



THE BASICS

OF PASTORAL
MINISTRY

VOLUME 4

Exposition and Evangelism

STUDY GUIDE

“If there’s going to be a return
to purposeful evangelistic
preaching, we need absolutely to
be convinced of its necessity and
to be clear as to its nature.”

ALISTAIR BEGG

The Basics of Pastoral Ministry: Exposition and Evangelism (Study Guide)
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INTRODUCTION

The sermons in this volume are intended to help current pastors, aspiring pastors, and lay leaders to have a greater understanding of their calling and work. These sermons and lectures were not originally delivered together in one cohesive series. There is therefore some overlap in content between sermons. The messages in this volume were selected and arranged in order to provide the most help to those who are training for ministry. We hope and pray that they will greatly benefit you as you seek to glorify God wherever He has set you.

Each lesson includes four main parts:

1) Key Scriptures: important Bible verses that were referenced in the message and are flagged for further meditation and memorization

2) Notes: space (and outlines, when relevant) for you to jot down your key takeaways, thoughts, and questions from each message

3) Going Deeper: quotes and questions to help you process each message's main ideas

4) Ways to Pray: prompts that are meant to help guide your petitions to and your affections for God

Learning Objectives

- Examine the convictions and practices that enable preachers to be faithful expositors of Scripture.
- Discover the key differences between expository preaching and its various substitutes.
- Learn how to develop sermons that are both expositional and evangelistic.

Getting Started

1. Listener disinterest in expository preaching frequently results when sermons are dull and irrelevant. What is the difference between good exegesis and good exposition? How can expository sermons be relevant without bypassing the text's original meaning?

2. While it's common to distinguish expositional preaching from evangelistic preaching, this need not be the case. How can a sermon be both expositional and evangelistic?

LESSON ONE

The Basics of Expository Preaching

Expository preaching begins with a particular portion of Scripture—but it doesn't end there. Alistair Begg explains that an expositor's job goes beyond accurate exegesis of a text; it also includes listening for the "melodic line" that runs throughout the entire Bible and helping listeners understand why a passage matters to them. Pastors must commit to preaching what the Bible says without bias, allowing Scripture to establish the framework and content of every sermon.

Notes

Introduction

What Is Expository Preaching?

Two Dangers of Expository Preaching

Lessons from Lucas

Speaking by Listening

KEY SCRIPTURES

“All the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.”
(Nehemiah 8:1-3)

Getting the Melodic Line

Holding the Line

Going Deeper

1. *“As preachers, we have to work hard to ensure that we’re not simply doing good exegesis—helping the listener to understand the meaning of the text—but that we’re also laboring to establish its relevance to the listener’s personal world.”*

Preachers constantly face the temptation to make their sermons simply a running commentary of a passage of Scripture. As Alistair mentions, a true expository sermon will build a bridge from the text of Scripture into the listener’s world. What can you do in the sermon preparation process to ensure that you are doing justice to the biblical text and showing how it applies to the lives of your listeners?

2. *“The greatest danger we face is believing that we understand before we do.”*

When we think we understand a text before we have done the hard work of study, we are more likely to bypass study and go directly into preparing a message. Why will such a mindset leave both us and our congregations deprived? Why should you still study a text you are going to preach from even when you think you already understand it?

3. *“It’s been a great freedom for me, personally, to just throw all that out the window and to just allow the text to constrain it. There may be one point, there may be twelve points, there may be three points.”*

Here Alistair addresses the number of points that a sermon should contain. Instead of having a predetermined number, as is commonly encouraged, he has made it his approach to allow the text to determine how a sermon will be organized. How might such an approach allow your preaching to be more natural and easier to follow?

Ways to Pray

- Alistair said, “We really need to pray desperately hard that God will break into our congregations.” Pray that God will show Himself strong by His Word and Spirit so that it becomes apparent to your church that God Himself is speaking and moving among them through the proclamation of His Word.
- Pray that God will give you an inner resolve to be faithful to the text of Scripture in your preaching. Pray that God will soften your own heart to His Word so that you allow the text of Scripture to set the agenda in your preaching.
- Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and insight for how to best apply the biblical text to the personal world of your congregation.

