- C. *A Few Other Errors*-Do not put too much weight on a word, thinking that the word, all by itself, is full of meaning. Focus your study on the larger unit, hesitating to place too much emphasis on an individual word. Tied to this fact is that theological concepts are larger than one word.

## **SECTION 22**

### **Theological Systems and Hermeneutics**

## **Over-Arching Theological Systems and Hermeneutics**

*NOTE: the following comparisons are drawn from Donald Hochner's work.*

**Dispensational Theology** organizes history and theology around a series of dispensations, which are each different "economies" or arrangements decreed by God. Each dispensation begins with an offer of blessing by God, and ends with failure by man to meet God's conditions and a resulting period of Divine judgment.

1. The Dispensation of Innocence – Untested Holiness
2. The Dispensation of Conscience – Cain & Abel
3. The Dispensation of Government – Noah
4. The Dispensation of Promise – Abraham
5. The Dispensation of Law – Moses
6. The Dispensation of Grace or the Church
7. The Dispensation of the Kingdom

### **Some Characteristics of Dispensational Theology**

- (1) Stresses a "literal" interpretation of the Bible
- (2) "Israel" always means only the literal, physical descendants of Jacob
- (3) God has 2 peoples with 2 separate destinies: Israel (earthly) and the Church (heavenly)
- (4) The Church was born at Pentecost
- (5) The Church was not prophesied in the OT but was a "mystery," hidden until the NT.
- (6) God's main purpose in history is national, physical Israel
- (7) The Church is a parenthesis in God's program for the ages.
- (8) Dispensationalism stresses a discontinuity between the OT and NT.
- (9) God's program in history is mainly through separate dispensations.
- (10) Some dispensationalists have said that OT sinners were saved by works.
- (11) Most teach that persons in the OT were saved by faith in a revelation peculiar to their Dispensation, but this did not include their faith in the Messiah as their sin-bearer.
- (12) Jesus made an offer of the literal Kingdom to Israel; since Israel rejected it, it is postponed.

- (13) The OT Law has been abolished for the Church, but not for Israel, who will be under the Law when the Church is taken away, and God returns to His original people – Physical Israel.
- (14) OT Laws are no longer in effect unless repeated in the NT.
- (15) The Millenium = the Kingdom of God. Pre-mil, Pre-trib usually.
- (16) The OT animal sacrifices will be restored in the Millenium (as a memorial).
- (17) The Millenium will fulfill the Covenant made with Abraham. Israel as a nation has a future.



## **Covenantal Theology**

Covenantal Theologians organize all history and theology around several covenants, or arrangements between God and humans or the Son. They are:

### ***1. Covenant of Redemption. This covenant occurred before creation.***

- The Son - perfect obedience in death promised to the Father
- The Father - promised to the Son: 1) Holy Spirit given to the Church; 2) salvation to all believers; 3) exaltation of the son.

### ***2. The Covenant of Works: Lasting from creation until the fall.***

- Man's conditions - Adam must obey God
- God rewards obedience with eternal life, punishes disobedience with death

### ***3. The Covenant of Grace: Lasting from the fall until the second advent.***

- a. Man's conditions - saving faith issuing in obedience
  - b. God's response - salvation in all of its phases
- 

## Characteristics of Covenant Theology

1. Always Calvinist. Usually five-point Calvinist.
2. Accepts both literal and figurative (spiritual) interpretation of the Bible.
3. 'Israel' may mean either physical descendants of Jacob, or spiritual Israel, depending on context.
4. God always had only one people, the Church gradually developed through the ages, in accordance with an Covenant worked out in eternity past between the "Three Persons of the Godhead."
5. The Church began in the OT (Acts 7:38) and reached fulfillment in the NT.
6. There are many OT prophecies of the NT Church.

7. Some OT prophecies are for national Israel, others for spiritual Israel.
8. God's main purpose\* in history is Christ and secondarily the Church.  
  
\*God's main purpose is His own glory, Christ included because He is the glory of God, and then the church. The Church is the culmination of God's saving purpose for the ages.
9. The main heir to Abraham's covenant was Christ, the Seed, and spiritual Israel which is "in Christ"
10. The eternal Covenant of Redemption was within the Trinity to effect election.
11. God made a conditional Covenant of Works with Adam as representative for all his posterity.
12. God made a Covenant of Grace with Christ and His people, including Adam.
13. God's program in history is mainly through related covenants, but all those covenants were derived from the eternal covenant that the Trinity made in eternity.
14. No man has ever been saved by works, but only by grace. (Eph 2:8-10)
15. All men who have ever been saved have been saved by faith in Christ as their sin-bearer, which has been progressively revealed in every age.
16. OT believers believed in the Gospel of Messiah as sin-bearer mainly by the sacrifices as types and prophecies.

17. The Holy Spirit has indwelt believers in all ages, especially in the present NT era, and will not be withdrawn.
18. Jesus made only an offer of the Spiritual Kingdom, which was rejected by literal Israel but has gradually been accepted by spiritual Israel.
19. Believers in all ages are all 'in Christ' and part of the Body and Bride of Christ.
20. The Law has 3 uses: to restrain sin in society, to lead to Christ, and to instruct Christians in godliness. The ceremonial laws have been abolished; the civil laws have been abolished except for their general equity; the moral laws continue.
21. OT laws are still in effect unless abrogated in the NT.
22. The Church is the Kingdom of God. They are usually Amil or Postmil; although a few are Premil or Preterist.
23. The OT sacrifices were fulfilled and forever abolished in Christ.
24. Christ fulfilled the Covenant to Abraham. Some believe in a future for literal Israel, most don't.
25. Christ alone sits on the throne in heaven. Saints rule under Him in Spirit.
26. Most embrace infant baptism, but the Baptist among them don't.

## **SECTION 23**

### **The Chicago Statements on Biblical Inerrancy and Hermeneutics**

# **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy**

## **Preface**

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denials, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to confirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

Drafted October 26 – 28, 1978  
Summit I  
International Council on Biblical Inerrancy  
Chicago, Illinois

## **A Short Statement**

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's Divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

## **Articles of Affirmation and Denial**

### **Article I**

**We affirm** that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

**We deny** that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition or any other human source.

### **Article II**

**We affirm** that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

**We deny** that Church creeds, councils or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

### **Article III**

**We affirm** that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

**We deny** that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

### **Article IV**

**We affirm** that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

**We deny** that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's Work of Inspiration.

### **Article V**

**We affirm** that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

**We deny** that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

### **Article VI**

**We affirm** that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

**We deny** that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

### **Article VII**

**We affirm** that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

**We deny** that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

### **Article VIII**

**We affirm** that God in His Work of Inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

**We deny** that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

### **Article IX**

**We affirm** that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

**We deny** that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

### **Article X**

**We affirm** that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

**We deny** that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

### **Article XI**

**We affirm** that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

**We deny** that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

### **Article XII**

**We affirm** that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud or deceit.

**We deny** that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.



### **Article XIII**

**We affirm** the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

**We deny** that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of materials, variant selections of material in parallel accounts or the use of free citations.

### **Article XIV**

**We affirm** the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

**We deny** that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

### **Article XV**

**We affirm** that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

**We deny** that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

### **Article XVI**

**We affirm** that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

**We deny** that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

### **Article XVII**

**We affirm** that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

**We deny** that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

### **Article XVIII**

**We affirm** that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

**We deny** the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching or rejecting its claims to authorship.

### **Article XIX**

**We affirm** that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

**We deny** that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

## **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics**

Summit I of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy took place in Chicago on October 26 – 28, 1978 for the purpose of affirming afresh the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, making clear the understanding of it and warning against its denial. In the four years since Summit I, God has blessed that effort in ways surpassing most anticipations. A gratifying flow of helpful literature on the doctrine of inerrancy as well as a growing commitment to its value give cause to pour forth praise to our great God.

The work of Summit I had hardly been completed when it became evident that there was yet another major task to be tackled. While we recognize that belief in the inerrancy of Scripture is basic to maintaining its authority, the values of that commitment are only as real as one's understanding of the meaning of Scripture. Thus, the need for Summit II. For two years plans were laid and papers were written on themes relating to hermeneutical principles and practices. The culmination of this effort has been a meeting in Chicago on November 10-13, 1982 at which we, the undersigned, have participated.

In similar fashion to the Chicago Statement of 1978, we herewith present these affirmations and denials as an expression of the results of our labors to clarify hermeneutical issues and principles. We do not claim completeness or systematic treatment of the entire subject, but these affirmations and denials represent a consensus of the approximately one hundred participants and observers gathered at this conference. It has been a broadening experience to engage in dialogue, and it is our prayer that God will use the product of our diligent efforts to enable us and others to more correctly handle the word of truth.

### **Council**

Gleason L. Archer  
William N. Garrison  
Harold W. Hoehner  
Roger R. Nicole  
Earl D. Radmacher  
R. C. Sproul

James M. Boice  
Norman L. Geisler  
A. Wetherell Johnson  
James I. Packer  
Moishe Rosen

Edmund P. Clowney  
Jay H. Grimstead  
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Robert D. Preus  
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Jack Sonneveldt  
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Hudson T. Armerding  
Henn A. G. Blocher  
W. A. Criswell  
John H. Gerstner  
David E. Kelby  
Frank N. Kik  
Hendrik Krabbendam  
Gordon R. Lewis  
John F. MacArthur  
William E. Nix  
Luis Palau  
Lorne C. Sanny  
Joseph R. Shultz  
Raymond C. Stedman  
Fred G. Wacker  
John F. Walvoord

# Articles of Affirmation and Denial

## Article I

**We affirm** that the normative authority of Holy Scripture is the authority of God Himself, and is attested by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church.

**We deny** the legitimacy of separating the authority of Christ from the authority of Scripture, or of opposing the one to the other.

## Article II

**We affirm** that as Christ is God and man in one person, so Scripture is, indivisibly, God's Word in human language.

**We deny** that the humble, human form of Scripture entails errancy any more than the humanity of Christ, even in His humiliation, entails sin.

## Article III

**We affirm** that the person and work of Jesus Christ are the central focus of the entire Bible.

**We deny** that any method of interpretation which rejects or obscures the Christ-centeredness of Scripture is correct.

## Article IV

**We affirm** that the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture acts through it today to work faith in its message.

**We deny** that the Holy Spirit ever teaches to anyone anything which is contrary to the teaching of Scripture.

## Article V

**We affirm** that the Holy Spirit enables believers to appropriate and apply Scripture to their lives.

**We deny** that the natural man is able to discern spiritually the Biblical message apart from the Holy Spirit.

## **Article VI**

**We affirm** that the Bible expresses God's truth in propositional statements, and we declare that Biblical truth is both objective and absolute. We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.

**We deny** that, while Scripture is able to make us wise unto salvation, Biblical truth should be defined in terms of this function. We further deny that error should be defined as that which willfully deceives.

## **Article VII**

**We affirm** that the meaning expressed in each Biblical text is single, definite and fixed.

**We deny** that the recognition of this single meaning eliminates the variety of its application.

## **Article VIII**

**We affirm** that the Bible contains teachings and mandates which apply to all cultural and situational contexts and other mandates which the Bible itself shows apply only to particular situations.

**We deny** that the distinction between the universal and particular mandates of Scripture can be determined by cultural and situational factors. We further deny that universal mandates may ever be treated as culturally or situationally relative.

## **Article IX**

**We affirm** that the term hermeneutics, which historically signified the rules of exegesis, may properly be extended to cover all that is involved in the process of perceiving what the Biblical revelation means and how it bears on our lives.

**We deny** that the message of Scripture derives from, or is dictated by, the interpreter's understanding. Thus we deny that the "horizons" of the Biblical writer and the interpreter may rightly "fuse" in such a way that what the text communicates to the interpreter is not ultimately controlled by the expressed meaning of the Scripture.

## **Article X**

**We affirm** that Scripture communicates God's truth to us verbally through a wide variety of literary forms.

**We deny** that any of the limits of human language render Scripture inadequate to convey God's message.

## **Article XI**

**We affirm** that translations of the text of Scripture can communicate knowledge of God across all temporal and cultural boundaries.

**We deny** that the meaning of Biblical texts is so tied to the culture out of which they came that understanding of the same meaning in other cultures is impossible.

