Sermon Divisions and Development

Let us begin with some review questions. The first question is what are three major components of exposition evident in Old Testament models that were systematized in synagogue worship patterns reflected in the New Testament? That is a very long question that asks what pattern for presenting and preaching biblical texts was established in the Old Testament and continues into the New Testament. You have presentation of the Word, then explanation of the Word, then exhortation based on the Word. Remember that pattern that you saw from Nehemiah that picks up and moves through the Bible.

The next question is what are three essential elements of exposition that are to be included in every main point? We would, of course, have to specify that this is in a formal, traditional sermon. We recognize that these will be varied, but if you are looking at a formal main point, you will always have included explanation, illustration, and application. Those are the three formal elements.

The next question is, shall we say, very stereotypical, and we have to acknowledge that: what is the proportion of these expositional elements for a general audience? For a very generic sermon, explanation, illustration, and application would occur in equal proportion. Each element would take up a third of the explanation, but the next question is even more critical. It is how may a double helix represent the expositional structure of a sermon's main points and how may this structure vary depending on target audience? This means, of course, that explanation, illustration, and application may vary tremendously. In other words, if you are looking at that double helix, those bubbles may swell or shrink according to the nature of the subject, the nature of the audience, the nature of the preacher, and the nature of the situation. We recognize many variables there. I would like for you to be able to reproduce the double helix and begin to explain its components. We are going to keep adding to it, but it is very common that I will ask you to tell me what the components are and how they vary. We will see that they get more involved as we go.

I want to review one final thing. It is often important to distinguish the Scripture introduction from the sermon introduction. The Scripture introduction introduces the Scripture reading. The sermon introduction introduces the sermon. It is important not to confuse those two elements, because sometimes we actually deaden the beginning of the sermon by confusing those two elements.

Let us pray, and we will move forward.

Father, we call You our Lord and Master. We do so because You give us direction and requirements, but You also provide what You require, so You are not merely our Master but our Redeemer. We would ask this day that You would teach us to be dependent on You, not merely for great matters and the times of extremity, but Father, in the ordinary course of life, this class period, and what we do the rest of this day, what we think about as we are preparing these messages for Your people long-term. Please help us, even in our hearts now, to be saying, "Lord, do not send us up to do this task if You do not go with us." Send Your Spirit, even now, to equip us for the purposes to which You call us. We ask Your aid, Your blessing, Your enablement, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here is what we are doing today. The goal for the lesson is to understand the basic subdivisions of a sermon. The key there is the word "sub." We want to understand the basic subdivisions of a sermon in standard expository development.

First, here is the big picture of where we have been and where we are going. We are zooming in from where we have been. We started out by talking about the general nature of preaching the Word of God, the nature of the servant of the Word of God, the idea of what is in the text, what the text is like, rules and ideas for selecting texts, and tools for interpreting the text. At some point we had to start dealing with the text, and so we began constructing sermons, which we said means taking that exegetical material that comes out of the exegetical outline and other research and beginning to enfold that into a homiletical outline. We have seen this structure take some form now, in the course of these weeks, in which we recognize that there is a Scripture reading, and the preaching is based on that reading of the Word. There is also, as we learned last time, a Scripture introduction. We began to move on in our taxonomy here and get terms to deal with the anatomy of a sermon. We know that the Scripture introduction actually has elements in it, like the "C-and-C," or contextualization and creation of longing. The Scripture introduction is fairly brief, but we are trying to get people into the reading of the Word. We know that after the reading of the Word there will be an introduction. This is the sermon introduction, and we began to recognize this itself had various components. It is intended to arouse attention, introduce the subject, give an identifiable fallen condition focus (FCF), prepare for the proposition in concept and terminology, and bond to Scripture. So we recognized that there were these various components of the introduction, which was getting us ready for the proposition, and we recognized that the proposition had its own components. Its components were "what is true and what to do about it." Do you remember? The principle and the application were the components of the proposition.

Now we have begun to look at the body of the sermon, and we began doing that by thinking of the skeleton, which represents the main point structures. So we see that there are these big "ribs," as it were, of the sermon, which are the main point structure. Then we said we have to define the meat that is going onto these bones, so we began to look at main points. We recognized that they have a configuration themselves, and we described it as this double helix, which was composed of explanation, illustration, and application. We know that these components can change places. They do not have to be in that standard order. They usually are, but they do not have to be.

So we have looked at explanation, illustration, and application, and where we are today is asking what the components of the explanation are. We will begin to think of the components of that specific piece, and of course we know that later on we will look at the components of illustration and application. For today, however, we are going to look at the components of the explanation, particularly its minor ribs. We are going to begin to look at some of the structure of the subpoints.

You see, then, we are ready now to begin analyzing the divisions of explanation within the main points. However, before we go in and begin to look at that structure, I do want to back up just a little bit and remind ourselves of the guidelines for the main point divisions themselves. As we think of these big pieces, we need to think again about the strategy that we were dealing with when we considered the number and nature of the main points. There are going to be three of these. There are three things we need to consider for the number and the nature of the main points. You will hear them, and you will say, "Of course." These are commonsensical things, but they help us get ready for thinking about what subpoints are.

The first consideration is this: in determining the number and nature of main points, we use the number of divisions necessary to present the thought of the passage. The key phrase here is "present the thought." We use the number of divisions necessary to present the thought of the passage, so whatever is necessary to capture the thought of the passage in front of us, that is how we choose the number of main points. We have said that there could be three-point messages. That is kind of standard, but we know

that there could be two-point messages. There can be messages with four or more points. Sometimes, we will discover later, there can be one-point messages, but we will choose the number of divisions necessary to present the thought of the passage.

