

THE CASE FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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To preach the Word is to allow the Word to do the preaching. Consider:

1. How much time is utilized in reading the word throughout the sermon?
2. How often is the particular Bible statement making the point repeated?
3. Illustrations are used to illuminate the Bible phrase being preached.
4. It is a matter of God's Word being pre-eminent, versus "my words."

Douglas White says that Expository Preaching prevailed to the thirteenth century. Then, "The chief characteristic of the period which we call the Reformation was the return (to expositional preaching)" (p.32).

This makes sense--as the "church" corrupted its doctrine, expository preaching became too revealing and convicting, so they turned to textual preaching. The Reformation, seeking to restore Truth, revived the method.

Expository Preaching is neither 1) Running commentary, nor, 2) lengthy reading with anecdotes filling the gaps.

ADVANTAGES OF EXPOSITORY PREACHING

5. God's Word working most efficiently
6. Bibles are open and used
7. People's knowledge increasing
8. Books of Bible develop continuity
9. People learn methods and principles of interpreting Scripture.
10. Diplomacy and Justification Established for handling delicate and pertinent subjects.
11. Balance of subjects preached.

TOPICAL, TEXTUAL, RUNNING COMMENTARY AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING METHODS COMPARED.

Distinguish between them.

TOPICAL--Preacher determines what he wishes to preach and searches the Scriptures for supporting texts or passages.

Examples:

EARTHQUAKES - When God Shakes the Earth
Hebrews 12:26

Earthquake of:

1. Condemnation (Exodus 20)
2. Redemption (Matthew 27)
3. Resurrection (Matthew. 28)
4. Salvation (Acts 16)
5. Revelation (Revelation 6 -19)

Or,

The Grace of God - Ephesians 1

1. The Excellency of Grace
2. The Examples of Grace
3. The Exercise of Grace

TEXTUAL--Taking an idea or subject from a verse and, even if ignoring the context and interpretation thereof, searching the pages of Scripture and human wisdom for material to preach the theme.

Examples:

JOY THAT HAS MUSCLE
Nehemiah 8:10

- I. Joy, not Sadness
- II. Joy of the Lord, not Satan
- III. Joy for Strength, not selfishness
 - A. In Soul-winning
 - B. In Service
 - C. For Separation

Or,

A REAL CLOSE SHAVE
Isaiah 7:20
A Razor...

- I. Must be Sharp
- II. Must be Possessed
- III. Must be Used
- IV. Must be Clean

The "RUNNING COMMENTARY" Method:

An exegeted passage is studied verse by verse, without a central theme; words, ideas, phrases and statements are commented upon independently, and sometimes chased through the scriptures and compared. Mt. 24 lends itself to this method well. Can be a good method for Sunday school, or other classroom setting.

The EXPOSITORY Method. Look at this comparison:

I Samuel 26, considered—

Topically, the subject would be, "Bible Fools."

Textually, in verse 21, it is "Playing the Fool."

But with the Exposition method, using the entire chapter, it becomes a matter of approach. Take the passage and let it speak. We discover the theme is not "fools," but, verse 21, "harming one of God's Anointed Ones". Hence, we build a sermon, entitled and constructed this way:

TOUCH NOT GOD'S ANNOINTED

I Samuel 18:8 - 26:1-11

We must not touch God's Preachers. Even When (They are):

I. Vicious (1-3). Note his attempts to kill:

A. He Cast a Javelin at David (19:10)

Note: 18:11

B. He Cast a Javelin at Jonathan (20:33)

C. He Condemned Ahimelech to Death (22:16)

II. Vulnerable (4-7)

A. Spared in En-gedi (24:6)

B. Spared in Wilderness of Ziph (26:9)

III. Vengeance is Deserved (8-11)

A. Reject the Prodding of Companions (11)

B. Rely on the Providence of God (10)

C.

Conclusion:

See Braga, p. 54 for excellent comparative note.

An expository Sermon has seven parts:

1. Title

2. Reference (Exegeted)

3. Introduction

4. Proposition

5. Outline (Discussion)

6. Illustrations

7. Conclusion

Develop them, in sermon preparation, in this order:

1. Reference

2. Proposition

3. Outline

4. Illustrations

5. Conclusion

6. Introduction

7. Title

I. REFERENCE.

Braga, p. 52, makes point that while Exegesis is the heart of the preparing of Expository Sermon, the purpose of the same is not to exegete the passage. This is an excellent point. Expository preaching is for declaring one truth—the central truth of the passage. It is not for teaching all the truth in found in the passage. That can be done effectively in a "running commentary," in a class room setting. There, the objective is to help the student gain Bible knowledge.