## **Article XII**

**We affirm** that in the task of translating the Bible and teaching it in the context of each culture, only those functional equivalents, which are faithful to the content of Biblical teaching, should be employed.

**We deny** the legitimacy of methods which either are insensitive to the demands of cross-cultural communication or distort Biblical meaning in the process.

## **Article XIII**

**We affirm** that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of Biblical study.

**We deny** that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on Biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

## **Article XIV**

**We affirm** that the Biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact.

**We deny** that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the Biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

## **Article XV**

**We affirm** the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

**We deny** the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

## **Article XVI**

**We affirm** that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning.

**We deny** the legitimacy of allowing any method of Biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer's expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

## **Article XVII**

**We affirm** the unity, harmony and consistency of Scripture and declare that it is its own best interpreter.

**We deny** that Scripture may be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that one passage corrects or militates against another. We deny that later writers of Scripture misinterpreted earlier passages of Scripture when quoting from or referring to them.

## **Article XVIII**

**We affirm** that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

**We deny** that the writers of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words.

## **Article XIX**

**We affirm** that any preunderstandings which the interpreter brings to Scripture should be in harmony with scriptural teaching and subject to correction by it.

**We deny** that Scripture should be required to fit alien preunderstandings, inconsistent with itself, such as naturalism, evolutionism, scientism, secular humanism, and relativism.

## **Article XX**

**We affirm** that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, Biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history or anything else. We further affirm that in some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches, and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

**We deny** that extrabiblical views ever disprove the teaching of Scripture or hold priority over it.

### **Article XXI**

**We affirm** the harmony of special with general revelation and therefore of Biblical teaching with the facts of nature.

**We deny** that any genuine scientific facts are inconsistent with the true meaning of any passage of Scripture.

### **Article XXII**

**We affirm** that Genesis 1 – 11 is factual, as is the rest of the book.

**We deny** that the teachings of Genesis 1 – 11 are mythical and that scientific hypotheses about earth history or the origin of humanity may be invoked to overthrow what Scripture teaches about creation.

### **Article XXIII**

**We affirm** the clarity of Scripture and specifically of its message about salvation from sin.

**We deny** that all passages of Scripture are equally clear or have equal bearing on the message of redemption.

### **Article XXIV**

**We affirm** that a person is not dependent for understanding of Scripture on the expertise of Biblical scholars.

**We deny** that a person should ignore the fruits of the technical study of Scripture by Biblical scholars.

### **Article XXV**

**We affirm** that the only type of preaching which sufficiently conveys the divine revelation and its proper application to life is that which faithfully expounds the text of Scripture as the Word of God.

**We deny** that the preacher has any message from God apart from the text of Scripture.



## **SECTION 24**

**Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society**

# JOURNAL OF THE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## THE BENEFITS OF AN AUTHOR-ORIENTED APPROACH TO HERMENEUTICS

ROBERT H. STEIN\*

### I. INTRODUCTION

In all communication three distinct components must be present. If any one of these components is missing, communication is not possible. These components are: the author, the text, and the reader. Linguists tend to use the terms: the encoder, the code, and the decoder. Still another set of terms that can be used is: the sender, the message, and the receiver. Having been born and raised in New Jersey where we like to use alliteration, we can refer to the three components as: the writer, the writing, and the "weader."

During the twentieth century we have witnessed amazingly diverse views as to which of these three components is the determiner of meaning. Who or what determines the meaning of a text, code, message, writing? At the beginning of the twentieth century the general assumption was that the author was the determiner of a text's meaning. The text meant what the author of the text consciously willed to convey by the words he or she had written. Texts were understood as a form of communication, and in communication we seek to understand what the author of that communication seeks to convey. Thus, if in a Bible study we were engaged in a study of Paul's letter to the Romans, and by some miracle the apostle Paul entered the room and explained what he meant by the passage under consideration, this would settle the issue. Our goal was to understand what the author, that is, Paul, meant by this passage, and we now know what he meant. Hopefully, we would proceed to discuss some of the implications of that passage for us today, but the issue of what the text "meant" would be settled. This is the common sense approach to hermeneutics that most people use quite unconsciously. This is why, for example, in trying to understand Romans we seek help from Galatians rather than Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* or Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. The reason for this is that the author of Galatians thinks more like the author of Romans than Hemingway or Mitchell, and we desire to understand what the author of Romans meant.

In the 1930s, however, a movement arose called the New Criticism. This movement became the dominant approach toward literature in the universities until the 1970s. This approach no longer sought meaning in what the

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author intended to convey, but in the text itself as an independent entity. Texts were interpreted as independent units in total isolation from their authors and the historical situation in which they were written. In fact, if, using the example given above, Paul entered into our presence and explained to us what he meant by what he wrote, this view would respond, "That is interesting but quite irrelevant, for after you wrote your text, you lost control of it. It is no longer a form of communication but a form of art. It has become 'literature,' and as a result it possesses semantic autonomy and has its own meaning or meanings." According to this view, in handing the text over to the reader, the author lost his or her authority over the text and its meaning. It should be pointed out that this view is very different from that of Billy Graham when he says, "The Bible says" or "Our text tells us," for Billy Graham means by this, "The author of our Biblical text is telling us." The New Criticism totally disconnects the text from the original author. It is as if texts magically appeared on the scene without father, mother, or author.

More recently we have witnessed a hermeneutic that seeks meaning, not from what the author consciously willed to say or from what the text means in isolation, but from the reader. This reader-oriented criticism argues that it is the reader who gives meaning to a text. The "written text in itself ... is dead or in hibernation. The text only comes to life through the reader. He revives the text, he gives meaning to it."<sup>1</sup> A text is in effect an open reality that stimulates us to give meaning to it. This is very different from and should not be confused with the view that the reader learns, deciphers, discovers, or ascertains the meaning that the author sought to convey or with the view that a text possesses in itself a meaning totally independent of both author and reader. In this approach the reader is the creator of the text's meaning. Kevin J. Vanhoozer comments concerning this new hermeneutical approach:

Recently ... the reader has come to the forefront in discussion of literary theory and biblical interpretation alike. Indeed, some critics speak of a reader's liberation movement. What is it that readers have hitherto not been free to do? The answer of an increasing number of literary theorists is: "make meaning." Reading is not merely a matter of perception but also of production; the reader does not discover so much as create meaning.<sup>2</sup>

This approach is witnessed to by such expressions as "a Marxist reading of the text," or "a feminist reading of the text," or "a liberation theology reading of the text," etc. John Ziesler describes this approach as follows:

To put it crudely, there is the question whether the text, any text, is a window or a mirror. Does it [the text] in some way facilitate our own illumination [as in the reader-response approach] or does it give us access to another world [as in the author-oriented approach]? ... It is far more fruitful to accept their mirror-like nature and concentrate on how we read them. "The texts are a language through which we generate meaning."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Walter Vogels, "Inspiration in a Linguistic Mode," *BTB* 15 (1985) 87.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Reader in New Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the New Testament* (ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995) 301.

<sup>3</sup> John Ziesler, "Historical Criticism and a Rational Faith," *ExpTim* 105 (1994) 273

This analogy of whether a text functions primarily as a mirror or as a window is a very useful one.

I shall seek to argue in this paper that the determiner of meaning in the communicative process is the author. (Please note the use of the singular "meaning.") Let me state from the beginning my deep debt to E. D. Hirsch, Jr. and his book *Validity in Interpretation*.<sup>4</sup> Permit me, however, to make some general comments about the other two approaches. I have always been troubled by the New Criticism's assumption that meaning is a property of the text as an autonomous entity. "Meaning," as I understand it, involves a construction of thought. It is a property of thinking persons. On the other hand, a text is an inanimate object. It is a collection of symbols on papyrus, vellum, paper, stone, metal, etc. A text consists of unthinking, lifeless material. Being lifeless and inanimate, it does not have the ability to think. It cannot construct a thought or an idea. Thus a text cannot "mean" anything, because it cannot intend or purpose anything. Whereas a text can convey the meaning of a thinking, willing person, it cannot possess meaning in and of itself, because it cannot think. To ask "What does this text mean?" is to ask of an inanimate object what it cannot do, that is, to construct a thought or idea. Authors and readers can think but not paper and ink, stone and groves, or papyrus and symbols. Thus I find it impossible to conceive of a text "meaning" anything. Usually what people are saying when they speak of the meaning of a text is "the meaning of the author that the text conveys."<sup>5</sup>

With respect to the present reader-response emphasis it should be noted that this view is indeed a product of our time. It is interesting to note that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the miraculous nature of various Biblical accounts was no longer accepted, scholars desperately sought to find meaning somewhere other than in what the author consciously willed to convey. Since critical scholarship did not believe in the historicity of narrative accounts containing miracles, it could not accept what the author consciously willed to convey by those accounts. In other words, it could not accept the author's willed meaning. Nevertheless, critical scholars still believed that these accounts taught something that possessed a "meaningful" dimension to it. The question was where this "meaningful" quality was to be found. Having rejected the traditional view of author willed meaning, scholars sought for meaning in other places. One such place was in the "event" referred to in the text.

Rationalism sought to reconstruct the event of the text to find out "what really happened." In so doing, scholars hoped to discover in the "actual" event something that would prove "meaningful." If the feeding of the five

<sup>4</sup> E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Note how the NT refers to the OT writers: Moses—"... offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded" (Mark 1:44; cf. also 7:10; 10:3-4; 12:19, 26; Luke 16:29, 31; John 1:45; 5:46; Acts 3:22; Rom 10:19; Heb 9:19); Isaiah—"Well did Isaiah prophesy of your hypocrites ..." (Mark 7:6; cf. also Matt 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; John 1:23; 12:38-41; Acts 28:25; Rom 9:27, 29; 10:16, 20-21; 15:12); David—"David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared ..." (Mark 12:36; cf. Acts 1:16; 2:25; 4:25; Rom 4:6; 11:9; Heb 4:7). Note also references to Jeremiah (Matt 2:17; 27:9); Daniel (Matt 24:15); and Joel (Acts 2:16).

thousand (or four thousand) was essentially a sharing of food initiated by a little boy's willingness to share his lunch with others, we then have a meaning-"If we share what God has blessed us with, there will be more than enough to go around." Such an approach, however, ultimately proved quite unprofitable, for it is exceedingly difficult to reconstruct what supposedly happened and then to find a moral lesson from these normal, misunderstood, natural events. Others sought to associate meaning in some way with the author.

One group sought it in the author's accommodation to his readers' mythological world view. According to this view, the author consciously sought to teach his readers moral truths through mythical traditions that his readers would believe but that he personally knew were untrue. This option encountered minimal success because it was obvious upon reflection that the Biblical authors truly believed what they were writing was true. An additional problem in the accommodationist's view was how such blatant liars could have produced the greatest moral teachings that the world has even known. The second group that sought to associate meaning with the author, but not with his consciously willed meaning, was the mythophiles. The mythophiles or "myth lovers" believed that meaning could be found in the sub consciousness that gave birth to these myths. Thus they sought to "demythologize" the miracle accounts to find out what the subconsciousness of the author was seeking to teach by these accounts.<sup>6</sup>

It should be noted that eighteenth and nineteenth-century attempts to find "meaning" in the miracle accounts sought for such meaning in either the author's conscious deception (the accommodationists) or their subconsciousness (the mythophiles) or they sought it in the event referred to in the text (the rationalists). No one apparently thought to seek meaning in the response of the reader. It was not until the 1960s and 70s that the reader response approach came into prominence. Whereas once the sun, as portrayed by Ptolemy, was thought to revolve around the earth and the earth was thought to be the center of the universe, later under Copernicus the earth was seen as rotating around the sun. Now this new revolution understood all of the universe and reality as rotating around the individual. The reader was no longer seen as part of the universe and seeking its meaning but as the center of the universe and imparting meaning to it.