LESSON TWO

The Benefits of Expository Preaching

What makes Bible-centered preaching so timeless and effective? Alistair Begg helps us see the many benefits of expository preaching, reminding us of the sufficiency, authority, and supremacy of God's written Word. Expository preaching demands consistent consideration of the whole Bible. Pastors, therefore, must be learning continually as they help their congregations study the Bible in an orderly way. God is glorified when His words—not man's ideas—are given priority.

Notes

Expository Preaching Glorifies God

Expository Preaching Requires Study

Expository Preaching Enables Learning

Expository Preaching Treats the Entire Bible

Expository Preaching Provides a Balanced Diet

KEY SCRIPTURES

“When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.” (2 Corinthians 2:12-17)

Expository Preaching Eliminates “Saturday Night Fever”

Going Deeper

1. *“It is imperative that as pastors we are learning. Constantly learning. If we’re not learning, we’re not growing.”*

If pastors are not consistently learning and growing, then they will have little to offer to their congregations. How can you ensure that you continually remain a student of Scripture, theology, and practical ministry? What disciplines can you begin today that will allow you to remain spiritually nourished and educated in the ministry?

2. *“The first heart that God’s Word needs to reach is the heart of the preacher. For there will be little benefit to our people from expository preaching that is just completely cerebral, unless we ourselves have been impacted by the Scripture as we are preparing to preach it.”*

Ezra’s practice was to study God’s Word, obey it, and then teach God’s people (Ezra 7:10). Ezra’s approach shows that the preacher’s life must first be transformed by God’s Word before he declares it to others. Why must pastors be equally diligent in preparing their hearts and lives as they are in preparing sermons? What will be the fallout of bypassing the important step of applying God’s Word to our own lives before we apply it to the lives of others?

3. *“Expository preaching liberates the preacher from the pressure of trying to figure it all out on Saturday nights.”*

Expository preaching is not easy. It requires pastors to do the hard work of understanding the meaning of Scripture in its context and the implications that it has for contemporary lives. Yet expository preaching has many practical benefits for both the preacher and the congregation. What are some practical benefits for pastors and churches that are committed to expository preaching?

Ways to Pray

- Ask the Lord to help you to balance your schedule effectively so that you are able to carve out sufficient time for study and learning beyond your regular time for sermon preparation.
- Pray that God will protect you from hypocrisy in your ministry. Pray that God’s Word will truly grip your heart and transform your life so that you can effectively guide others into obedience to God’s truth.
- Alistair said, “God does not come upon methods but upon men.” As you study and prepare sermons, pray that God will come upon you and bless your preparation and proclamation with His presence.

LESSON THREE

What Happened to Expository Preaching?

Every pulpit must allow the Bible, not the pew, to determine what is preached. Many pastors face the temptation to entertain the congregation or treat God's Word as a product in need of selling. The preacher's true duty, however, is to uncover the text's meaning and relay his findings to the people of God in a way that does not compromise the integrity of Scripture. Alistair Begg encourages us not to lose confidence in the Bible's ability to save the lost and edify the church.

Notes

Introduction

Substitutes for the Expository Preacher

What Happened to Expository Preaching, and Why?

KEY SCRIPTURES

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Ephesians 3:8)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Psalm 139:23–24)

Going Deeper

1. *“If a man does not have a solid conviction that the Word of God is powerful in and of itself, he’s going to be forced to do something with it to try and overcome the consumer resistance which he feels is his task.”*

God’s Word is offensive to man’s pride. Even when a preacher faithfully and graciously proclaims God’s truth, there will be those who disapprove of the messenger because of the message he has proclaimed. When the preacher faces “consumer resistance,” his true convictions will become manifest. What promises concerning the power of God’s Word encourage you to persevere in your task when you encounter this type of opposition?