One may begin the expository sermon preparation with selection of a subject/topic. This is not the preferred method, however. If such an approach is used, the preacher must be content, having found a passage that deals with the subject as its main theme, to preach only that passage and limit himself to what that passage says about the subject. Alternatively, a series could be preached on the selected subject, each message being separate and distinct from the others, built on the exegeted passage alone.

Proper Bible expository preaching is to seek what passage to preach, discover the interpretation and theme of the passage, establish a proposition, and build the message around it.

For it to be truly expository, there must be enough verses involved to include enough material to establish the theme, and support the theme in outline form with points and sub-points. Otherwise the sermon borders on textual preaching. (Note Braga, p. 54.)

The passage may involve a few verses, a whole chapter, or even a whole book. The treatment of very extended portions must be viewed with an eye toward preaching it within the scope of several sermons.

But, therein is the beauty of it all. Ephesians 4-6 certainly has the theme of "The Christian Walk." A "one-night-stand" kind of message could treat all three chapters in one message, using the "Walks of Unity (4:1-16), Purity (4:17-29), Love (5:1-7), Light (5:8-17), Submission (5:18-6:9), with sub-points of Submission to the Holy Spirit (18-20), Saints (20), Spouses (22-33), Parents (6:1-4), and Employers/Employees (6:9), and the Walk of Warfare (6:10-20). But, an Evangelist could spend a whole week of meetings preaching this

passage as a series of expository messages. Whereas a Pastor could take weeks or months to do the same. It is all expository, however, if developed and preached according to the principles we are setting forth.

The prime principle is to seek for the passage to be preached, first. In your daily Bible reading exercises, in a preaching service while you listen to another preacher, or perhaps in the experiences of life, as you are tuned into Heaven's frequency, the Holy Spirit will signal your mind concerning some given portion of His Word (It is marvelous to experience such working!). As you then begin to study and meditate on that passage, He will use His Word to give you the sermon theme/proposition. Then merely build the outline and sermon around it--from the passage that God has given to you.

II. PROPOSITION.

Definition: ONE DECLARATIVE SENTENCE, BOTH STATING THE THEME OF THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE, AND ESTABLISHING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE SERMON.

Note Braga's definition of a "proposition," on page 113. For purposes of this study, the first part will reign supreme: "...a principle: a rule which governs right conduct...." Someone said, "No teaching takes place until a life is changed." A Biblical approach to preaching is for the purpose of changing lives, not just the imparting of information. Hence, propositions developed in our class will be in the form of a challenge, or requirement: The attitude of necessity--an imperative.

Beginning phrases, as "we ought," or, "we must," will be widely used. The objective is to preach to move the hearers to respond (not, react) to the sermon. They must then clearly know what action they are required by the Lord, according to the passage preached, to take. The proposition, as described, supported by the outline and discussion (as we will consider later), will provide that knowledge. Powerful preaching (Holy Spirit power!!) will provide the needed impetus to act.

Generally, the proposition will require a transitional word, as "who," "how," "why," "when," "where," "because," etc. Then, the major outline will answer that interrogative.

The student should familiarize himself with page 114 of our text, the section entitled: "THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROPOSITION."

III. OUTLINES

A sermon, well outlined, is about as rare as finding a pearl in an oyster. A good sermon outline will increase the effectiveness of a sermon, in a way similar to the effect of a home's exterior, to the quality of the house. The sermon outline is not the quality, but when well done, is inherent in a quality sermon.

One does not preach outlines! One, rather, preaches the sermon, utilizing the outline to make it powerful and effective. The exterior of a house may be beautiful, but is of little consequence if the quality of life inside is lacking.

If exegesis is the foundation, the reference the location, and the proposition the purpose of the sermon house, then the outline is the structure. It is but framework. It give form (shape), and rigidity (strength), but is not a sermon house. It is of tremendous importance, but is not the sum total.

Do not construct a perfect outline to impress the hearers! Build it rather to give strength, identifiable shape, and a framework for a powerful, orderly, and easily discernable life-changing delivery of the sermon.

The student, by this time, has discerned that building a sermon is comparable to the method of building a house.

The outline is indeed parallel to the framework of a house. One must build it step-by-step, piece by piece, in each one's respective place, in progressive order. A builder cannot construct the framework, unless the foundation has been laid. Neither can he frame up a window, or doorway, unless the frame itself has reached a designated state of progress. He must begin at a designated point, and progress to completion. Such comparisons are seemingly endless, and cannot be exhausted here. It is left to the student to visualize those comparisons, from this point onward, and apply them.