## II. THE ARGUMENT FOR AUTHOR-DETERMINED MEANING

The question of where the meaning of a text is to be found is, I believe, the major issue that faces Biblical scholarship today. This hermeneutical issue, however, affects far more than just Biblical scholarship. There is great debate today as to whether the constitution of the United States means what the original authors of the constitution meant or what the judges of the Supreme Court make it mean. If the latter is the case, then what do

<sup>6</sup> For a helpful survey of these attempts, see Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) esp. 245-66.

judges of the Supreme Court swear to uphold? Is it the meaning they would give to the constitution or the meaning that the founders who voted for the constitution gave to it? The recent renovation of the Sistine Chapel has brought a great deal of debate and discussion, for the restored paintings are much brighter and warmer in color than before the renovation. Were the darker and more somber colors due to the soot of four centuries of burning candles and the aging of the original frescos, so that the renovation has simply restored the original colors? Or has the restoration changed the tone and coloring of the original work, so that the paintings no longer represent the original colors and hues of Michelangelo? And does it matter?

The greatest argument in favor of understanding the author as the determiner of a text's meaning is that it is the common sense approach to all communication. One cannot have a meaningful conversation or even a serious debate about this issue without assuming this. During the present reading of this article, you, the reader, have been seeking to understand what I, the author, meant by the words I have written. Probably it has not even entered into your mind that the words I have written should be treated independently of my intention or that you should give your own meaning to these words. Communication between two people can only take place if both parties seek to understand what the other person means by their words. Should a person's last will and testament be read according to the deceased's consciously willed meaning? What would you think of an executor of a will who began by saying, "I am not interested in what the deceased meant by the words of this will? Here is the meaning that I choose to give to this will." For an executor to do so would, at least at the present time, be a criminal act.

It has been argued, however, that we should distinguish and treat communication differently than literature. When originally written, the letters of Paul were a form of communication, and their meaning was determined by what he meant by them. Now, however, it is argued, these letters are literature and should be interpreted as "art." Yet who determines if something is literature? Any definition of "literature" is ultimately quite fuzzy. Is it simply a matter of age and usage that determines if something is literature? What then should we do with the classification "twentieth-century literature"? And who determines how to interpret a work of art? Is it simply the viewer? But why did the artist place a title on his or her work?

Much of the interpretative process that people perform almost unconsciously is based on the hermeneutical principle that the goal of interpretation is to arrive at what the author of a text meant. For example, in the attempt to understand the meaning of a particular word in a text such as Galatians, to what primary sources do we turn? Why does common sense say, "Look up where it is used elsewhere in Galatians. Then look up how it is used in Romans and the Corinthian correspondence"? Why do we look for help in Galatians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians rather than in the writings of Plato or Julius Caesar? Why do we go to Luke in order to understand Acts rather than to Josephus? The answer is because we want to understand what the Biblical author (Paul or Luke) meant, and the writer of Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians thinks more like Paul than Plato or Julius

Caesar, and the writer of Luke thinks more like the writer of Acts than Josephus. Why do we try to find help in understanding Calvin's works in his other writings rather than in the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Koran?

Not only is the author-oriented approach to meaning the common sense approach to interpreting the Bible, I believe it is also the one that best fits an evangelical view of the Bible's inspiration. If we believe that the "meaning" of the Bible is inspired, where is this meaning to be found? Surely it is not found in the ink and paper used to convey that meaning. As stated earlier, these inanimate materials cannot think and therefore cannot will a meaning. If we, on the other hand, give to the reader the authority to determine or create the meaning (note we are not saying "to ascertain or learn" but "to determine or create" the meaning), what do we do with diverse and contradictory "meanings" that readers find in the Scriptures? Are they all inspired? How do we distinguish a good translation of the Bible from a poor one? Is it that a poor one elicits fewer reader-responses than a good one? Is not the test of whether a translation is good or bad dependent on whether it translates accurately and well what the Biblical author consciously meant by the words he used?

A popular expression often used to argue against the view that the author is the determiner of meaning is the "intentional fallacy." In some circles this has become a shibboleth, and simply saying that someone is guilty of the intentional fallacy is considered a refutation of their view. This expression was made popular by William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe Beardsley.<sup>7</sup> They argued that it is impossible for a person to climb into the mind of an author and experience what he was going through when he wrote. This is, of course, true. One cannot relive an author's "mental acts" while writing.<sup>8</sup> Unless the authors stated them, they are inaccessible to us. We shall define shortly the "meaning" of a text not as the process that an author went through in writing a text, but rather what the author consciously willed to convey by the words he or she has given us. We possess those words, and because the author wanted to be understood and wrote using the norms of language in his day, we can understand what the author intended by these words.

Another objection sometimes associated with the intentional fallacy is the idea that an author may have been inadequate or incompetent in ex

<sup>7</sup> See W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954) 3-18. Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: University Press, 1991) 189, points out that Wimsatt and Beardsley are inconsistent in their use of the term "intentional." "In their opening statement, 'intention' signifies *aim, plan, purpose, goal*, whereas 'criticism' signifies *evaluation*. But very shortly . . . 'intention' starts to signify *meaning*, and by the end of the essay 'criticism' has come to signify something like *understanding or interpretation*. Thus Wimsatt and Beardsley's fairly innocuous beginning-to the effect that an author's aim has no place in the evaluation of a work-has been transformed into the quite different and much more radical statement that an author's intended meaning has no place in the interpretation of a work [author's italics]."

<sup>8</sup> The impossibility of reconstructing the experiences and influences that an author had in writing is clearly shown in C. S. Lewis, "Fern-seed and Elephants" in *Fern-seed and Elephants and Other Essays on Christianity* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, 1975) 114-15. This article, and especially the pages mentioned, should be required reading for all Biblical students.

pressing what he sought to convey. What teacher has not had a student say, "Well, what I meant to say in my paper was ..."? There is no need to deny that an author may be incompetent in expressing his meaning, so that the reader cannot understand it. Yet is this true in most instances? It is surprising how seldom those who point out this problem of incompetence think that they may be incompetent in their writing about this problem! Why bother writing about it, if this problem is insurmountable? Furthermore, as an evangelical Christian, a factor comes into play that eliminates this objection for the most part. If divine inspiration means anything, it means that God gave to the Biblical authors a competency to write down adequately what they were led to write. As a result, I think that a correct understanding of an author-oriented hermeneutic is not guilty of the intentional fallacy. The reason is that it is not interested in ascertaining the mental acts of the author that led to the text but rather what the author meant by the words found in the text. In addition authors, especially divinely inspired authors, are generally quite competent in expressing their willed meaning.

### III. VOCABULARY FOR AUTHOR-DETERMINED MEANING

A great deal of the confusion involved in hermeneutical discussion is due to the lack of a clear and precise vocabulary. At this point I would like to offer a brief conceptual framework of terms for our discussion. This framework will be limited to four terms, for the sake of brevity. These terms are: meaning; implications; significance; and subject matter.<sup>9</sup>

1. *Meaning*. I define meaning as: "The paradigm or principle that the author consciously willed to convey by the sharable symbols he or she used." In this definition we should note that meaning is associated with the words of the author. It is not concerned with the thought processes or mental acts an author experienced while writing the text. In this respect, the pursuit of meaning avoids that aspect of the intentional fallacy which argues that one cannot relive the experiences of an author in their writing of the text. Meaning is not concerned with reliving the author's writing experiences but with understanding what the author consciously meant to convey by the words or symbols found in his or her text.<sup>10</sup> The "shareable" nature of these symbols indicates that the author consciously encoded his or her meaning using the norms of language with which their readers were familiar.

It should be noted that the term "consciously" is used to describe the meaning that the author wished to convey. This is to distinguish our definition from those views that seek to demythologize the myth that the author

<sup>9</sup> For further definitions of the terms "understanding," "interpretation," "mental acts," "norms of language," "norms of the utterance," "literary genre," and "context," see Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 48-58.

<sup>10</sup> In the present work "the author's writing experiences" are referred to as "mental acts" and "what the author consciously meant to convey by the words or symbols found in his or her text" as "meaning." Other terminology sometimes used to distinguish "mental acts" and "meaning" is "authorial motives" and "authorial communicative intentions." See Stephen E. Fowl, "The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture" in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies & Systematic Theology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2000) 71-87.



has written and to find out the subconscious meaning of the author that lies behind the myth. It also distinguishes our definition from such views that reject the surface-level meaning and seek to discover the substructural meaning of a text. Meaning as it is defined here is what the author consciously wanted to communicate to the readers by the words he or she chose.

Understanding this meaning is possible because the Biblical author possessed competence and in seeking to communicate his meaning intentionally inscribed this meaning following the norms of the language of the readers. Thus we can understand the meaning of the author by understanding the norms of the language of the text's original readers.<sup>11</sup>

Because the author willed this meaning at a particular time and place in history, this meaning can never change. It is a part of history, and because history cannot change, the author's meaning cannot change. Even if an author no longer agrees with the meaning willed in the past, that meaning cannot change. The author may recant that particular meaning, write a revision in which he explains that he no longer believes what he wrote earlier, but he cannot change the willed meaning of the shareable symbols contained in the first work. The reason for this is that one cannot change the past. Thus the meaning willed in the past remains. The meaning of the author, however, involves a paradigm or principle that goes beyond the specific meaning that was consciously willed. Thus there are implications that are part of this paradigm of which the author may not be aware but which are nevertheless contained in the paradigm. This brings us to our second definition.

2. *Implication.* Implications refer to "Those submeanings of a text that legitimately fall within the paradigm or principle willed by the author, whether he or she was aware of them or not." Since meaning involves a paradigm or principle, the author may not be, and probably never is, aware of all the implications of that paradigm. I frequently use as an illustration of this Paul's command in Eph 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine." Now the specific meaning Paul had in mind for the Ephesian Christians was not to become intoxicated with that mixture of water and what we call wine that was called "wine" in his day.<sup>12</sup> Yet, let us imagine for a moment that

<sup>11</sup> At times the goal of interpretation is stated as "... to hear the message of the Bible as the original audiences would have heard it or as the first readers would have understood it." So William M. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 11. The problem with this is that at times the original readers *misunderstood* the intended meaning (see the letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians). Perhaps we should reword this by saying that our goal is to hear the message of the Bible as the original audiences *should* have heard it or as the first readers *should* have understood it. The value of seeking how the original audience *should* have understood the author's texts is because we believe: (1) the author was competent in expressing his meaning; (2) he consciously wrote that message using the norms of language with which his audience was familiar; and (3) we can understand those norms and therefore, like the original readers, understand the meaning that the author intended.

<sup>12</sup> See Robert H. Stein, "Wine-Drinking in New Testament Times," *Christianity Today* 19 (June 20, 1975) 9-11.

Paul later visited the church in Ephesus and found drunkenness in the church. How would he have responded if he asked, "Did you not read in my letter not to become drunk with wine?" and someone responded, "But Paul, ever since we read your letter, we have switched from wine to beer"? Would Paul have said, "Well, that's OK. So long as you are not drunk with wine"? Would he not rather have said, "You know, I meant beer also"? Within the paradigm that Paul uttered, beer is included as well as wine, even though beer is not mentioned.

Now let us imagine asking Paul the question, "Paul, did you mean that we should not become drunk with whiskey or vodka?" How would he reply? Now it is evident that, whereas Paul knew about beer, he did not know about whiskey or vodka. I believe, however, that he would have responded as follows. He would first have asked what whiskey and vodka are. Upon having this explained, he might have answered something like this, "In my day, we could not distill alcoholic beverages and concentrate their alcoholic content. In fact, we always diluted what you call wine with water. But, yes, I meant, 'Be not drunk with whiskey and vodka.' In fact, the paradigm that I meant by Eph 5:18 was something like, 'Do not take into your bodies substances, like wine, that cause you to lose control of what you are doing.'" Since the meaning of Paul's command in Eph 5:18 involves a paradigm that goes beyond his specific meaning, his meaning has implications. He may not have been aware of all of them but they nevertheless stem out of the paradigm he willed.

Let me give another example. Johnny received a Christmas gift from grandma and grandpa of fifty dollars. He knows exactly what he wants to do with the fifty dollars. He wants to go down to Target and purchase two toys that together, with tax, cost \$49.95. As his father, you, however, tell Johnny, "Now I don't want you to go down to Target and buy those two toys with the money grandma and grandpa gave you. They don't want you to spend it on toys at Target." Later, when you come home, you find Johnny playing with the two toys. In frustration you respond, "Didn't I tell you not to buy those toys at Target?" How would you respond if Johnny replied, "Well, dad, I didn't buy them at Target. I went to Wal-Mart and bought them for only \$44.50." Would you say, "Oh, that's OK. As long as it wasn't Target"? Wouldn't you say, "Johnny, you knew I meant you shouldn't buy those toys at Target, Wal-Mart, or any other place?" What you meant by, "Now I don't want you to go down to Target and buy those two toys with the money grandma and grandpa gave you. They don't want you to spend it on toys at Target" involves a paradigm which, even though unstated, goes beyond Target.<sup>13</sup> Meaning involves numerous implications that we may not be aware of at the time but that are nevertheless present and logically flow out of the paradigm given.

