

A Redemptive Approach to Preaching

Primary Goal of this Lesson:

To see the overarching plan that is the reason we have constructed sermons according to the design we have followed thus far.

I. Review of Key Perspectives

A. The Principle of Fallen Condition Focus

Thus far we have made II Tim. 3:16-17 a key to understanding any text's purpose:

"All Scripture is inspired by God ... in order that the man of God might be perfect [artios=complete]"

All Scripture is intended to complete us in some way – by leading to salvation or advancing sanctification. The necessary implication is that we are _____. We are fallen creatures in a fallen condition and God's redemptive work in Scripture is making us whole in ways we cannot by ourselves.

B. The Swiss Cheese Effect

Thus, all Scripture and all expository preaching designed to reflect the meaning of a scriptural passage, addresses aspects of humanity's "Fallen Condition." Our goal in expounding a text is to determine not only *what it says* but why it was written and *what we spiritually share in* _____ with:

- those for (or about) whom it was written?
- or
- the one by whom it was written?

Transition: Now recognize that thus far we have only discussed the _____. If all Scripture focuses on some aspect of our fallen condition, why does it do so? The answer is clear, to supply the warrant and need for the redemptive elements it contains to be applied. Thus, just as every Scripture echoes our incompleteness, it is in some manner signaling the Savior's work which makes us whole. Our goal in redemptive preaching is to decipher the signals, for until we do so we do not truly understand our text.

It is possible to say all the right words and yet send all the wrong _____.

[Consider a Radio Ministry.]

What went wrong here? How can he seem so right and yet be so far off base?

II. The Nature of Redemptive Preaching

A. The Nature of Redemptive Interpretation

Magnifying Glass ---- compared to ---- Fish-eye Lens
(Systematic Theology) (Biblical Theology)

That discipline of Bible interpretation that emphasizes the overarching themes that unite all of Scripture's particulars is called _____. Biblical theology is not simply asking what truth does this particular passage reveal but _____ is it related to the _____ message of Scripture.

B. The Principles of Redemptive Interpretation (cr. G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*)

1. The _____ Principle
Biblical theology is that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible. Revelation is a noun of action relating to divine activity. Revelation is an historically *progressive* process—a long series of successive acts.
2. The _____ Principle
The progressive process is *organic*: revelation may be in seed form which yields later full growth accounting for diversity but not true difference because the earlier aspects of truth are indispensable for understanding the true meanings of the later forms and vice-versa.
3. The _____ Principle
Revelation is inseparably linked to the activity of *redemption*. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption. To see revelation properly we must see it in its *redemptive* context. The context and content of some revelation may be in seed form as it relates to redemption but it is integrally related to the mature message and is not properly understood or communicated until this relationship is made clear.

THE ACORN ANALOGY

In the same sense (as trying to explain an acorn without mentioning the oak tree, we cannot properly explain any aspect of revelation, even if we say many true things about it, until we have in some way related it to _____).

C. The Implications of a Redemptive Perspective

1. Divine Provision is Necessary for Holy Living:

Since all Scripture is redemptive revelation addressing our fallen condition (incompleteness or inadequacy), then we must recognize in some way every passage points not only to our _____ of redemption, but also to God's _____ of our redemption. The Bible is not a self-help book. "Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus said (John 15:5).

2. Biblical Theology is Necessary for Proper Interpretation:

We must gather that to profit much in the holy Scripture we must always resort to our Lord Jesus Christ and cast our eyes upon him, without turning from him at any time. You will see a number of people who labor very hard indeed at reading the holy Scriptures – they do nothing else but turn over the leaves of it. . . . And why? Because they do not have any particular aim in view, they only wander about . . . [A]lthough they have gathered together a number of sentences of all sorts, yet nothing of value results from them. Even so it is with them that labor in reading the Holy Scriptures and do not know which is the point they ought to rest on, namely, the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (**John Calvin, Sermon on Ephesians 2:19-22, 1559**) (See distributed Articles also.)

3. Redemptive Interpretation is Necessitated by Biblical Instruction:

I Cor. 2: 2 I resolved to make nothing known among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified. . . . (cf. 1: 23 We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.) "atonement," not example, is key (cf. II Cor. 4:3-5; Gal. 6:14).

Luke 24: 27 Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

(Note: Since Jesus says all Scripture is about him, when we try to explain a text without mentioning his redeeming work we neglect to expound the very thing Jesus says the text reveals.)