It now remains to consider the content of a proper outline.

The beauty of the expository method is in extracting the outline from the text passage. The topical and textual method draws upon the imagination of the sermonizer, to imitate the proverbial man who got on his horse, and rode off in all directions. Such can preach any pet peeve, or ride any hobbyhorse that suits his fancy. He can ignore any subject that might be beyond his range of knowledge, stir up a hornet's nest within the church, or that he, for whatever reason, or excuse, just does not want to deal with. But the expository method finds the outline ready made, inherent within the passage. One searches which way the Bible author is going, and goes with him. It is then a matter of transforming it into words easily discerned by the hearer, in the setting in which one will be ministering.

Examples may be more valuable than further dissertation from the author.

The preacher is studying the Word, meditating, with his heart burdened for an upcoming opportunity for preaching. Praying includes the earnest desire to preach what God would direct. The Holy Spirit impresses the heart and mind of the preacher concerning some particular passage. The preacher may or may not readily discern what it is that our Lord would accomplish through this portion of His Word. That is not as important, as trusting God that He has led, and the preacher has found His will.

Suppose the passage impressed upon the preacher's heart is John, Chapter 3. The first thing to do is to read it, meditate upon it, and exegete it. That is, to mine from the passage the jewels found therein. Do word studies, especially from the original languages, and comparing them to other passages in which the respective word is used. Exegesis is digging out of the passage the meanings contained therein. It is the opposite of what is too often apparent, particularly where false doctrine is inherent, that is, "salting the mine." The preacher must not go to the passage looking for some truth, and even attempting to force it into the context. Rather, let the passage speak, and then preach it!

When exegesis is accomplished, find the main theme declared. In this passage, obviously, it concerns the new birth, though the passage is not a theological study of the new birth, or a polemic against opposing positions. It is rather a solid declaration of the necessity thereof. What then is the logical proposition? It is simply, to put it in the form one might use in the sermon, "You must be born again." Or, it may be stated, "You must be sure you have been born again." Now one might tend to state it this way, "It is necessary for a person to get born again." However, that is more cumbersome than the former statements. It takes longer to "say," and so is inherently less effective. Neither is it as direct and personal, as the former.

Choosing the best way to state it (understand that "best" for this sermon, may not be the same as "best," for the next time you preach it), will also be affected by what question you choose to ask. The question, in turn, is determined by the intent of the passage. Is the Lord, in John 3, primarily speaking of "Who?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?", or "How?" a person must be born again. That determination will greatly aid in the exact way to phrase the proposition.

The Lord may be concerned primarily with "Whom?" For it is Nicodemus, "The Master Teacher in Israel" (verse 10, See the Greek Text). If the master teacher in Israel must experience a new birth, surely it is required of all others. One of the other questions could also be chosen. Just because "Who?" may be the primary one, it isn't necessary to go that route. After all, you can come back later and preach the same passage again, to the same congregation, and choose a different question to answer. For, it may also be that "Why?" is the primary question, as indicated by verses 3 and 5. It is a determination that the one planning to preach the passage must make, according to his specific purposes.

Now it remains to answer the question. This will establish the outline.
Example:

Proposition: You must be born again.

Question: Who?

Answer (Outline):

- A. The Natural Man (4)
- B. The Educated Man (10)
- C. The Religious Man (2, 10)

Now, this is a very simplistic outline. It is in its most basic form, and it is expository. (It can be developed further, as will be examined later.) The passage is the sermon, but the whole passage is not preached. While many wonderful facts, and challenges, lie within these verses, the purpose is not to exegete the passage. Rather, having exegeted the passage in preparation, a sermon is preached within the passage, built upon the proposition. Only deal with those statements, verses, and facts, which develop the proposition. Neither is the sermon preached "from" the passage. Bible preachers do not preach "from the Bible." They "preach the Bible." Preaching the expository sermon is tantamount to preaching the passage—but only the content of the passage that supports and develops the proposition.

Frankly, this is why many preachers cannot control the time element in preaching.

Instead of establishing a starting point, setting a goal, and preaching only the content of the passage that accomplishes their purposes, they stray away in attempting to preach every powerful truth they come across. Contextual facts may need to be presented in order to set the stage for the sermon production. When that is accomplished, preach the proposition.