Implications flow out of the paradigm of the author's meaning. As a result, we as readers do not create them but discover them. A great deal

<sup>13</sup> In the example just given it is assumed that Johnny's father referred to "Target" in the generic sense of a "store" and that he was not urging a boycott of Target products.

of confusion can be avoided if we recognize that these implications are not new "meanings" independent of the author's meaning. Rather, they are "submeanings" that flow out of the paradigm the author has given. If we think of meaning as a tree, implications then correspond to the various branches and parts of the tree that make up the entire tree. Implications are submeanings that in their totality make up the entire meaning. To refer to these branches as independent "trees" or "meanings" is both incorrect and confusing. It is much better to refer to the submeanings that flow out of a paradigm willed by the author as implications than to refer to them as different "meanings." This permits us to acknowledge the single meaning of an author's text and nevertheless acknowledge that there are implications flowing out of that meaning of which the author was unaware. Only God in his omniscience knows all the implications of a text's meaning. The author, however, still controls these submeanings because they stem from his or her willed paradigm. A miner does not create the gold he finds in a mountain. He discovers it. Similarly, the interpreter of Scripture does not create the implications he or she finds in the text. If they are legitimate implications, they are merely discovered by the interpreter, for ultimately they stem from the paradigm willed by the author.<sup>14</sup>

3. *Significance.* Significance, as I understand it, refers to "How the reader responds to the willed meaning of the author." Significance involves the reader and his or her reaction to the author's meaning. Whereas the author is master of the meaning of the text, as well as the implications flowing out of its paradigm, with respect to significance the reader is master. In its simplest form, significance is the reader's "yes" or "no" to the author's meaning.

Perhaps an illustration may be useful at this point. The meaning of Acts 1:8 is that the followers of Jesus are to witness to his work and words throughout the world." Some general implications flowing out of this paradigm may involve such things as witnessing to one's neighbor, modeling the Christian life at work and sharing the good news with one's fellow workers, entering the Christian ministry, etc. Specific implication(s) flowing out of that paradigm may involve accepting the pastorate of a specific church, being a missionary under a particular mission board in a particular place, teaching a Sunday School class in church, etc. These general and specific implications are all subsumed under the category of "implications" and are controlled by the paradigm derived from the author's willed meaning. Significance, however, is the response of the reader to the meaning of the text and its implications. It involves not the mind's attempt to understand- the meaning of the

<sup>14</sup> If we think of the willed paradigm that Paul gives in Eph 5:18 as a geometric figure, then every submeaning or implication of this text lies within that figure. The totality of all the legitimate implications, along with the author's specific willed meaning which functions in the paradigm as a submeaning, defines the extent and shape of the figure.

<sup>15</sup> Whereas this command in Acts 1:8 is addressed specifically to the apostles, others are also seen as being witnesses of Jesus. (Cf. Acts 22:15 and 20 where Paul and Stephen are referred to as witnesses.) The present writer believes that Luke has recorded this command not simply to tell his readers that the apostles were called to be witnesses but that this is by implication a responsibility for each follower of Jesus.

text and its implications but the response of the will to that understanding. Thus significance involves not a cognitive activity but a volitional one.

The term "application" does not appear in our set of definitions. The reason is that this term does not consist of a single element in the conceptual framework of hermeneutics. It involves instead a compound of two elements. Just as water is a compound of the elements of hydrogen and oxygen, so "application" is a compound of the "elements" implication and significance. To be even more precise, it is a compound of a specific implication that concerns the individual, which is cognitive in nature, and the value response given to that implication, which is volitional in nature. Thus the term "application" can be confusing, because it refers to two different components in the communicative process. Implications, even those that apply uniquely to an individual, are controlled by the author and flow out of the paradigm determined by his or her willed meaning. The reader, on the other hand, controls significance.<sup>16</sup>

4. *Subject matter.* The term "subject matter" refers to "The content or 'stuff' talked about in the text." The distinction between subject matter and meaning is reasonably clear in the non-narrative portions of Scripture.<sup>17</sup> For example, the "stuff" discussed in Romans 1-8 involves how a person can find acceptance before God. The meaning of Romans 1-8 is what Paul teaches on this subject. The "stuff" of a genealogy involves the relationships between the people listed. The meaning of a genealogy involves what the Biblical author is seeking to teach by this listing of relationships.

In historical narrative, however, there is a great deal of confusion as to what the meaning of such a narrative is. Most commentaries and preaching assume that the meaning of a gospel narrative involves the event being discussed, that is, what happened. Commentators will spend a great deal of time and effort explaining the historical situation in the life of Jesus in which the event being discussed occurred, what preceded and led up to this event, the response of Jesus' audience, how this may have led to his crucifixion, etc. Yet this has nothing to do with the "meaning" of the text. This involves rather the "subject matter" of what is being discussed in the text. Meaning is something different. This can be shown by the following example. Assuming that the passage under consideration is the story of Jesus' cleansing of the temple in Mark 11:15-19, how would you complete the following sentence? "I, Mark, have told you about Jesus' cleansing of the temple in Mark 11:15-19 because. . . ." Completing that sentence requires us to distinguish the event or subject matter from what Mark is

<sup>16</sup> I believe that E. D. Hirsch, Jr. loses sight of this compound nature of the term "application," and this has led to confusion. Whereas implications are aspects of meaning that the author may or may not have been aware of, application is not simply an aspect of meaning but a combination of this aspect of meaning plus the significance given to it by the reader. In his "Meaning and Significance Reinterpreted" in *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984) 20 Hirsch seems to confuse "application," "meaning," and "significance." As a result he states, "... certain present applications of a text may belong to its meaning rather than to its significance." The reason for this confusion is that application is a combination of implication (and thus "meaning") and significance.

<sup>17</sup> The terms "text" and "event" or "sense" and "referent" often express the distinction between "meaning" and "subject matter".

seeking to teach his readers by this subject matter. In other words, the meaning of a historical narrative<sup>18</sup> involves what the Biblical writer meant or willed to teach his readers through this subject matter. The distinction between text and event, meaning and subject matter can be clearly seen if we ask, "What did the author seek to teach his readers through this event?" In my hermeneutics class I have two assignments that deal with historical narrative. The first sentence of each assignment must begin, "I [the Biblical author's name then follows] have told you [the Biblical passage then follows] because. . . ." Although some students still try to discuss what happened, that is, the event or subject matter, most see the difference between this and the meaning that the author seeks to teach by his use of this subject matter.

#### IV. THE ADVANTAGES OF AUTHOR-DETERMINED MEANING

We have already mentioned some general advantages of a single, author determined meaning. These include: (1) it is the common sense approach to all communication; (2) any special hermeneutic suggested for works of "literature" have the difficulty of defining what "literature" is and defending why literature should be treated differently than other forms of communication; and (3) the main argument against author-determined meaning, the "intentional fallacy," confuses the willed meaning of an author with the process or "mental acts" which produced the work. At this point we shall now look at two other advantages that a single, author-determined meaning provides.

In his famous article "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?"<sup>19</sup> Rudolf Bultmann argues that when Paul quotes Deut 5:4 ("You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain") in 1 Cor 9:9 as proof that those who preach the gospel should live off the gospel, this is an illegitimate, allegorical interpretation.<sup>20</sup> I would suggest, however, that, properly understood, the Deuteronomist's willed meaning is in fact accurately interpreted by the apostle. If the Deuteronomist willed a paradigm by his words, then the specific statement, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain" is a paradigm that has implications going far beyond a simple application to oxen. Surely, no one would have any problem saying that what is true of oxen treading out the grain would also be true of donkeys. Even though donkeys are not specifically mentioned, the paradigm's implications include them as well. If this is true, would such a paradigm not also include

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that such expressions as "the meaning of Romans 1-8," "the meaning of a genealogy," "the meaning of a Gospel narrative," "the meaning of the text," and "the meaning of an historical narrative" found in this and the preceding paragraph are shorthand expressions for "the meaning of Paul contained in Romans 1-8," etc. The present author has earlier argued that a text cannot possess a meaning in and of itself, because it is inanimate and thus cannot will a meaning. It can, however, convey the meaning that the author willed by these words. It is in this sense that these shorthand expressions should be understood.

<sup>19</sup> This is found in Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961) 289-96.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 289-90.

humans? Is it only dumb animals that should reap some benefit from their labor? Paul is probably saying in 1 Cor 9:9, "If it is true that an ox should receive benefit from its labor, how much more then does this imply that a preacher of the gospel should receive benefit from his labor." Surely the Deuteronomist would not say, "Only dumb animals should receive benefit from their labors. Humans, who are created in the image of God, should not be given similar treatment ..,"<sup>21</sup>

Another advantage of a single, author-oriented meaning is that it avoids the need of seeking a different and separate divine meaning in difficult texts. I am thinking here in particular of reference to a *sensus plenior*. The *sensus plenior* is the idea that some Scriptures, especially prophecy, contain two separate meanings. One is the meaning of the Biblical author; the other is the meaning of God. I want to make two preliminary remarks about the *sensus plenior* before I deal specifically with this issue. First of all, I want to state that I do not believe that one's basic hermeneutical approach to the interpretation of Scripture should be developed based on the predictive prophecies of Scripture. The vast majority of Scripture involves other genres (narrative, teaching, proverbs, poetry, laws, parables, etc.). Even in the prophetic books predictive prophecy makes up only a portion of the contents of these books. We should derive a hermeneutical system based upon the most frequently used genres and then see how predictive prophecy fits the system of hermeneutics that has been developed. All too often the hermeneutic developed to interpret difficult predictive prophecies becomes the means by which the simpler and less difficult passages of Scriptures are interpreted. I would prefer developing a hermeneutical system based on the interpretation of the simpler and more common passages of Scripture and seek to apply that system to the predictive prophecies.

Second, the only way that we can understand what an author means is by his or her use of language. We can understand a Biblical writer such as Luke by noting that he wrote to someone in the first century using the Greek of his day and that he wanted to be understood. Therefore, if we seek - to understand how someone like Theophilus should<sup>22</sup> have interpreted the words found in Luke-Acts (and we know enough of the Greek of Luke's day to do this), then we can understand the meaning Luke willed by his words. We can compare how the words under consideration are used in the rest of Luke-Acts, how Luke used the same prepositional phrases elsewhere in Luke-Acts, how he used the same tense and participles elsewhere, etc. On the other hand, we have no such access to God's use of language. Why should we assume that words, prepositions, participles, etc., in one part of Luke-Acts should be interpreted in a similar manner as elsewhere in LukeActs? The answer is that the same author is responsible for these words,

<sup>21</sup> This is the only law found in Deuteronomy 25 that does not refer to humans. Surrounding this command are laws concerning disputes among people (25:1-3), levirate marriage (25:5-10), fighting (25:11-12), and dishonest business transactions (25:13-17). It would be difficult to conceive of the command in 25:4 not being seen as containing implications with respect to humans. Clearly the rabbinical interpreters of this passage saw it as having various human implications. Cf. *B. Mes.* 88b; *Git.* 62a; *Mak.* 13b, 23a; *Yeb.* 4a.

