

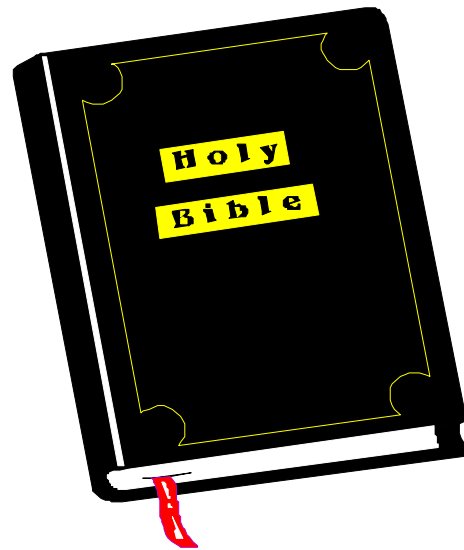
## The Case For Expository Preaching

By Don Kimbro

### A SIGN OF OUR TIMES

The church of Jesus Christ is at a crossroads in history. Bible believing Christians are in a fight for their very lives. Not only is the inerrancy of the Scriptures being challenged in even the most conservative of churches, but the contemporary relevance of honest and accurate exposition of the word of God is being questioned as well.

The search for absolute truth is being abandoned in favor of so called "spiritual" experiences, emotional highs, pop psychology, hyped-up worship services, and the catering to self-esteem needs. John MacArthur has said it well, "A large portion of the church is rejecting sound doctrine while favoring and embracing relationships, as if they were priority. They have become fascinated with entertainment and bored with exposition. They have become enamored with feelings and lowered the value of thinking clearly." This is not a new problem. In seventeenth century France, Blaise Pascal wrote that, "Truth today is so obscure and errors so established, that unless we love the truth, we will never know it." The question facing the church today is, "Do we still love the truth?"



The great tragedy in all of this is that the seeking of "warm fuzzy" feelings and the desire for love and acceptance at any cost, is fast becoming the new basis for evangelical and charismatic theology. Many believers, rather than looking to the holy word of God to test the validity of their "spiritual" experiences, are changing their theology to match their experiences. One popular charismatic leader is quoted as saying, "We are in the process of cataloging our experiences, so we can come up with a theology." So they are in effect, rewriting the word of God to suit themselves.

The answer to this shift away from doctrinal purity, once based solely on the word of God, is a return to good, solid and accurate expository preaching and teaching by men of God who know how to interpret and present the whole counsel of His word.

### THE NEED FOR EXPOSITION

Preaching usually comes in one of three forms: topical, textual or expository. Topical sermons combine a series of Bible verses that loosely connect with a theme. Although there are some very good topical preachers, the problem with this type of sermon is that unless the context of each verse used is examined closely, to make sure that it fits the topic being preached, the possibility of error is tremendous.

Textual preaching uses a short text or passage that generally serves as a gateway into whatever subject the preacher chooses to address. The context is mostly irrelevant in textual preaching because it's the thought that is

preeminent. This, too, can lead to all kinds of error as one TV evangelist recently demonstrated. He used a short phrase in the Old Testament as his text to promote his idea of our being able to receive continual blessings (mostly financial) from God. He repeatedly spoke of the *"seedtime and harvest"* that God promised to Noah after the flood (Gen. 8:22). The idea was that all we have to do is plant a seed and God will always bring a harvest. The seed could be a scripture, a thought, a spoken word, financial giving to some organization (his, in this case) or some other kind of action. God then, according to the *"seedtime and harvest"* principle would bring a gigantic return from whatever seed that was sown. An examination of the context of that passage, however, reveals that it has nothing to do with financial blessings but it was a proclamation by God to restore the order of the seasonal cycle of the earth after the flood and His promise never again to destroy the world in that manner.

Expository preaching, in contrast, focuses predominantly on the text under consideration along with its context, which is absolutely critical in determining truth. It also forces the expositor to preach the whole counsel of God's word, taking each verse as it presents itself. Because God's word is *"living and active,"* every text has an application to the life of the believer, *"as it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12).

## **WHAT IS EXPOSITORY PREACHING?**

Simply put, expository preaching derives its sermon content directly from the Scripture, seeking to discover its divinely intended meaning, to observe its effect upon those who first received it, and to apply it to those who seek its guidance in the present. It usually consists of a verse by verse, chapter by chapter, in-depth study of the only book ever written that is *"... God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Expository preaching is an honest and scholarly effort to bring the hearers into the world of the author of the text in order to determine the true sense and intent of the passage. It's an attempt to sit at the feet of Jesus as he teaches on the mount overlooking Capernaum; to walk with the apostle Paul into Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe as he preaches the gospel; or to stand in awe with the people of Israel as God parts the Red Sea.

The Bible is an ancient document penned by at least 40 authors over a period of 1500 years. Cultures and customs were different, and languages and idioms varied. In addition, we are separated by a period of up to 3500 years from the writers. To accurately interpret the teachings of the Bible involves first a thorough and studied knowledge of the Scriptures, plus an ability to research and examine the historical, grammatical, linguistic and literary setting of every passage, in order to develop the proper context in which the word was written.

The goal of the expository preacher is to preach through most of the books of the Bible. This has great advantage over all other types of preaching because it forces one to handle the difficult themes of Scripture as well as the more popular ones. Everyone has their "pet" doctrines but expository preaching keeps truth in balance since it follows the pattern of Scripture itself in presenting the truth.

## **MY COMMITMENT TO YOU**

As a pastor and a teacher, I am committed to expository preaching and teaching because I believe that it is the very best method to bring the absolute truths of God's word to those He has placed under my care. I will do this to the best of my ability and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because I know *"that we who teach will be judged more strictly"* (Jas. 3:1), my assurance to you as a member of this church, is that I will faithfully devote the time necessary to study, research, examine and thoroughly prepare each section of God's word that I preach or teach. With God's help I will not take shortcuts in an attempt to find truth which often leads to error. I will also spurn the temptation to resort to reading into a text something that is not there in order to satisfy the *"itching ears"* of fickle Christians. I covet your prayers.

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