For instance, in the John 3:1-15 passage (good exegesis will show, from the Greek Text, that verses 1-15 comprise one paragraph), the matter of the title, "Kingdom of God" (verses 3, 5), likely would be a profitable teaching point. This would be true especially if the

"question" being answered was "Why?" The "Kingdom of God," by INTERPRETATION, is the literal kingdom of which our Lord offered to Israel during His earthly ministry. Due to their rejection of their King, it is now in postponement to a future date. By APPLICATION, however, for the Church Program, it would be equivalent to the requirements for one seeking entrance into Heaven. This explanation would be a necessary part of preparing the hearers to understand, and receive, the sermon itself.

An example of an unnecessary "rabbit trail," cumbersome and detracting from the propositional preaching method, would be a more extensive treatment of verses 3 and 5. Instead of briefly explaining the basics of the distinctions noted above, the preacher would get involved in some hermeneutical, didactic dissertation. He might spend ten or fifteen minutes tracing the distinction between the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Heaven throughout the scriptures. That would be a great Bible study in a Sunday school class, or Wednesday Night Bible study time. It, however, would be detrimental to the purposes established for the expository sermon. It is out of place at this point. It is detracting from the preaching of the proposition. It is time consuming, causing the preacher to have to preach too long (Remember, the mind can only absorb what the "seat" can endure). Compensation will either take the form of leaving out one of the major points, not adequately developing one point, or dragging the sermon on and on unto exhaustion for the hearers.

Propositional preaching is preaching for results. One noted educator said words to this effect: "No learning takes place until a life is changed." If the listeners stop listening, they will leave the same, if not worse off, than when they came. Whatever deters the preacher from accomplishing the goal (i.e. obedience to the proposition), must be kept from the presentation.

Let us consider an expository sermon from this same passage, John 3:1-15, using the same proposition, but this time, answering the question "Why?"

Proposition: Ye Must Be Born Again!

Why?

Because: The Natural Man Cannot Change (6)

A. A Sinner Cannot Ascend to Heaven (13)

B. Jesus Said So (3, 5)

The outline clearly answers the question, suggested by the proposition. However, the outline has no symmetry; lacks balance in its construction. It does not appeal to the hearing. To correct it, one possibility is by using alliteration. By definition, alliteration is:

The repetition of the same sounds or of the same kinds of sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables, as in "*on scrolls of silver snowy sentences*" (Hart Crane). Modern alliteration is predominantly consonantal; certain literary traditions, such as Old English verse, also alliterate using vowel sounds.

Many preachers do not like this instrument, but the use of it will correct the above complaints. To alliterate the outline, we might change it thusly:

You must be born again!

Why?

Because of:

- A. The Immutability of Man's Nature (6)
- B. The Impossibility of Man Ascending to Heaven (13)
- C. The Imperative Character of Christ's Statement (3, 5)

The points in both outlines are identical, but much more pleasant to the hearing, and much easier to preach, in the latter one. However, the symmetry of the outline is lacking. In points I & II, we have an "I" word, followed by the preposition "of." The alliteration even extends to an "M" word. In the third Main point, however, the flow is disrupted. Only the "I" word is alliterated. Beyond that, the phrase is out of character (no pun intended) with the first two.

The particular congregation slated to hear the sermon, can also influence the outline. Imagine using the words "Immutability" and "Imperative" at the local Rescue Mission, in contrast to preaching in a Bible college chapel service. For the former:

Ye Must Be Born Again!

Why?

Because:

- A. We are Sinners by Birth (6)
- B. We Cannot Devise a Way to Heaven (13)
- C. We Dare Not Ignore the Word of Christ (3, 5)

Here, only the first word follows the alliterative form. That is okay. Beyond that, there is a logical, forceful, effective progression of thought and development, in the outline. The emphasis now has changed, in the third point, from, "Christ said it: That settles it," to, "We must do what He said." It is the difference in a father telling his child that he must obey "because daddy said so," and in teaching the child to be obedient to what dad says. The outline also just flows better, in this present form.

This outline will preach, powerfully, in any congregation of any age, ethnic, or education level. It is "keeping the cookies on the lower shelf." It is simple enough for the uneducated audience to grasp it, while profound enough to avoid insulting the scholarly hearers.

Further development of the outline is possible, by dividing the Main points into Sub-points. The purpose of the sermon, and the length of time available to preach it, can factor into this. One can always develop the sermon outline to the fullest, but only use what is appropriate for the occasion.

This author has seen outlines something like this (not considering the content, but the form alone):

- A. Let's go there (Xxxxx)
 - 1. Because we need to.