<sup>22</sup> See footnote eleven.

prepositions, participles, etc.<sup>23</sup> But if we are seeking God's meaning in distinction from that of Luke's, why not interpret the words, prepositions, and participles in Luke according to how they are used in Romans, or Mark, or Revelation?<sup>24</sup> We have no way of understanding what God means except through what his apostles and prophets wrote in Scripture, and in seeking to understand God's apostles and prophets, we want to know what these human, inspired authors meant by their words. We simply have no access to a separate divine meaning.<sup>25</sup>

With respect to prophecy, let me say that a single, author-determined meaning causes me to interpret certain terminology figuratively and metaphorically that I was taught to interpret literalistically.<sup>26</sup> For example, the language of Acts 2:16-21 is frequently interpreted as an example of a *sensus plenior* because of the imagery in vv. 19-20: "And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day." Since this imagery was not literalistically fulfilled at Pentecost, it is assumed that these words possess a *sensus plenior*. However, Luke quotes Peter as saying in v. 16, "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." A single, author-determined meaning indicates that Luke believed that all of Joel's prophecy found in these verses was fulfilled in the events of Pentecost

<sup>23</sup> This does not mean that those words, prepositions, participles, etc., always mean the same thing throughout an author's work. It is the immediate context provided by the author that ultimately determines the meaning of words, prepositions, participles, etc. Generally, however, authors tend to use words in a fairly consistent manner.

<sup>24</sup> Such a hermeneutic can be disastrous. Compare what would happen if we seek to understand what "God" means by "faith" and "works" in Jas 2:14-26 by the way "God" uses these terms in Romans and Galatians! In Jas 2:19 "faith" refers to the acknowledgement of a simple fact "God is one." Thus James can state that, "Even the demons believe [this]." "Works," on the other hand, refer to acts of loving compassion, such as clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. In Paul, however, "works" are meritorious works that seek to place God in one's debt. They involve such "works" as circumcision, keeping "the works of the law," etc. Ultimately both Paul and James agree that the faith that saves is a faith that works through love (Gal 5:6). Nevertheless, the "faith" and "works" James describes in 2:14-26 are very different from what Paul means by "faith" and "works" in Romans and Galatians.

<sup>25</sup> Imagine someone in the Corinthian church telling the apostle Paul, "I am really not interested in what you meant by the letters you wrote to us. I am interested in what God means." How would Paul have replied? Would he not have said, "God means what I mean! And if you disobey what I mean, you are disobeying God"? Cf. 1 Cor 14:37 and 2 Thess 3:14. G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) 61, correctly points out, "We have no access to the mind of Jeremiah or Paul except through their recorded words. A fortiori, we have no access to the word of God in the Bible except through the words and the minds of those who claim to speak in his name. We may disbelieve them, that is our right; but if we try, without evidence, to penetrate to a meaning more ultimate than the one the writers intended, that is our meaning, not theirs or God's."

<sup>26</sup> The terms "literalistic" and "literalistically" are used to distinguish this hermeneutical procedure from the "literal" interpretation of Scripture. When the Reformers referred to the "literal" interpretation of Scripture, they meant that the Bible should be interpreted in accordance with what the Biblical authors meant by the words they used. Thus metaphors, poetry, figures of speech, etc., were not to be interpreted as ends in themselves, but in accordance with what the Biblical authors meant by them. "Literalistic" interpretation, like allegorical interpretation, rejects an author-determined meaning and treats the text as an independent entity.

Rather than forcing Luke and Joel to fit within a literalistic interpretation of language, we need to understand how they interpreted such imagery. It is evident that the sun being darkened, the moon turning to blood, the stars falling from heaven, etc., are all part of the imagery that the prophets frequently used to describe divinely ordained events that are now past.<sup>27</sup>

In Isa 13:1-22 this imagery is used to describe the fall of Babylon, as 13:1a and 19 specifically state and the reference to the Medes in 13:7 demands. In Jer 4:23-28 this imagery is used to describe the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC, as 4:3, 5, 14 and the whole context of the book indicates. In Ezek 32:2-19 this imagery is used to describe the destruction of Pharaoh Necho of Egypt and his army. In Amos 8:9 it refers to the destruction of Israel in the eighth century BC. Frequently those scholars who seek to interpret prophecy more literalistically argue that these passages must be interpreted as possessing a *sensus plenior*, so that there is both an authorrelated meaning and a separate divine meaning. Yet, once we accept that these prophecies were understood by the prophets as referring to events in their own time, the need for a *sensus plenior* disappears. Once we acknowledge that the Biblical authors understood this imagery metaphorically and figuratively, we have no need for a *sensus plenior*. I would argue that a single, author-determined meaning allows us to interpret prophecy literally, that is, in the way that the Reformers used this term-according to their author's meaning, and not literalistically, that is, in a literalistic manner contrary to the way the Biblical authors understood this imagery.<sup>28</sup>

I shall not seek to provide any all-inclusive method of how to interpret the fulfillment prophecies in the NT, but I would like to suggest how a single, author-determined meaning might seek to resolve some of these difficult texts. In Matt 2:15 the Evangelist sees the return of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus from Egypt as being the fulfillment of Hos 11:1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Now it seems clear in reading Hos 11:1 and its immediate context that Hosea had in mind the exodus under Moses. In particular, he seems in this text to be alluding to Exod 4:22 where Moses is commanded to

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Richard D. Patterson, "Wonders in the Heavens and on the Earth: Apocalyptic Imagery in the Old Testament," *JETS* 43 (2000) 403, who states, "The persistence of these images strongly suggests that they had become a body of stylized vocabulary that the prophets had at their disposal to express God's judgment and saving activities. The freedom and variety with which they were utilized suggests further that although they had become a conventional part of eschatological predictions, they are not to be viewed as a blueprint of concrete details relative to end-time events ... Therefore, they should not be interpreted in a slavishly literalistic manner."

<sup>28</sup> Another example of how Biblical writers understood such terminology figuratively is found in Luke 3:4-6. It is evident that the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ did not bring about geographical and geological changes either in Israel or anywhere else on this planet. The term used for "brought low" in 3:5, however, is used in Luke 14:11 and 18:14 with respect to those who exalt themselves being "humbled" or "brought low." In Luke 4:18 Jesus' bringing "release" to the captives should be interpreted in light of how the term here interpreted "release" is interpreted everywhere else in Luke-Acts, that is, as "forgiveness." The "recovering of sight" to the blind in Luke 4:18 is also probably best understood in light of such passages as 1:79 ("to give light to those who sit in darkness") and Acts 26:18 ("to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God").



tell Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord, 'Israel is my first-born son.'" Do we need to resort to a *sensus plenior* in order to make sense of Matthew's seeing the return of the holy family from Egypt as fulfilling this passage? I would suggest that we should seek first to apply our single, author-determined meaning to this passage. Is it possible that what we have is the following: (1) Hosea clearly referred to the exodus under Moses. (2) Matthew, however, understood Hosea's statement as involving a paradigm. This paradigm included the following: God had promised to Abraham and his seed that they would live in the land he had promised. As a result he would not leave Israel in bondage in Egypt, but he would deliver his "son" from Egypt into the promised land. Matthew realized that, if this were true with respect to the people of Israel, that is, God's "son," how much more would it be true for his Only "Son." (3) Thus Hosea's reference to God's fulfillment of his promise which led to the exodus had as an implication God's bringing the holy family back from Egypt as well.

## V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to explore some of the advantages of an author-oriented model of hermeneutics. I make no claim that the model of a single, author-determined meaning resolves all the hermeneutical issues involved in Biblical interpretation. What I would suggest, however, is that such a hermeneutic is holistic, that it agrees with the rules of all communication, that it can be applied to all literature and all genres, and that it has less difficulties associated with it than any other alternative.

## **SECTION 25**

### **Luther's Instructions for Studying Theology as a Biblical Hermeneutical Method**

# Luther's Instructions for Studying Theology as a Biblical Hermeneutical Method<sup>1</sup>

(an oral address given at the SE Regional Evangelical Theological Society meeting, March 2005)

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## I. Introduction

Never in the history of the church have so many good hermeneutics textbooks been available. Of course, never in the history of the church have so many bad hermeneutics texts been in print as well. Still, evangelicals have little to complain about. If we haven't learned to "read the Bible for all its worth," we have hopefully at least come upon "a basic guide to interpreting the Bible." Though current evangelical hermeneutics texts vary in strength, as a whole, they are excellent in defending authorial intent, providing a history of biblical interpretation in the church, giving rules for determining various literary genres and enumerating principles for interpreting those genres. With so many excellent texts on biblical interpretation available, it is striking how few hermeneutically-sound sermons one hears. Where is the clarity and power of sound Biblical interpretation manifested in pulpits, popular Christian literature, and Sunday School classes? Is something lacking?

Martin Luther, though he wrote nearly 500 years ago, provides some guidance on this subject in the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings. Indeed, if the sole benefit of this paper is to serve as a goad so that you – the listener – find and read this short preface yourself, your time in this session will be well-spent, I believe. Luther's memorable style of expression undoubtedly exceeds the quality of my writing – and thus, I point you to it. (*"Ad fontes!"* as the Reformers said.) Yet, with faltering lips, I hope to summarize faithfully and apply some of Luther's thoughts to our current setting.

In his preface, Luther gives a three-part prescription for theological study, which I think provides the missing ingredients in much current evangelical hermeneutical instruction. This three-step method is *Oratio*, *Meditatio*, and *Tentatio* (prayer, meditation, and trial). These elements, I believe, are crucial to faithful biblical reflection, but are often neglected in current discussion. In this paper, I will proceed by looking at the basis for Luther's theological prescription. That is, *why* does he see prayer, meditation, and trials as the *sine qua non* of true theological study? Then, we will examine each one of his three recommended elements in turn. Finally, I will make some concluding remarks.

## II. Luther's Basis for his Prescription

Luther rather confidently commends his three-step method for theological study. In fact, he claims, "If you keep to [this method of study], you will become so learned that you yourself could . . . write books just as good as those of the [church] fathers and

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations of Luther's preface are from the following English translation: "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, edited by Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 63-68

[church] councils. . .”<sup>2</sup> On what basis can Luther make such an audacious claim for his prescribed method of study? He can make such a claim because he does not believe a human authority stands behind the prescription, but a divine one. Luther’s derives his method from Psalm 119 [the lengthiest psalm in the canon, as you know]. Luther notes that throughout the psalm, David repeatedly mentions three things:

- (1) David cries out to God for understanding of his Word (prayer, Oratio)
- (2) David thinks on, recites, sings, and variously ruminates on God’s Word as he seeks to understand and apply it (meditation, Meditatio), and
- (3) David is repeatedly oppressed by enemies and difficulties (trial, Tentatio).

A superficial reading of Psalm 119 will quickly note these motifs. For the purposes of this short paper, I will choose a few examples of each theme. Many more could be listed, and hearers of this paper are encouraged to search Psalm 119 for themselves.

**First, Psalm 119 models a prayerful approach to studying God’s word. [2x]**

Psalm 119:5 [David, addressing the Lord]  
Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes!

Psalm, 119:10  
With my whole heart I seek you [Lord] ; let me not wander from your commandments!

Psalm 119:12  
Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!

Psalm 119:17-20  
Deal bountifully with your servant, that I may live and keep your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. I am a sojourner on the earth; hide not your commandments from me! My soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times.

Psalm 119:34-37  
Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

Second, Psalm 119 models a meditative approach to studying God’s Word. [2x]

Psalm 119:11  
I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:13-16

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 65.

With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

Psalm 119:27

Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

**Third, Psalm 119 presents trials as integrally related to the psalmist's prayers and meditations. [2x]**

Psalm 119:23-24

Even though princes sit plotting against me, your servant will meditate on your statutes. Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

Psalm 119:28

My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!

Psalm 119:41-42

Let your steadfast love come to me, O LORD, your salvation according to your promise; then shall I have an answer for him who taunts me, for I trust in your word.

Psalm 119:49-55

Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life. The insolent utterly deride me, but I do not turn away from your law. When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD. Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law. Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my sojourning. I remember your name in the night, O LORD, and keep your law.

Psalm 119 has 176 verses. In this short survey above, I draw from less than the first third of the psalm. Even from such a superficial analysis, one cannot miss the prominent repetition of prayer, meditation, and trial. In other words, Luther stands on firm evidential ground in asserting the importance of Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio in the psalm. And, as the psalm is about God's word and his people's approach to it, the text seems very fitting as a basic hermeneutical or theological method. It may also be of passing interest to note that Dietrich Bonhoeffer had the custom of requiring incoming theological students to memorize Psalm 119. One wonders - if prospective students were informed that they must memorize a 176 verse psalm before beginning study at Southern Seminary, how this new requirement might affect matriculation rates.

We will now look in more detail at the individual components of study recommended by Luther.