2. *“Young men beginning pastoral ministry are besieged by members of their congregation wanting them, urging them, demanding them, to begin their sermons with man and his need rather than God and His glory. And they are asking for what they don’t need. What they need is not what they want. And brethren, we’re going to have to be bold in these days. Kind, but bold.”*

Alistair explains that what those in our congregations often want to hear is not necessarily what they need to hear. How can you kindly, yet courageously, persuade your congregation to embrace sound biblical teaching?

3. *"You are a gift to the church. They don't pay you to preach! They couldn't pay you enough to preach. They couldn't pay you too little that would stop you preaching. They want to give you money, that's fine, but you're going to preach."*

It is good and right for churches to provide financial support for their pastors, but it is a grave mistake for pastors to simply view their ministry as a job. How can the perspective that Alistair describes help you to overcome the fear of man in your preaching?

Ways to Pray

- God encouraged the prophet Jeremiah with these words: "Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29). Ask the Lord to help you to be absolutely convinced that His Word is as powerful as He says it is.
- Think of different ways that you see resistance to God's Word represented in your own congregation and community. Pray that God, through His Word and by His Spirit, will cause these walls of resistance to collapse.
- Pray that God will protect you from succumbing to the temptation to curb the message of God's Word in order to cater to people's preferences.

LESSON FOUR

A Historical Survey of Preaching

From the early church to the present day, many great men have dedicated themselves to communicating God's Word so that people can understand its meaning. Alistair Begg walks us through the history of preaching, which shows us that such faithful ministers succeeded by remaining grounded in Scripture, focused on Christ, and devoted to God's glory. Today's pastors will be well served if they avoid the peril of man-centered preaching and instead examine the past triumphs of preaching oriented to the Gospel.

Notes

Introduction

Preaching in the Bible

The Preaching of the Early Church Fathers

The Reformation and Preaching

Preaching after the Reformation

KEY SCRIPTURES

“He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.” (2 Peter 2:5)

“Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. ... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood.” (Nehemiah 8:4-5)

“Rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ And he said to them, ‘Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.’ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.” (Mark 1:35-39)

Final Quotes and Illustrations

Going Deeper

1. *“We’ve really done nothing till we’ve brought people to Jesus.”*

No text of Scripture can be properly understood apart from its relation to Christ. Therefore, it is important that every sermon be Christ centered. How can you ensure that every sermon “brings people to Jesus” without manipulating the text or simply attaching Jesus at the end?

2. *“Preaching in the Bible ... was grounded in Scripture, it was focused on Christ, and its great end was the glory of God.”*

Alistair shows that there is a pattern for preaching provided within Scripture and throughout church history. How does learning this pattern encourage you to be faithful in your preaching and guard you from adopting contemporary fads that depart from this pattern?

3. *“We’re not going to assess blessing in terms of numerical things, per se. But I don’t think that there is much question that if a young man will take the Bible, and will take his life, and will lay his life down before Christ, and put his nose in the Bible and his knees on the floor, at least in the silence of his own room, and cry out to God for help, that he will see remarkable things happen.”*

Evaluating success in ministry purely based on numerical results can be dangerous. We may, in fact, see numerical results because we have departed from Scripture in our practice. While numerical results alone are an unhelpful metric for success, why should a pastor who faithfully preaches the Bible and depends upon God for help expect to see certain results? Besides numbers, how else can you evaluate the effectiveness of your ministry?

Ways to Pray

- Pray that your life and preaching will be marked by an all-consuming passion for Jesus.
- Pray that the Lord will keep you from being “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14), and that He will help you to offer preaching that is grounded in Scripture, focused on Christ, and glorifying to God, just as the those in Scripture and church history have done before you.
- Ask the Lord to put His hand of blessing upon your efforts to proclaim His Word so that it will transform the lives of your listeners.

LESSON FIVE

The Nature of Expository Preaching

For pastors, expository preaching is not just an optional style that God makes available to them; it is the standard method by which they are to proclaim His Word. The exposition of Scripture prevents the preacher from avoiding difficult passages and makes the biblical text central to the sermon's framework. Alistair Begg reminds us that preaching grounded in God's Word ensures that the preacher studies his Bible carefully and that the congregation receives a balanced diet of biblical truth.