2. (A. necessitates at least B.)

B. XXXXXXXX

This is erroneous in form. Anytime one divides something, the thing divided ends up in at least two parts. With the main point being:

C. We Are Sinners by Birth (6)

One would look at the passage to see what is said further therein, about that matter.

Some things are readily apparent in context. Many things might be preached here, by including additional, supporting scriptures, gathered from throughout the Word of God. But in context, adhering to the principle of preaching only what is within the passage, these facts are readily apparent: One, the flesh is in contrast to the spirit; Two, the flesh will always be flesh, and Three, the flesh cannot inherit what is reserved for the spirit. Taking those three things, and dividing the main point, we might state sub- points thusly:

A. We Are Sinners by Birth (6)

B. The Flesh is Condemned

C. The Flesh is Unchangeable

D. The Flesh is Inferior

With further effort, and the use of a good Thesaurus, you might find good alliteration for the last word of the each sub-point, respectively. In such an endeavor, never sacrifice clarity and simplicity, for the sake of alliteration.

Having established the sub-points within the context, the preacher may refer to additional references for further support.

The proper itemizing of the points uses this form: (notice every feature—spacing, alignment, capitalization, vertical line spacing, indentions, underlining, parentheses, etc.)

Ye Must Be Born Again!

Why?

Because:

A. We are Sinners by Birth (6)

1. The Flesh is Condemned

2. The Flesh is Unchangeable

3. The Flesh is Inferior

B. We Cannot Devise a Way to Heaven (13)

1. Xxxx

2. Xxxx

a. Xxxx

b. Xxxx

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

3. Xxxx

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

C. We Dare not Ignore the Word of Christ (3, 5)

1. We will never Behold Heaven (3)

2. We will never Be in Heaven (5)

Even further division is possible, by constructing sub, sub-points, as in the example above, beginning with Arabic Capital Letter B.

If more than one verse is involved in a point, they should be listed specifically. If sub-divided, then place each specific verse in parenthesis at the end of each sub-point. Every point must have a foundational scripture reference! In some case, where only one verse is divided, the sub-points may be referenced using (6a), (6b), etc., as is appropriate. In the case of verse 6, the nature of it requires no listing of references after A., B., and C. The absence of additional verses in I. assumes verse 6 is the basis for the sub-points.

For reinforcement, here is an additional, partial outline example:

We must Know our Relation to Christ is Genuine.

How? By—

A. The Test of Faith (1:1-11)

Examples of Abraham, Job.

Are we (Experiencing):

1. Gaining Patience? (3)

2. Growing toward Perfection? (4)

3. Gracious Provision? :

a. Wisdom (5-8)

b. Exaltation (9-11)

c. Reward (12)

B. The Test of Character (1:13-25)

1. Source of Sin (13, 14). Not God, but our heart. God gives:

a. Good Gifts (17)

b. New Birth (18)

2. Process of Sinning (15)
3. Warning Not to Sin (16)
4. Safeguards Against Sinning (19-25)
 - a. Be a Learner (19-21)
 - b. Be a Doer (22-25)

etc.

It remains, now, for the siding and roofing materials to be nailed onto the frame we have constructed, in our sermon house. That, of course, is the content of the sermon: What we intend to preach (say). Don't write out the content, for one, against the temptation to read your sermon. Rather, the outline should be so clear and effective, as to guide you into the meat content of present bare bone. The second reason is that the Holy Spirit might guide you in what to preach (say), and what NOT to say! In preparation, pray about what to say. Spend time contemplating what to preach, as concerns each point. In the pulpit, let the outline spur you mind as to what you were planning to say. In preaching, allow the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind what He wants you to say.

Now we are builder apprentices, let us go on to perfection, to become wise master builders of sermons.

IV. ILLUSTRATIONS

In the construction of the sermon house, the framework is completed, and completely covered over. It is dark inside. You have the light—you have studied and prepared. But your congregation is in the dark. You just let some light in.

Artificial light, as we might say, is okay. It will make the inside of our sermon house visible. Natural light, however, is superior in quality and effectiveness.

You can enter into lengthy explanations, theological dissertations, and comparing of different views—and these all can be excellent. Artificial light is effective. But natural light comes through illustrations!

The preacher needs to cut holes in the covering, called windows, to let some light in. These openings are called windows, and they do let the light in—if large enough, and not diffused. Sermon windows are illustrations. These proverbial thousand word windows are a most effective way to let your listeners in on your secrets.