### III. *Oratio*

In our age of pragmatism (in which we seek seven simple steps to solve any problem), is it any surprise that we do not want to be told to wait? And prayer – a waiting and dependence upon God – has become less and less emphasized in Biblical study, whether that study be academic or pastoral. A survey of recent hermeneutics textbooks reveals the cursory attention given to prayer. Some hermeneutical discussion even implies that prayer biases the student of Scripture towards a pre-conceived conclusion. According to this understanding, it may actually be the non-believer who has the advantage in determining the meaning of Scripture, for he comes with little bias as to what the text will say, for it makes no authoritative claim on his life.

Daniel Fuller is the most recognized proponent of this view, though it has other prominent adherents. Fuller bifurcates understanding into cognitive and volitional categories. That is, there is cognitive understanding and volitional response, and the two are not to be confused. Fuller claims that supernatural intervention only functions on the volitional level.<sup>3</sup> In other words, it is only in inculcating a desire to obey the meaning of the text that God supernaturally intervenes in the life of the believer. Thus, determining cognitively the authorial meaning of the text is solely the application of acquired skill and natural reason.

It seems striking to me that Fuller, who would likely pray readily for a surgeon's increased skill in an operation, believes that prayers for increased exegetical skill are to no avail. "No," an objector will say, "What one needs is more lexicons, more grammatical study, more time in the text!" Undoubtedly, grammatical study, lexicons, and time in the text are essential. But, is there a place for God's supernatural aid in understanding, acquired through prayer and God's gracious intervention? If not, then the traditional Protestant understanding of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is incorrect.

More common than an outright rejection of the value of prayer or divine aid in the understanding of the text is brief lip service to the idea, with the subsequent wholesale neglect of it. Where in any modern hermeneutics textbook can be found a thoughtful and biblically-based discussion of how prayer should practically be used in study? By failing to appropriately emphasize and instruct our students in the school of prayer, we are implicitly teaching them not to pray. Jesus' disciples saw the prominence of prayer in his life, and asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1) When our disciples view our lives, do they ask this question, or do they ask, "How do you read so many books?" Or, "How do you write so much?" Or, "How do you sleep so little?"

Is it any wonder that modern sermons and Christian writings so rarely fail to expose and cast out the spirit of the age? Indeed, (to commit my own hermeneutical faux pas), "this kind can only come out through prayer" (Mark 9:29).

A brief survey of texts that discuss the doctrine of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit illustrate a lack of clarity and exegetical grounding. On the other hand, Fuller's system, while clearly understandable, is biblically unconvincing and dangerous. While I do not personally impugn Fuller or any who follow him, I believe his system does encourage an arrogant independence from God in approaching the text. A semi-Pelagian reliance upon one's unaided reason seems to me also dangerous and unbiblical.

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel P. Fuller, "The Holy Spirit's Role in Biblical Interpretation," in *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford LaSor (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978), 192.

The doctrine of total depravity teaches us that the entirety of the human person is affected by the fall – reason, emotions, will. We need the specific and supernatural aid of God to counteract our sinful nature in the regular study of the Scriptures. No one can win a biblical argument by claiming, “The Spirit told me,” or “I prayed before I wrote this article.” However, it appears to me that the Biblical evidence presents understanding as an indivisible mixture of both cognitive and volitional elements – an understanding in fallen creatures that can and must be aided by God’s special intervention.

Does this mean, then, that non-believers cannot understand some portions of the Biblical text? No, but it does mean a believer who seeks God’s aid in understanding a text has advantages over a non-believer with equal intellectual gifts, background, and skills. It is not that the Spirit provides additional information that is not in the text, but the Spirit helps in seeing clearly the information there and in the weighing of contextual and debated factors. It is as though the Spirit provides the spectacles that bring the picture into clearer focus. As believers wearing the spectacles of faith, however, we must make our arguments on the basis of the words before us in the text – not by appealing to supernatural assistance, regardless of how real and ongoing that assistance may be. As I observe the revelatory landscape along with my non-believing dialogue partner, I must make my argument on the basis of the facts in front of me.

As I strain to see through my God-given spectacles, I might say, “I see a small white bird that has just landed in the cedar tree.”

My unbelieving, un-spectacled partner counters, “I saw a movement in the tree, but a bird you did not see – only the wind blowing.”

The same facts are there before us, but only one sees rightly.

#### **IV. *Meditatio***

In addition to being a prayerless people, we in the western church are a hurried and unreflective folk. We may respond to forty ministry-related emails in one day and daily read large sections of our Bible, but where is the chewing, ruminating, and deep reflecting on the text that causes it to sink down in our souls - and by God’s grace, change us. The great scandal of the church, one modern pastor has said, is large buildings filled with undisciplined people. Like skates on a frozen lake, the Word has skirted over our minds and hearts with little measurable effect.

Luther warns of the danger of unreflective Bible study. He writes, “And take care that you do not grow weary or think that you have done enough when you have read, heard, and spoken [the words of Scripture] once or twice, and that you have complete understanding. You will not be a particularly good theologian if you do that, for you will be like untimely fruit which falls to the ground before it is half ripe.”<sup>4</sup>

In some recent popular Christian writings, we are seeing a reaction to our unreflective and hurried lives. Is it any wonder that a minority, but growing number of Western Christians, are being drawn to the spiritual disciplines of solitude and silence as they seek to unclutter their souls. Unfortunately, in some books on this subject, it seems to me that a form of unbiblical Eastern meditation (maybe via Oprah or Hollywood) has been adopted. The highest goal of this meditation seems to be some sort of ethereal, ineffable experience of

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<sup>4</sup> Lull, 66

relating to God with an “empty mind.” From the Scriptures, however, it seems that God would have us meditate on his Word. Yes, we may seek moments of silence and solitude, but those are moments when God tries and tests our hearts – bringing to mind Scriptures, failings, obligations, words of encouragement, or challenges. Not an empty mind, but a mind convicted, filled, focused, and transformed by God is the goal of biblical meditation.

We are inclined to think of biblical meditation as sitting quietly and simply thinking about a text over and over. This is biblical meditation, but it is also much more. Luther rightly points to the multitude of ways in which David meditates on the Word of God in Psalm 119. The Reformer writes,

Thus you see in this same Psalm how David constantly boasts that he will talk, meditate, speak, sing, hear, read, by day and night and always, nothing except God’s Word and commandments. For God will not give you his Spirit without the external Word; so take your cue from that. His command to write, preach, read, hear, sing, speak, etc., outwardly was not given in vain.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, meditating on the Bible is not simply quietly reflecting on a passage, but singing, reciting, memorizing, and writing the word. Meditating on the Word is using whatever intellectual and creative energies God has given us to focus on his revelation in thought, action, speech, or image.

In the Epistle of James, chapter 1, verse 25, we read, “The man who looks intently into the perfect law, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.” How desperately we as professors, pastors, students, and Christians in the pew need to be people who look intently into God’s perfect Word – and to be transformed into people who do not simply hear the word, deceiving ourselves, but do what it says.

With added attention to the Word of God, some other things will likely have to be scaled back – such as attention to secondary literature. I recall with personal delight I. Howard Marshall’s address on this campus in which he lamented the unnecessarily large number of books being published these days. I add my hearty “Amen,” as I find it nearly impossible to even read a summary of all the publications in my field in New Testament Abstracts. Might it, in fact, be a good thing, to spend less time in secondary literature and more time in the Bible?

With his own “Amen” to this idea, Luther writes:

I would have been quite content to see my books, one and all remain in obscurity and go by the board. Among other reasons, I shudder to think of the example I am giving, for I am well aware how little the church has been profited since they have begun to collect many books and large libraries, in addition to and besides Holy Scriptures, and especially since they have stored up without discrimination, all sorts of writings by the church fathers, the councils, and teachers. Through this practice not only is precious time lost, which could be used for studying the Scriptures, but in the end the pure knowledge of the divine Word is lost, so that the Bible

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 66.



lies forgotten in the dust under the bench (as happened to the book of Deuteronomy, in the time of the kings of Judah).<sup>6</sup>

Becoming a more prayerful and meditative people will come at a cost. Could the popular “less is more” principle be true when it comes to our theological intake?

### ***V. Tentatio***

Much energy in the Western world is directed at avoiding trials. Nearly one-fifth of the United States’ Gross Domestic Product goes towards insurance – a way of protecting ourselves against unplanned car wrecks, house fires, or medical expenses. Ironically, the very difficulties we seek to insulate ourselves from are often the means God uses to mature us. They are the means, Luther claims, of taking our abstract knowledge of what the Bible says and making it experiential and real. The Reformer writes:

[A trials is] the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdoms.<sup>7</sup>

And later Luther adds,

. . . as soon as God’s Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor of you, and by his assaults will teach you to seek and love God’s Word. I myself (if you will permit me, mere mouse-dirt, to be mingled with pepper) am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil’s raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much, That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have been otherwise.<sup>8</sup>

Trusting and obeying God in the midst of trial leads to a more mature understanding of Christian truth. The Biblical authors so frequently link suffering to spiritual growth that it is difficult to know which of numerous examples to cite. James 1:2-4 reads, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” Similarly, Romans 5:3-5 reads, “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” And in Philippians 1:29, we read, “For it has been graciously granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.” (Phil, my translation)

Just last week, I had planned to attend an all-day pastor’s conference where one of the main topics was God’s demonstration of his power through our weakness. On the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 67.

morning of the conference at 3:45 am, my daughter began several hours of a difficult bout with a stomach virus. My exhausted, pregnant wife, meanwhile, was recovering from a difficult cold. Is it possible that changing vomit-soaked clothes and sheets over and over could teach me more about God's power in weakness than hearing yet another speaker on the topic?

If we survey the lives of prominent saints in the Scriptures (e.g., Abraham, Moses, Paul), we see very quickly that God's path towards understanding of and service in the kingdom is often a path through repeated trials. As Jesus says in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."

## **VI. Conclusion**

In this short paper, I have offered my introduction to and reflections upon Luther's instructions for studying theology, as recorded in the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings. While not wanting to neglect the valuable secondary studies available to us, the Biblical text itself demands our own prayers, meditations, and trying experiences. The strength of Luther's proposal, I believe, is its rooting in the hermeneutical method advocated in Biblical revelation itself, that is, in Psalm 119.

Luther's own words provide us with a fitting conclusion:

There now, with that you have David's rules. If you study hard in accord with his example, then you will also sing and boast with him in the Psalm, "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces" [Ps. 119:72]. Also, "Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep thy precepts," etc. [Ps. 119:98-100]. And it will be your experience that the books of the fathers will taste stale and putrid to you in comparison. You will not only despise the books written by adversaries, but the longer you write and teach the less you will be pleased with yourself. When you have reached this point, then do not be afraid to hope that you have begun to become a real theologian . . .<sup>9</sup>

May God grant that we be such persons in our day.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 67.

## **SECTION 26**

### **Melanchthon as Interpreter of the New Testament**

## Melanchthon as Interpreter of the New Testament

This essay originally appeared as an article in *Westminster Theological Journal*, Fall 2002 (Vol. 62), pages 257-265. It is made available to my students with the permission of *WTJ*.

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### Introduction

Just as modern scholars often praise F. C. Baur for being one of the first NT scholars to treat Romans as an occasional letter, they regularly pillory Melanchthon for treating Romans as an abstract summary of the gospel. In such attacks on the Preceptor of Germany, references to his writings are frequently brief and undocumented. Typical of this approach is the following quote from J. C. Beker's article in *The Romans Debate*: "Although the tendency persists to view Romans as a dogmatics in outline, or as a version of a *compendium doctrinae Christianae* (Melanchthon), Romans is actually a profoundly occasional letter."<sup>1</sup> Karl P. Donfried, Peter Stuhlmacher, Arland J. Hultgren and Lucien Legrand make similar references to Melanchthon's compendium quote, though none of the above authors cites the source of his quotation.<sup>2</sup> Do these brief undocumented references to Melanchthon's writings accurately convey the reformer's view of Romans? The purpose of this short essay is to investigate Melanchthon's compendium quote, and more broadly his hermeneutical approach, to determine if modern NT scholarship has represented him accurately.