Notes

Introduction

Beginning with the Text of Scripture

Fusing Text and World

Encouraging Understanding of Scripture's Relevance

Benefits of Expository Preaching

KEY SCRIPTURES

“The Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over and join this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: ‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’ And the eunuch said to Philip, ‘About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” (Acts 8:29–35)

Going Deeper

1. *“True exposition must have some prophetic dimension that leaves the listener in no doubt that what he has just heard is from the living God and creates in him or in her at least the sneaking suspicion that the Author of this book knows them.”*

Preaching that has a “prophetic dimension” is only possible through the supernatural enabling and intervention of the Holy Spirit. Why must preachers pray that God will intervene during the preaching event in this way?

2. *“It is absolutely vital that we come to the Bible with a spirit of discovery; that we come looking for the surprises in the passage; that we come, if you like, agnostic to the text.”*

Preachers must always be learners, and in order to learn, they must have a teachable spirit. How does coming to the Bible with a spirit of discovery and eagerness to learn allow your study of the Bible to be more profitable and enjoyable?

3. *“My approach to things is that when the bird flies into the room and the whole congregation goes to the bird, then you better include the bird in your proclamation.”*

Expository preachers are committed to the consecutive exposition of Scripture. Yet pastors must not approach the task of preaching with a rigid inflexibility that is unwilling to adapt to unique circumstances. What are the benefits of adjusting your preaching schedule to address unique cultural and societal issues when they arise? What are the potential consequences of pressing on with your normal schedule during these times?

Ways to Pray

- The apostle Paul instructed his protégé, Timothy, “Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Timothy 2:7). Pray that the Lord will do as He promised and give you fresh insight into the meaning of His Word as you devote yourself to its study.
- Ask the Lord to give you a renewed passion for studying Scripture and discovering its meaning.
- The author of Hebrews writes, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (4:12). Pray that the Lord will directly address the hearts and circumstances of your listeners as you proclaim His Word.

LESSON SIX

Evangelistic Preaching – Part One

The pulpits of twenty-first-century churches reflect an absence of effective evangelistic preaching. As we endeavor to proclaim what is biblical, we must be deliberate in preaching both from the passage we're expounding and within the control of the rest of Scripture. Alistair Begg takes a helpful, candid look at his own process of study and preparation, sharing truth-filled insights about the challenges of evangelistic preaching.

Notes

Introduction

Six Observations on Evangelistic Preaching

Think Yourself Empty

Read Yourself Full

Write Yourself Clear

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’ So he told them this parable: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?’” (Luke 15:1-4)

Pray Yourself Hot

Be Yourself, Don't Preach Yourself

Going Deeper

1. *“The absence of effective evangelistic preaching from our pulpits is in some measure due to the influence of those who have drawn very clear lines of demarcation between the notion of preaching which edifies and preaching which evangelizes.”*

Alistair challenges the notion that a sermon must be focused on either edifying Christians or evangelizing non-Christians. How can you accomplish both goals within a single sermon? Why is it unhelpful to separate edifying preaching from evangelistic preaching?

2. *"I find that if I too quickly go to a commentary written by someone that I admire and trust, and particularly if that commentary is at all homiletical, I may find myself completely up the creek, in the sense that it seems to me that the person whom I admire and trust has dealt with the passage in such a way that I say, 'I can't do any better than this.'"*

Commentaries are very helpful resources for pastors, and they greatly influence one's understanding of a text of Scripture. Why is it important for pastors to study the text for themselves before having their thoughts shaped by the perspective of commentaries?

3. *"There's no chance of fire in the pews if there's an iceberg in the pulpit."*

No church member will be inspired to devote his or her life to Christ if the preacher himself seems to be bored with his material. What does cold, lifeless preaching communicate to those who listen? How can you prepare your heart so that your congregation can perceive that the truths you preach have gripped your own heart?