Principles for illustrating:

- A. If the illustration is a personal experience, say so, but use such sparingly. Constant and continuous references to "me, and my family," may effectively let light in. However, if the people are offended, or get a wrong impression about your pride in your grandchildren, they can quickly shut their eyes to the light. They can become like the fellow of whom the late Dr. Charles Stevens used to speak. The story goes: One fellow challenged another that he would give him a dollar, if the challenged could show the challenger a penny, in the next 60 seconds. The man began searching his pockets for a penny, found one, yanked it out and held for his benefactor to see. He did it in less than 60 seconds. But he didn't get the dollar. Why? The Challenger had his eyes shut tight. He replied, "You can't show me a penny, cause I won't look!"

No illustration is effective if you offend the congregation, and they refuse to listen.

This somewhat subtle insertion of the above illustration is also demonstrative of the power of illustrations. The illustration makes the assertion, i.e. "they can quickly shut their eyes to the light," very understandable.

B. Use real life, timely, and current illustrations. Experiences that happened years ago tend to make one wonder if nothing is happening in the preacher's life, currently, worth telling of. Historical anecdotes are fine. Just stay balanced.

C. Don't risk offending. Blonde jokes and funny stories downing women may be humorous, and evoke laughter. If the women, however, are offended, you have lost much of your audience. Know your people, and know what you can say and what is best left unsaid.

News events, community happenings, anecdotes, illustrations from books may all be used effectively. However, if the news event involves a member of your congregation, it may be wise to leave it untold, as an illustration.

D. Tell the story accurately. In my relating of the story above, attributed to Dr. Stevens, I may well have misstated the facts of the story, in relation to how he told it. It may not have been a dollar. It may have been five dollars. It may not have been 60 seconds, it may have been a longer time, or shorter. If some of the facts are uncertain—say so. Get the facts straight. When you have done your best to get the facts straight, but some uncertainty remains, then tell the people that you are telling the story as best you remember it.

I once used an illustration in a class, in Bible College, on sermon preparation. I told it for a fact. Actually, I wasn't sure of some of the details, so I "winged" it. The professor just happened to have read that same story in the newspaper, months (I think) before. He did remember enough to know that I had misstated some facts. He called my hand on it.

E. Illustrations, used properly, are effective. Was not the illustration above, concerning the man closing his eyes to the showing of the penny, effective? That illustration is indeed worth ten thousand words of explanation.

Using our outline of John 3, here is how to incorporate illustrations into the sermon outline. First, memorize the illustration. Know it thoroughly, so that just a key word will spur your mind to tell it, and know what to tell. Then, in the outline, note the key words, in italics under A. 1.

A. Ye Must Be Born Again!

Why?

Because:

1. We are Sinners by Birth (6)

a. The Flesh is Condemned

Condemned House

b. The Flesh is Unchangeable

c. The Flesh is Inferior

2. We Cannot Devise a Way to Heaven (13)

a. Xxxx

b. Xxxx

1) Xxxx

2) Xxxx

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

c. Xxxx

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

3. We Dare not Ignore the Word of Christ (3, 5)

a. We will never Behold Heaven (3)

b. We will never Be in Heaven (5)

(If handwriting the sermon, draw a rectangular box around the words, to easily identify them as the key to an illustration.)

"Condemned house" reminds me of the illustration, and that this is the point in the sermon delivery, to tell the illustration. The illustration is that of the city condemning a run down house in an old neighborhood. The foundation has crumbled, part of the house has fallen, and the wood is rotten and eaten up with termites. It is beyond renovation. The only option is replacement. The telling of this illustration is not the same as the recounting of it here in print. Tell it with emotion, conviction, and clarity. Then make the comparison to the fleshly nature of man. Our flesh is under the condemnation of God, and is not salvageable. It can only die. Only regeneration, a new (replacement) birth can save us.

Most textual and topical sermons are filled with illustrations. They become the heart of the sermon. Illustrations are not the sermon. They are windows, letting in light, that the hearers may readily understand the sermon.

They are a tool, not the end.

Sources for illustrations abound. Books contain them, organized both by subject, and by scripture reference. Online web sites contain sources for them. The wise preacher will keep a notebook of illustrations, based on personal experiences, and current events.

A clear example is that which occurred just prior to the completing of this composition. Hurricane Charley was rampaging Northward into the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, off Florida's West coast. Forecasters warned the residents of heavily populated Tampa Bay Area, in Florida, to evacuate. They did, and fled to Orlando, to escape the storm's wrath. Problem is, just south of Fort Myers, the storm bobbed, then turned to the

Northeast. It devastated that region, avoiding Tampa Bay altogether, and headed toward Orlando.