### The Famous Compendium Quote

Eduard Schweizer is one of few scholars who correctly notes that Melanchthon's compendium quote is from the introduction to the reformer's 1521 edition of the *Loci Communes*.<sup>3</sup> The quote is found in section 2.1.7 of *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl* and page sixty-nine of the English rendering of the *Loci* by Charles Leander Hill. What exactly is the context of this quote and what did Melanchthon mean in referring to Romans as a compendium of Christian doctrine? Let us begin by providing a fuller version of the quotation:

In the Epistle to the Romans, when he drew up a compendium of Christian doctrine, did Paul the author philosophize about the mysteries of the Trinity, the mode of the Incarnation or about "creation active and

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<sup>1</sup> J. C. Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate* (rev. ed.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 327.

<sup>2</sup> Karl P. Donfried, "Introduction 1977," in *The Romans Debate*, xli; Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Purpose of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 231; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Gospel and Mission: The Outlook from His Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 9; Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 121. Though Renan does not specifically name Melanchthon, he alludes to the compendium quote: "Ce n'est plus l'Épître aux Romains qui est le résumé du christianisme, c'est le Discours sur la montagne" (Ernest Renan, *Saint Paul* [Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1869], 570).

<sup>3</sup> Eduard Schweizer, "The Church as the Missionary Body of Christ," *NTS* 8 (1961-62) 1; cf. L. Ann Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans: A Comparative Letter Structure Investigation*, JSNTSup 55 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 14-15.

passive?” On the contrary, what does Paul do? He reasons most certainly about the Law, Sin, and Grace. Topics, I say, on which alone the knowledge of Christ depends.<sup>4</sup>

The above passage comes soon after another frequently quoted portion of Melanchthon’s Loci:

I do not see how I can call that man a Christian who is ignorant of the remaining topics such as the power of sin, the law and grace. For by them is Christ properly known, if indeed this is to know Christ, [namely], to know his benefits and not as they teach, to perceive his natures and the mode of his incarnation.<sup>5</sup>

From looking at the compendium quote in its original context, it is clear that Melanchthon is contrasting Paul’s discussion of the more pragmatic aspects of the Christian’s experience (law, sin, and grace) with discourse over the minutiae of trinitarian doctrine or similarly obscure theological subjects (i.e., topics the scholastics preferred to discuss). Melanchthon asserts that Paul addresses practical matters which affect the conscience and daily life as opposed to abstract or non-soteriologically significant doctrines. This meaning of compendium doctrinae Christianae differs from the sense given to the term in modern scholars’ reference to it. Arguably, irresponsible quotation of the Loci has led modern readers to believe that Melanchthon thinks Paul presents the reader of Romans with a full-orbed presentation of Christian doctrine. This is not what Melanchthon says.

W. G. Kümmel argues that we should not consider Romans a “compendium of Christian doctrine,” as Melanchthon does, because Paul does not deal adequately with eschatology and Christology. Nor does the apostle even mention church order or the Lord’s supper.<sup>6</sup> Ironically, Melanchthon’s quote, which Kümmel cites as a simplistic misunderstanding of Romans, actually presents roughly the same view of Romans as Kümmel. The letter is not an abstract summary of all aspects of Christian belief and practice; this is what the scholastics would have meant by a “compendium of Christian doctrine.” Melanchthon, on the other hand, means a collection of soteriologically-

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<sup>4</sup> MWA 2.1.7. The Latin original: “Paulus in epistola, quam Romanis dicavit, cum doctrinae christianae compendium conscriberet, num de mysteriis trinitatis, de modo incarnationis, de creatione activa et creatione passiva philosophabatur? At quid agit? Certe de lege, peccato, gratia, e quibus locis solis Christi cognitio pendet.” The English translation is by Charles Leander Hill (Philip Melanchthon, *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, trans. C. L. Hill [Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1944], 69). The standard critical editions of Melanchthon’s writings are K. Bretschneider and H. Bindseil (eds.) *Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis Opera, quae supersunt omnia*, 28 vols. (Halle [vols. 1-18], Brunswick, NJ [vols. 19-28]: Schwetschke, 1834-60; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1963), and Robert Stupperich (ed.) *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, 7 vols. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1951-75). These series are abbreviated as CR and MWA.

<sup>5</sup> MWA 2.1.7. The Latin original: “Reliquos vero locos, peccati vim, legem, gratiam, qui ignorarit, non video quomodo christianum vocem. Nam ex his proprie Christus cognoscitur, siquidem hoc est Christum cognoscere beneficia eius cognoscere, non, quod isti docent, eius naturas, modos incarnationis contueri.” English translation: Hill, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 17th ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 312.

significant and pragmatically valuable teaching on the Christian life.

Two other caveats should be made when using the compendium quote to explain Melanchthon's hermeneutic. First, one should remember that the quote is taken from the reformer's systematic theology rather than from one of his commentaries on Romans. While the *Loci* is based on Romans, it was intended to be more of an abstract synthesis. Second, the reference to Romans as a compendium doctrinae Christianae is missing from later editions of the *Loci*, and thus Melanchthon himself may have been uncomfortable with possible misunderstandings of his words.

### **Melanchthon as New Testament Commentator**

As we turn to Melanchthon's commentaries to investigate his hermeneutical approach, we must remember that he wrote prior to the rise of the critical method and its historical consciousness. Thus, Melanchthon was most concerned with the current-day application of the biblical text (i.e., the reforming result of biblical study). A "commentary on Scripture" to Melanchthon meant something quite different from modern biblical scholars' use of the term "commentary."<sup>7</sup> Melanchthon's approach generally respects the original historical context, yet is most concerned with the enduring didactic value of the text. To discover this enduring value of a biblical book, Melanchthon argues, one must understand the author's purpose in writing, or one can easily get mired in the misinterpretation of individual verses taken out of context. Melanchthon explains his exegetical approach in the *Praefatio* to his commentary on Colossians:

Just as it is usual for other works to begin with the establishment of their theme, so it is with Paul's letters: the reader is first to be shown, what subject is under discussion, what the status of the letter is, what--as the Greeks say--is hypokeimenon [what is presented]. The purpose of this is so that he should know what to look for in the book as a whole, and what to expect from it. You will not be reading profitably, if you simply abstract isolated statements from it. It should be read as a single continuous address, so that there may be drawn from it one established statement that is capable of strengthening and teaching the conscience. Those who are [forever] departing from the general scope and purpose of the book as a whole fail to do this.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Timothy J. Wengert and M. Patrick Graham (eds.) *Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); also see Kenneth Hagen, "What did the Term *Commentarius* mean to Sixteenth-Century Theologians?" in Irena Backus and Francis Higman, eds., *Théorie et pratique de l'exégèse* (Geneva: Droz, 1990): 13-38; chapter 2, "Les Commentaires de l'écriture," of Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 71-92.

<sup>8</sup> MWA 4.211. The Latin original: "Sicut in aliis scriptis principio constitui solet, quod sit argumentum operis, ita in Paulinis epistulis primum monendus est lector, qua de re dicatur, qui sit cuiusque epistolae status, quod, ut Graeci dicunt: u(pokei)/menon, ut, quid petere et exspectare ex toto scripto debeat, sciat. Nec utiliter legeris, si tantum mutilatas sententias inde excerpteris, totius orationis series cognoscenda est, ut inde colligatur certa sententia, quae munire conscientiam et docere possit, quod, qui non faciunt, ii saepe in universum aberrant a totius scripti scopo ac proposito." The English translation above is by D. C. Parker (Philip Melanchthon, *Paul's Letter to the Colossians*, trans. D.C. Parker [Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1989], 29). C. Joachim Classen notes that Melanchthon, in his biblical commentaries, is interested in helping the reader understand "the intention of the letter as a whole, the general line of <sup>8</sup> the argumentation and the structure of particular arguments" (C. Joachim Classen, "St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds., *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1993], 274). Cf. T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans 1532-1542* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 4-5.

In order to determine properly the guiding purpose of a biblical book Melanchthon employs his knowledge of classical rhetoric.<sup>9</sup> The reformer's treatment of Romans in his 1540 commentary is a prime example of this approach.<sup>10</sup> Melanchthon names the two major propositions in Romans as: [1] sin exercises universal dominion over humanity (Rom 1:18),<sup>11</sup> and [2] God justifies unmeriting sinners by faith (Rom 3:21f.).<sup>12</sup> In submitting the remainder of his exegesis to these guiding propositions, Melanchthon agrees with his prior statement in the *Loci*, i.e., that Romans is a compendium of Christian doctrine—an exposition on the essential matters of salvation.

While Melanchthon views Romans as primarily a document about salvation, it remains an occasional letter to him. A brief look at his treatment of Romans chapter 1 confirms this fact. Melanchthon does not simply apply the text; he repeatedly notes Paul's first-century context.<sup>13</sup> Then, Melanchthon makes an explicit comparison to his own time period—drawing out the implications and significance of Paul's intended meaning. Melanchthon's clear understanding of this distinction between the original context of Romans and his own time is emphasized by the phrases with which he introduces the comparisons to his own time period, e.g., “In the same way . . .” (*Eodem modo . . .*),<sup>14</sup> “So also at this time . . .” (*Ita et hoc tempore . . .*),<sup>15</sup> and “Now let popes and monks be compared with the picture Paul paints” (*Iam ad imaginem Pauli conferantur Pontifices et Monachi*).<sup>16</sup> A careful reading of Melanchthon's commentary will confirm this pattern. While Melanchthon's primary concern is to uphold the truth of the gospel by attacking falsehoods of his day and leading readers to a proper understanding of the gospel, the text of Romans remains for him a letter written by a first-century apostle to a

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<sup>9</sup> Schneider writes, “. . . Melanchthon construed Scripture literally as sacred rhetoric, *oratio sacra*, and that detailed tracing of how this construal governed his hermeneutical processes and systematic formation of doctrine is indispensable both to understanding and to assessing him and the prevailing historiography” (John R. Schneider, *Philip Melanchthon's Rhetorical Construal of Biblical Authority: Oratio Sacra* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990], 6).

<sup>10</sup> The 1540 commentary is found in volume 15 of *Corpus Reformatorum*. Fred Kramer recently translated this work (Philip Melanchthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. F. Kramer [St. Louis: Concordia, 1992]). This commentary is a revision and expansion of Melanchthon's earlier *Commentarii in epistolam Pauli ad Romanos* (Wittenberg: 1532). The 1532 edition is most easily accessed in volume 5 of MWA. See Schäfer's excellent article on this earlier edition (Rolf Schäfer, “Melanchthons Hermeneutik im Römerbrief-Kommentar von 1532,” *ZTK* 60 [1963] 216-235).

<sup>11</sup> CR 15.561 (*Evangelium arguit omnes homines ac pronunciat omnes sub peccato esse . . .*). Cf. the 1532 edition, MWA 5.69 (*omnes homines [sunt] sub peccato*).

<sup>12</sup> CR 15.586-87. Cf. the 1532 edition, MWA 5.99 (*Fide iustificamur*).

<sup>13</sup> I do not want to overstate this point. Admittedly, one could find many sections of Melanchthon's commentary which at first glance seem far removed from the historical context of Paul's letter. I would argue, however, that underlying Melanchthon's extended application of the text is always a knowledge of the text's origin.

<sup>14</sup> CR 15.549.

<sup>15</sup> CR 15.554.

<sup>16</sup> CR 15.555. I am following Kramer's translation here (68).

first-century congregation in Rome.<sup>17</sup> In fact, authorial intention remains key for Melanchthon because it is only the author's intention to construct his letter according to a rhetorical scheme which can justify Melanchthon's over-arching hermeneutic.<sup>18</sup>

Melanchthon also notes the importance of authorial intent in his commentary on Colossians. This quotation needs to be reproduced here because it so clearly presents Melanchthon's apologia of his rhetorical approach:

It may perhaps seem inept of me, to relate Paul's prose to rhetorical conventions. But it is my opinion that the Pauline style of writing can be better understood, if the series and dispositio of each section is taken into consideration. For the material itself shows that Paul did not write completely without any order or ratio. He has his loci in which he prepares the minds of the readers; he has his particular method of teaching and of explanation. Not to notice this in our exposition would be simply doing what the Greeks call jumping in the dark or, as Chrysostom says, *nyktomachein* [fighting in the dark].<sup>19</sup>

### **An Evaluation of Melanchthon's Rhetorical Hermeneutic**

Calvin and Erasmus criticized Melanchthon for twisting the biblical text to fit his rhetorical scheme.<sup>20</sup> The modern scholar Rolf Schäfer has made a similar accusation.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Melanchthon's familiarity with classical rhetoric and cautious scholarship should give us pause before impugning his motives. The reformer wrote three handbooks on rhetoric and three works on dialectic--all in Latin.<sup>22</sup> Few, if any, modern rhetorical critics could claim such familiarity with their subject matter.