Ways to Pray

- Pray for the congregation that God has put under your care and for those to whom you may preach that have yet to become committed followers of Jesus Christ.
- Pray that your primary motivation in preaching may always be "that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 4:11).

LESSON SEVEN

Evangelistic Preaching – Part Two

Most pastors are well acquainted with the parable of the prodigal son, so much so that its familiarity may supersede the richness of its evangelistic message. As Alistair Begg explores the story's recognizable images and events, he highlights the essence of Christ's teaching not only in this parable but also in the stories that surround it: Drawn by the hope of mercy, we must ask ourselves where we stand regarding the mystery of the good news.

Notes

Introduction

A Crowd of “Saints” and Sinners

A Bedroom, a Bedsit, and a Pigsty

A Waiting, Watching, Loving Father

The Parable's Missing Piece

KEY SCRIPTURES

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”
(Luke 15:20-24)

Going Deeper

1. *“The one who is missing from the parable is actually the one who is telling the parable. And the one who is telling the parable is telling the parable in light of the fact that he has already set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and He will go up to Jerusalem, and He will be mocked by cruel men, and He will be scourged, and He will be nailed to a cross, and He will rise on the third day.”*

Alistair here shows how to preach the Gospel from passages of Scripture that do not explicitly mention the Gospel. Why is it important that pastors do likewise in their preaching? What potential misunderstanding about God’s forgiveness might result from failing to show how this parable relates to the Gospel?

2. *“The desire to turn from our sin is born in our hearts when we realize that in coming to the Father, we will receive mercy and forgiveness.”*

Why does preaching that emphasizes God’s mercy and forgiveness motivate repentance? Why is chastising people for their sin unlikely to encourage their repentance? How can you warn against the dangers of sin while also directing your listeners to the mercy of God?

3. *"I say to you, run, don't walk. Run! Run into the arms of God, expressed to you in His cross. Run into the embrace of God, offered to you in His kiss. Run into the refuge of His mercy."*

Alistair presses his listeners to respond to the offer of God's mercy and grace. Why is it important for pastors to not only explain the contents of the Gospel but also to call hearers to respond to the message? What might dissuade a preacher from calling sinners to respond to the Gospel in this way?

Ways to Pray

- Pray that God's eagerness to forgive sinners will soften your heart toward those who do not know God. Ask the Lord to protect you from a legalistic spirit that does not rejoice in the salvation of sinners.
- Ask the Lord to give you insight into how to clearly preach the Gospel from texts that do not explicitly explain the Gospel.
- Remember that you are the son that abandoned his Father but was mercifully welcomed home. Pray that God's great mercy toward you will encourage you to have a heart of love and compassion for those who have not yet run to the Father.

LESSON EIGHT

Gospel Ministry — Part One

The message we hear from the pulpit may sound compelling and helpfully relevant. All too often, though, it's also disconnected from the fundamental message of the Bible. A true Gospel ministry should be centered on proclaiming the story of the “great exchange”: Christ paid the penalty for sin on behalf of His people and credited His righteousness to their account. Alistair Begg reminds us that the call to believe in this good news should be the continual, passionate plea of every pastor.

Notes

Introduction

“This Ministry”

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.” (2 Corinthians 4:1-7)

Going Deeper

1. *“In declaring a Gospel to others that I am seeking to live by myself, I’m reminding myself again and again that the Lord Jesus has achieved all that is necessary for our justification.”*

When you continually preach the Gospel, it not only benefits your hearers but also benefits you. What are some of the benefits that you as the preacher experience?

2. *“Some of us are guilty of urging people to receive the benefits of the Gospel or warning them about the perils of ignoring the Gospel without ever actually announcing the Gospel. And the distinction between the message and the demand to believe it is absolutely vital.”*

Preachers may easily urge people to respond to the Gospel without having first explained it because they assume that their hearers already know it. Why must you never assume that your hearers know the Gospel? What are some of the consequences that might result from urging people to respond to the Gospel without having first explained it?

3. *“We try to persuade men.’ Do you try and persuade anybody?”*

What is your response to Alistair’s question? How can you as a preacher faithfully attempt to persuade others to believe in Christ without manipulating them into a response?