What an illustration warning against the abundance of erroneous preaching in our day. Folks are told that there is no judgment ahead. They are told, in order to escape judgment, to flee to church membership, baptism, and so on. As the weather forecasters were wrong, so are these false prophets. Only God knew the true course Charley would take. Only God's Word is dependable to learn how to escape the wrath of God, ahead. What a powerful illustration for a sermon on salvation. The preacher should have a copy of the story cited, either in hard copy, or saved in computer. This will help insure the accuracy of your facts, and provide proof of the accuracy of your story, if challenged.

V. CONCLUSION

The conclusion is abused in sermon preparation and delivery. In preparation, it is often ignored. Note the sermons preached, where the preacher obviously does not know how to close out his sermon. He did not prepare before hand, how to do it.

Do not introduce new material in the conclusion. Do not read new scripture, in the conclusion.

Do not begin preaching something in the conclusion that you forgot to say in the sermon.

The Conclusion should summarize the sermon, and "drive it home." One might say, "We have seen from the Bible that we must be born again. "The new birth is necessary because of our sin nature, our inability to please God, and the clear command of Christ Jesus. "Ladies and gentlemen, we cannot escape if we don't come God's way." That is enough. Do not preach the sermon again. Restate it, simply and concisely. Then render a good illustration to reinforce it. Only one illustration is needed. The conclusion should be short, concise, and powerful. Give the invitation. Note the example below:

Ye Must Be Born Again!

Why?

Because:

1. We are Sinners by Birth (6)
 - a. The Flesh is Condemned
 - b. The Flesh is Unchangeable
 - c. The Flesh is Inferior
2. We Cannot Devise a Way to Heaven (13)
 - a. Xxxx
 - b. Xxxx
 - 1) Xxxx

2) Xxxx

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

c. Xxxx

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

3. We Dare not Ignore the Word of Christ (3, 5)

a. We will never Behold Heaven (3)

b. We will never Be in Heaven (5)

(This line space is intentional—note the pattern)

CONCLUSION:

Note: Restate the main points.

Newborn baby

VI. INTRODUCTION

I trust the order of preparation of the sermon outline is obvious. The introduction is left to the end, because the preacher can't know how to introduce his sermon, until he has the sermon prepared.

You know what you plan to preach. You know where you will begin, where you will end, and how to get from the beginning to the end. The sermon outline will guide you in that, with the Holy Spirit empowering, and maybe making some changes on the way.

The first minute or two after the preacher stands to preach, are the most important minutes he will expend. He must convince, and lead the hearers, to hear. If you cannot get the audience to listen to you; if they are wiggling, yawning, sleeping or daydreaming, it will all be for naught.

How shall the preacher get their attention? The key is in a good, well prepared and presented, Introduction.

One of the most effective methods used currently, in radio preaching, is when the first words spoken in the beginning of the program, are something like: "What if you looked up, right now, and saw the Lord Jesus descending to Earth?" Or, "The most important thing you will do today, is...", and the statement is completed according to the planned broadcast sermon. This method is a real "attention-getter." Its design is to make one want to stay tuned and hear what the speaker is going to say about those subjects. This is exactly what the public speaker must do. Not this precise method, but "get their attention, and create a desire in their hearts and mind, to "stay tuned" and listen to you. These are the sole purposes of the introduction.

Whatever joke you may tell; whatever greetings you may deliver; whatever announcements you may make—get them all behind you prior to delivering your introduction.

Read the scripture first, then pray, as you choose to do. Deliver the introduction, then preach! Do not place anything in between the introduction and the delivery of the sermon. Personal preference can interfere with this method. Only you can determine if the scripture and praying should follow the introduction and that by experience.

The preacher must labor to find a way to create in the hearts and minds of the congregation, the desire to listen to his sermon.

This will not wash: After reading the scripture, and praying, the preacher says "Today, I'm going to preach on depression." Some of the congregation will yawn as though they are in no danger of ever experiencing such; others will say that they know somebody they wish were here to hear, but that is their problem. Off to sleep they go. A few will perk up to listen, knowing they stand in need of God's answer for their depression. You immediately have gained the attention of some, and lost most of the others.

This will work: By using statistics, anecdotes, illustrations, show the seriousness of the malady; demonstrate that all are in danger of it; created a desire for to know how God can deliver them, and or their friends and family, and give the victory. Don't ever say something on the order or "Today, I am going to preach on...." Especially, don't say "Today, and for the next several weeks, I'm going to preach on...". This latter statement means, in all probability, that you have not adequately prepared, and you don't know how to condense it down into one sermon.