Matt. 17 The Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the prophets, appear to testify of Christ. (cf. John 5:39f.; I Pet. 1:10-11)

Key Note: These verses demonstrate that the term "Christ-centered" is synecdoche for all of God's redeeming work that makes us know and depend upon his grace *ultimately* provided in Christ. A Christ-centered sermon does not attempt to make Jesus appear where the text does not speak of him, but rather demonstrates the _____ of the text to his person and/or work. Thus, these are also referred to as "Redemptive messages" or "Grace-focused messages".

Our goal in Christ-centered Preaching is not to make Jesus magically or allegorically appear in every text, but rather to demonstrate the _____ principles evident in the text that are most fully revealed in Christ's person and/or work, and are necessary for our growth in Christ-likeness.

IV. The Nature and Design of Non-Redemptive Preaching

A. The Nature of Non-redemptive messages: "sola bootstrapsa"

1. Various Forms:
 - Pick yourself up by your own bootstraps
 - 10 steps to a better ...
 - Do this thing (or behavior) to get yourself right with God
2. Basic Problem:

These are not merely _____-Christian messages, they are _____-Christian messages, since no Scripture *in context* says, "Just be good and God will be happy."

B. The Design of Non-redemptive messages: "the Deadly Be's"

1. Be _____ (follow this example)

Be like Daniel, Moses, David, Jesus, etc. (question: If David were asked who we should be like, would he say, "David?"). Care actually seems to be taken in Scripture to tarnish all (but one) so that we won't turn to anyone but God for ultimate aid.

God is the _____ of every text!
2. Be _____ (save yourself)

Don't drink or smoke or chew, or ...
Hunker down and try harder.
3. Be _____ (sanctify yourself) ...

Pray more, read your Bible more, go to church more, etc.

Of course, "Be" messages are in Scripture, but identify their context (e.g. I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1: 4-6; II Thess. 3:7-9).

Recognize "Be" messages are not wrong _____ themselves; they are wrong messages _____ themselves.

"Be" messages *by themselves* imply that _____ are able to change our fallen condition by our own efforts. Such messages, stated or implied, make us no different than Unitarians, Muslims or Hindus.

C. The De-merits of Non-redemptive Messages (why they don't help)

1. There is no _____ in keeping God's commands – blessing, but no merit.

Jay Adams-"How could there be merit for us if He is the enabler?"

Abraham Kuyper-"This holy disposition [viz., sanctification] cannot spring from man, not even from regeneration.... The indwelling Spirit is the actual worker" (pgs. 456-7).

Westminster Confession of Faith XVI. 2, 3, 5, 6

[G]ood works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: ... Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves but wholly from the Spirit of Christ."

"We cannot by our best works merit pardon for sin ... by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God...; by them [i.e., our best works] we can neither profit nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have but done our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because, as they are good, they proceed from his spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.... [B]elievers being accepted through Christ, their good works are also accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unproveable in God's sight."

(Cf. Is. 64:6 - "filthy rags"; Luke 17:10 - "unworthy servants").

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), pp. 790-791.

"To man we may assign only this: that he pollutes and contaminates by his impurity those very things which are good. For nothing proceeds from a man however perfect he be, that is not defiled by some spot. Let the Lord, then call to judgment the best of human works: he will indeed recognize in them his own righteousness by man's dishonor and shame."

2. Challenges to holiness without mention of grace force a _____-centered religion. People cannot do what they are told to do apart from Christ's grace (John 15:5; Rom. 8:36). Requirements of holiness by themselves wound people because without provision of divine aid they either will despair of hope or trust in their own righteousness. Thus, if you wound — even unintentionally — you are obligated to heal. We heal by wedding all requirements of holiness to a proper relationship with Him who alone can provide holiness (and showing where and how the Scripture we are interpreting does the same).

E.g. Eph. 6:10 Be strong in the power of _____ might. (cf. Col. 1:29; II Pet. 1:3)

The Bottom line: With whom will they walk out the door? Me, myself and I, or their Savior? To whom will you lead them, and with whom will you leave them?

How to Determine the F.C. F.

3-Step Process: (Ask these things ...)

1. What does the text say (What's the Big Idea)?

2. What Concern(s) Did the Text Address

3. What Do We Share in Common with:

-those to (or about) whom it was written

or

-the one by whom it was written