Ways to Pray

- Make Alistair’s prayer your own: “We want desperately to know You, to commune with You, to have the words that come from our lips increasingly be the overflow of a life that is in touch with You, so that in doing our best to understand and to study and to think, we don’t become some kind of theological pundits, but rather, we feel ourselves compelled by Your grace to tell out this wonderful news.”
- The apostle Paul asked others to pray for him that God would give him words so that he may open his mouth boldly in his proclamation of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:18-19). Pray that you likewise would be given the words to speak so that your proclamation of the Gospel is both clear and bold.
- Pray that the members of your church will be effective witnesses for Christ in their various spheres of influence and that more and more non-Christians will be in your midst to hear the Gospel preached during each of your church’s services.

LESSON NINE

Preaching Evangelistic Sermons

Evangelistic preaching is hard work, and pastors sometimes avoid the task because it is inconvenient or unpopular. As Alistair Begg explains, however, it is vitally important that the cross of Christ is consistently presented and people are urged to respond in faith. It is this message that speaks to our greatest need. We must not allow concern for popularity or theological predispositions to displace faithfulness to the Gospel message.

Notes

Introduction

The Cultural Challenges

The Theological Challenges

The Nature of Evangelistic Preaching

KEY SCRIPTURES

“Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”
(Romans 10:1)

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:9-14)

Going Deeper

1. *“The Gospel message is not a popular message. ... If to any extent we have bought into the notion that our greatest influence will be when we are popular and when we are able to popularize things, when we are accepted and when we’re able to make things amenable and acceptable, then almost inevitably we’re going to have to step away from this kind of evangelistic preaching.”*

It is natural to want to be liked, but this good desire can be problematic if it takes precedence over faithfulness to the Gospel. The Gospel is offensive to man’s pride, and every preacher will be tempted to soften its message to make it more acceptable for those who hear it. Why is a desire to be popular incompatible with Gospel ministry?

2. *“Part of the challenge in evangelistic preaching, I think, today is that irrespective of the congregation, there’s a lot of hard work to be done before we can actually advance the cause.”*

Here Alistair refers to the fact that many in our culture will not understand the Gospel because they are lacking many of the basic convictions that make the Gospel comprehensible. Preachers must contextualize the Gospel so that listeners in their specific context will understand it. What are some basic biblical concepts and beliefs that those in your context are lacking that you will need to explain before they can understand the Gospel?

3. *“The only hope we have, brothers, is that God speaks through this book—that actually, when God’s Word is rightly read and taught, God speaks. Absent that conviction, I could never come back into a pulpit again. And I should never come back into a pulpit again.”*

How does the conviction that God speaks through His Word to call men to Himself encourage you to persevere in preaching the Gospel even when you do not see results?

Ways to Pray

- The apostle Paul said, “Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10). Pray that the Lord will help you to have this same conviction.
- Pray that when you preach the Gospel to non-Christians, they will come to realize that God’s Word is “living and active” (Hebrews 4:12).
- Make this prayer your own: “Help us to get up and get out. And give us a boldness that’s not about our personality, but it is about the truth of the Bible, the loveliness of Christ, and the expansive call of the Gospel to men and women in their need.”

EPILOGUE

Exposition and Evangelism

Key Takeaways

Answer the following questions based on what you learned from the sermons in this volume.

1. What are the different substitutes for expository preaching that Alistair mentions? How can you avoid the pitfalls of these various models in your preaching?

2. What are the benefits of expository preaching? Are any of those benefits absent from your own preaching?

3. Why has there been an absence of evangelistic preaching in recent years, and how can it be recovered?

Further Reading and Study

- *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* by R. Albert Mohler Jr.
- *Thoughts on Preaching: Being Contributions to Homiletics* by James W. Alexander
- *The Craft of Sermon Construction* by W. E. Sangster
- *Preaching the Living Word: Addresses from the Evangelical Ministry Assembly* by David Jackman
- *Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless* by C. John Miller



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