After you have established the importance of your subject, by suggestion—not by naming it: After you have their attention, and interest, it is time to state the title of the sermon, and being preaching it.

VII. TITLE

Now that you have all the above in place, it is time to give the sermon a title.

You can call it, "How to overcome Depression." To do so is to immediately give away the subject of your sermon, and risk losing some. Better, would be "God's Victory in Your Time of Trouble." The audience will not know that you are going to preach about depression. The title could refer to that, or financial trouble, or domestic trouble, or a hundred other problems. As you deliver the sermon, they will discern, in the scriptures, that depression is the subject at hand. You can come back the next week and preach the same title, but preach a passage that talks about some other problem. This could continue for weeks. The key is that they won't know which one is coming at them today. They will be eager to find out.

Here is a sermon title: "Seventeen ways in which a man can manage to mess up his life in the world, and regret it in the world to come." However, it is not a good one. It is too lengthy. It mentions a specific number. Minds begin calculating: If he preaches one way to mess up, per 5 minutes, we will be here for 85 minutes. Add the introduction, the conclusion, and the invitation time.... You may as well close before you get started. They are lost to your ministry.

This might be a good form for the title of a theological dissertation, in Seminary, but it will not work for a sermon.

In Contrast: Sin. Neither is this good. It tells the listener nothing about the coming oration. It creates no interest in hearing the sermon. It will not compete with the prospects of the would be hearer's anxiety over whether his ball team is going to win in the afternoon, or the prospects of a Sunday afternoon boat ride on the lake.

The catchy title: "Seven Ducks in a Muddy Stream." Now, that creates some interest. It is a title someone created for the story of Naaman, in II Kings, Chapter Five. Only the individual preacher can determine if

such a title is a suitable device for his ministry.

The "How To" Title, as How to Know Heaven is your Eternal Home. To preach this title effectively, one must know his congregation. Are the mostly professing believers? Is there any doubt that the majority are genuine? If so, and if not, then if approached as a message of assurance, it may be effective. Preached in an assembly of mostly lost people, it could be powerful.

The title needs to create interest and desire for the sermon. Whatever you do, avoid the common practice of saying, "If I had a title..." or, "If I were going to title this message..." "I would call it such and such. That again indicates a lack of preparation, or perhaps, a lack of clarity on the preacher's part as to what he is going to preach.

PUTTING THE SERMON TO PAPER:

Using a pencil, write out the sermon on a full sheet of paper. Write down a point (main point, sub-point, etc.). Write it again below it, stating it differently. Erase, or line through the ones you reject, after getting all points of that particular section written down in various forms.

Place the illustration keys in their proper location.

When all the drafting of the outline is completed, and it is precisely as you desire it to be. Transfer it to a new sheet of paper.

I recommend that you take a sheet of 8 ½ x 11 paper, without lines, and tear it in half. Utilizing the one-half sheet, long-wise vertically, take a pen (not a pencil), and hand-write the sermon outline. If you have to make changes, then your preparatory work was not complete. Use a pen, but don't use it until you have finalized the outline (finally...for the last time!).

Draw a rectangular box around the illustration key words.

Underline the Title, and the Main points.

It should look like this:
(understand that the illustration box is represented herein by italics)

Ye Must Be Born Again!

INTRODUCTION: *Birth of Pretty Boy Floyd*

PROPOSITION: We must Make Sure We Have Been Born Again!

Why?

Because:

I. We are Sinners by Birth (6)

A. The Flesh is Unacceptable

Illustration

B. The Flesh is Unchangeable

II. We Cannot Devise a Way to Heaven (13)

A. We are too Ignorant (10) "Master Teacher"

Illustration

B. We are too Incapable (8) "Cannot tell"

Illustration

C. We are too Earthly (12)

III. We Dare not Ignore the Words of Christ (3, 5).

Without the New Birth:

A. We will never Behold Heaven (3)

Illustration

B. We will never Be in Heaven (5)

CONCLUSION:

Note: Restate the main points.

Newborn baby

Three-ring notebooks are available into which you can place this outline. Mark on it when and where you preached it. Record results, and whether the sermon flowed well, or was difficult to preach.

It would be good to keep a separate record in a file cabinet, of your ministry. Include directions to the location, and pertinent names of people to whom you ministered.

Above all: Preach the Word!