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<sup>17</sup> CR 15.546.

<sup>18</sup> CR 15.495. Cf. CR 1.1044. See Schäfer's account of Melanchthon's evolving view of Paul's rhetorical background and intentions (Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik," 218f.)

<sup>19</sup> MWA 4.214-15. The Latin original: "Videar fortassis ineptus, si Pauli sermonem ad rhetorica praecepta conferam. Ego tamen sic existimo intelligi melius posse orationem Paulinam, si series et dispositio omnium partium consideretur. Neque enim omnino nullo ordine aut nulla ratione scripsit Paulus, id quod res ipsa ostendit. Habet suos locos, quibus praeparat animos, habet suam quandam docendi et narrandi rationem, quam in enarrando non animadvertere, quid aliud est, quam quod Graeci dicunt: in tenebris saltare, seu ut Chrysostomus ait: *nuktomaxein*." English translation by D. C. Parker, Colossians, 32.

<sup>20</sup> John Calvin, *Iohannis Calvini Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2.45-50. In an October 1534 letter to Sadoletto, Erasmus wrote, "Miseram Commentarios Melanchthonis, non vt illos imitareris (nec enim alibi magis torquet scripturam, vtcumque miram professus simplicitatem), sed quum illic commemorantur variae multorum opiniones, sciebam tuam prudentiam illinc excerpturam quod ad mentis Paulinae faceret cognitionem." (PSA XI, 45). In June 1533, in a letter to Boniface Amerbach, Erasmus wrote, "Venditur istic commentarius nouus Philippi Melanchthonis in Epistolam ad Romanos; in quo sibi placet—et multa praeclare dicta fateor. Sed in multis displicet. Torquet multa, arroganter reiecit Origenem et Augustinum, non pauca transilit. Legi quaterniones aliquot." (PSA X, 244-45). PSA is the standard abbreviation for the 12 volume set, P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, eds., *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami* (Oxford: University Press, 1906-58).

<sup>21</sup> Schäfer, "Melanchthons Hermeneutik," 222.

<sup>22</sup> They are: *De Rhetorica libri tres* (Wittenberg, 1519), *Institutiones Rhetoricae* (Hagenau, 1521), and *Elementa rhetorices libri duo* (Wittenberg, 1531), *Compendiaria Dialectices* (Leipzig, 1520), *Dialectices libri quator* (Hagenau, 1528), and *Erotemata dialectices* (Wittenberg, 1547). See Classen, 271



Contrary to criticism, Melanchthon does not blindly apply his rhetorical hermeneutic to every biblical text. In fact, Melanchthon freely admits that 1 Corinthians does not fit a rhetorical scheme and that “the letter is not coherent in the way that Romans is.”<sup>23</sup> In investigating 2 Corinthians, Melanchthon employs some rhetorical categories, but says the letter’s structure is “mostly obscure and badly connected.”<sup>24</sup> In his 1559 *Enarratio Epistolae Pauli ad Colossenses*, Melanchthon mostly abandons the earlier rhetorical outline that he used in his 1527 commentary on Colossians; at least, he makes little mention of it.<sup>25</sup> Also, for Melanchthon, OT prophetic speech sometimes provides the basis for Paul’s rhetoric, rather than classical patterns.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, when classical rhetorical categories and terms do not adequately describe Paul’s speech, Melanchthon is not hesitant to coin new terms.<sup>27</sup> For example, the reformer finds the three standard categories of rhetoric (forensic, epideictic, deliberative) inadequate to describe Romans and other biblical books, and thus proposes a new fourth category, *genus didascalicum*.<sup>28</sup> It must be remembered that “rhetoric” for Melanchthon was not primarily a series of classical forms, but “speaking correctly and elegantly.”<sup>29</sup>

Such a complex rhetorical approach to the NT might be unexpected from a Reformation scholar, especially since recent articles on rhetorical criticism assume that ancient rhetorical categories were “rediscovered” in the twentieth century. Many scholars seem to think that Paul organized his letters with a knowledge of classical rhetoric, some of the church fathers understood his approach, and then the church was plunged into the dark ages of allegorical exegesis and proof-texting for church dogma.<sup>30</sup> James Muilenburg’s 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature is often cited as the impetus for the modern flowering of rhetorical criticism.<sup>31</sup> Within the field of NT studies, scholars look to Hans Dieter Betz as a modern pioneer in this “rediscovered discipline.” Betz first introduced his rhetorical approach to Galatians in an August 1974 lecture at the 29th General Meeting of the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* at Siguna (Sweden).<sup>32</sup> Betz’s 1979 *Hermeneia* commentary on Galatians applies in more detail the rhetorical analysis he originally proposed in his 1974 lecture.

<sup>23</sup> MWA 4.16 (noted by D. C. Parker, *Colossians*, 21).

<sup>24</sup> MWA 4.86 (noted by D. C. Parker, *Colossians*, 21).

<sup>25</sup> CR 15.1223-82 (noted by D. C. Parker, *Colossians*, 23).

<sup>26</sup> CR 15.561.

<sup>27</sup> Classen, 273-74.

<sup>28</sup> CR 13.423-25 (or *genus didacticum*).

<sup>29</sup> CR 13.419 (from *El. rhet.*).

<sup>30</sup> Augustine used oratorical paradigms for biblical interpretation in his *De doctrina christiana* (A.D. 426). See Gerald A. Press, “*Doctrina* in Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 17 (1984) 98-120; James Jerome Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 47-63; C. Clifton Black II, “Keeping up with Recent Studies: Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation,” *ExpTim* 100 (1988-89) 255.

<sup>31</sup> For Muilenburg, rhetorical criticism is “. . . the study of the characteristic linguistic and structural features of a particular text in its present form, apart from its generic rootage, social usage, or historical development” (e.g., looking at word repetition, *inclusio*, *chiasmus*, parallelism, and poetic devices) [Black, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 253].

<sup>32</sup> Classen (“*St Paul’s Epistles*”) writes of Betz, “. . . as Professor Betz stresses the novelty of his method [in his commentary], it seems obvious to ask why it was not discovered and used before or, as he mentions Luther, Melanchthon and Lightfoot in a footnote, were they the first and what did they do?” (268).

During the two decades following Betz's commentary, modern rhetorical criticism has blossomed. Numerous NT scholars have attempted to dissect Paul's rhetoric in Romans, usually with little or no acknowledgment of non-contemporary approaches (e.g., Melanchthon). Wilhelm Wuellner pioneered this modern rhetorical approach to Romans, and was followed by many others, including David E. Aune and Robert Jewett. Jewett's article, "Following the Argument of Romans," is possibly the best known contemporary rhetorical foray into Romans.<sup>33</sup> In this article, Jewett says he hopes the rhetorical method will provide an objective approach to understanding Paul's argument and highlight the letter's occasional nature. Jewett sees the rhetorical approach as corrective of theologically-driven understandings of Romans.<sup>34</sup> Jewett concludes that the letter is an ambassadorial one, in which ". . . Paul aims to provide a theological argument that will unify the competing house-churches in Rome so that they will be willing to cooperate in a mission to Spain, to be mounted from Rome."<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Melanchthon, Jewett contends, "If one were to pose the traditional question of the 'high point' or 'climax' of Romans, it is surely to be found in the peroration in chapters 15-16 rather than in the abstract, doctrinal themes of the earlier part of the letter."<sup>36</sup> Jewett would agree with Schäfer that Melanchthon's interpretation of Romans is driven by outside theological concerns. One might question whether Jewett's rhetorical approach is not equally conditioned.

Dunn gives a balanced summary of modern rhetorical approaches to Romans:

The key fact here is that the distinctiveness of [Romans] far outweighs the significance of its conformity with current literary or rhetorical custom. Parallels show chiefly how others wrote at that period; they provide no prescription for Paul's practice and no clear criterion by which to assess Paul; and the fact that no particular suggestion has commanded widespread assent in the current discussion suggests that Paul's style was as much or more eclectic and instinctive than conventional and conformist.<sup>37</sup>

In agreement with Dunn, we judge "the new rhetoric" to hold greater promise than classical rhetoric for understanding Paul's letters. Rather than seeking to fit Paul's letter's into a classical rhetorical mold, "new rhetoric" looks for distinctive patterns and markers within the apostle's speech and then lets these divisions guide our outline of Paul's thought.<sup>38</sup> Melanchthon approaches this flexibility of the new rhetoric with his openness to coining new terms, abandoning rhetorical schemes when they are not helpful, and looking to the OT as a pattern for Paul's speech.

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<sup>33</sup> Robert Jewett, "Following the Argument of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 265-77.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 265-66.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-77.

<sup>37</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "The Formal and Theological Coherence of Romans," in *The Romans Debate*, 245-46.

<sup>38</sup> Hansen argues that the successful application of "the new rhetoric" to Paul's letters show that the observation-based elements of rhetoric are what make Paul's letters fit a rhetorical outline. Hansen notes that classical rhetoricians composed their rhetorical manuals based on observations of what did and did not work in speech. Quintilian compared the rhetorician observing rhetorical patterns to a doctor noting the medicinal properties of herbs (G. W. Hansen, "Rhetorical Criticism," in G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993], 822-24).

## Conclusion

As we saw at the outset of our study, Melanchthon is often presented as a simplistic misinterpreter of the Scriptures. Yet, in examining Melanchthon's actual writings and secondary studies of his rhetorical hermeneutic, we have discovered that the reformer is more exegetically sophisticated. Melanchthon does not present Romans as a systematic theology dealing with all topics of Christian theology, such as eschatology, the Lord's Supper, and church order.<sup>39</sup> He treats the text as a presentation of the gospel (i.e., soteriologically-significant and pragmatic doctrine). Though Melanchthon's rhetorical approach may seem forced at times, it arguably presents the major themes of Romans accurately.<sup>40</sup> The reformer's approach allows us to look at Romans as a unified message-something the framing epistolary brackets of the letter encourage (Rom 1:11-17, 15:14-33).<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Contra Kümmel's unfounded accusation (Introduction to the NT, 312).

<sup>40</sup> Melanchthon's emphasis on justification in Romans is really not that different from some modern scholars. For example, see Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme*, NovTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

<sup>41</sup> For a further defense of the importance of these framing brackets, see Jervis. (See n. 3 for a full citation of Jervis.)

## **SECTION 28**

### **Filing and Saving Your Work**

## **Filing and Saving Your Work**

“The best teachers in any field of knowledge are those who remind students all their lives. It is particularly true of the ministry of the Word.”

(John R. W. Stott)

“Plan your preparation time weeks ahead, and keep to your timetable. Show your people you love them by the time you spend in prayer and preparation.”

(Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Words*, 167)

### **I. Filing**

1. Purchase a standard four-door filing cabinet to begin. Add new cabinets as needed.
2. Develop both biblical and topical categories.
  - a. Start your topical files from “Abortion” to “Zwingli” and add new topic files as needed.
  - b. Start your biblical files with one on each book of the Bible. Eventually, you will want to expand this to one per chapter of the Bible. Later, you will want to break some chapters down to smaller separate segments (e.g., Eph. 1:1-14; Eph. 1:15-23).

### **II. Tapes**

1. Purchase a dependable and, as inexpensive as possible, tape storage system (a “sound stacker”). Recognize CD's are on the way.
2. Develop a biblical, topical and author index system.
  - a. Notebook for topics/authors
  - b. Wide margin Bible for sermon text
  - c. Tape and catalog your messages

### III. Your Sermons

1. Conserve all your research work. Add to, but never reinvent the wheel.
2. Save your sermon notes. That makes it easy to recall them. Document well!
3. A notebook binder system is a proven method, as it individualizes sermon files.
4. Don't just read a book or listen to a tape, own it through proper conservation principles (Mark and record your observations/highlights).