The second consideration is this: We will use the number of divisions necessary to cover the territory. The expositor's ethic is to open the Bible and say, "Let me tell you what this passage says. Let me tell you what this passage means." Now, when I do that, if I say, "So I will explain verse 1, and I will explain verse 2, and I will explain verse 4, and I will explain verse 5," what did I just fail to do? I did not explain verse 3. That is what covering the territory is about. I will cover the territory of the passage that I present as the expository unit, because I have said to you, as an expositor, that I will explain what this means. If I just skip portions, I cannot do that. Now, does that mean we must cover every portion equally? No! Some portions will need a lot of attention, and some will need a little attention. Sometimes you might take three verses and group them into one main point. You might take another verse and divide it into four subpoints. Coverage will vary, depending on the amount of attention you feel is necessary to explain the passage, but the goal is to cover the territory. The old language, and you will still see it in a lot of homiletics textbooks, is "to exhaust the passage." That was the old language. That a little problematic to our ears, because we typically think about the inexhaustible riches of the Word of God. You will never get to the bottom of any passage of Scripture. You will never plumb the full depths of the Word, but that was not really what the old language meant. It really meant to cover the territory, so that is what we are going to remind ourselves to do as well—to cover the territory.

These first two considerations were about presenting the thought of the passage and covering the territory of the passage. The third consideration for determining the number and nature of main points is this: we use the number of divisions necessary to organize the thought of the sermon. We must present the thought of the passage and cover the passage, but we also have to organize the thought of the sermon itself, so there are the communicative obligations also. That organization will include things like the need to choose the number of points necessary to make the message logical and proportional and progressive. It must be proportional, because we do not want one main point to last 30 seconds and the next one to last 30 minutes. It needs to be roughly, not exactly, but roughly proportional. It is also important that the sermon does not feel like we are just stuck in one place. We need to feel that we are progressing as we move through the message, so we choose the number of divisions necessary to make the sermon logical, proportional, and progressive.

Now, I think, you begin to feel that if you have a 30-minute message or so, with these main points coming every 8 to 10 minutes, they may themselves get lost. How do we connect these pieces? The answer is that we have subdivisions that are themselves anchored by subpoints. This explanation portion of the main point itself has navigation signs in it, and those navigations signs are subpoints that move us through that main point and get us to the next main point. So for a while we are going to talk about the nature of subpoints and their key characteristics.

First, subpoints complement, that is, support or prove, their specific main point. Now, as obvious as that seems, we must look at the subpoint and say, "Does it deal with my main point?" We need to ask that, because the tendency is to develop a main point that is somewhere in the passage and then begin to identify subpoints as you are simply moving through the passage, but they do not conceptually link to that main point. You are moving through the pattern of the passage but not developing the thought of your main point, which may mean that you have to move that subpoint to another main point. However you do it, you need to make sure that each subpoint complements or supports its specific main point. Do you remember the little stool with all the legs under it that I used to illustrate proposition and main points? The same stool works as an illustration for a main point and its subpoints. The main point is like

the top of the stool, and all the subpoints have to fit conceptually under that main point, like legs underneath a stool.

Second, subpoints relate to their main point in the same way. That is, they can answer a similar—not necessarily the same—diagnostic question, or they support the main point in the same way. I will give you an example, because if you hear it, you will automatically know what I am talking about. Let me give you a main point and subpoints, and you can think about which one does not fit because it does not develop the main point in the same way as the others. Just listen to it, and your ear will tell you. The proposition is "Because God is sovereign, we should honor Him." The subpoints are, "We should obey Him," "We should trust Him," and "Prayer leads to godliness." Of course, you notice that the third one is not like the others. Now, it may be a very true statement. Prayer leads to godliness. It may be within the text. It is even something about honoring a sovereign God. It may even fit conceptually, but it is not worded like the others. It does not develop the main point in a similar or same way. What question is being answered by "We should obey Him"? It is the question of how we should honor God. Because God is sovereign, we should honor Him. How should we honor Him? We should obey Him, we should trust Him, and prayer leads to godliness. Now convert the third subpoint. How could you take "prayer leads to godliness" and make it fit as a subpoint? You could say, "We should pray to Him." You simply word it in such a way that it will answer the same or a similar diagnostic question.

What you just noticed was strong parallelism. The parallelism will usually make you word things in such a way that they develop the main point in the same way. Now they may answer slightly different questions, but they are developing the main point in the same way.

Third, subpoints are about the one thing the main point is about, not new subjects. Sometimes people confuse that. They might think, "Oh, here is a subpoint. I am talking about something else now." No, the subpoints are subdivisions of their main point. They are not about new subjects but about the development of that subject, so they stay on the same point.

Fourth, subpoints ordinarily support or develop the developmental clause. We also call that the magnet clause of the main point. Now let us just remind ourselves again that the magnet clause is the one with the key word change that triggers the ear and causes us to say, "Oh, there is something different in that parallel phrase." So those subpoints deal with what attracts the attention of the ear in the main point. The subpoints are about what is different in the main point, which means they support or develop the magnet clause. The very point of the magnet clause was to draw attention to itself, and therefore it draws the explanation of the subpoints. The subpoints are about the magnet clause. I will remind you quickly that you developed the anchor clause just before or after the proposition. The anchor clause of the main points, the thing that does not change, is the basis of the sermon, so the anchor clause was developed in the introduction or possibly early in the first main point. The magnet clauses, the developmental side, are the ones that are getting the attention of the explanation. The anchor clause is typically something that can be taken for granted or understood very quickly, so it is developed very early, and then the magnet clause is what draws the attention of the explanation.

For this reason, fifth, subpoints are brief statements of principle or application, not both. The word "or" is very important here. Propositions are made up of a principle and an application. Main points are made up of a principle and an application, but subpoints will only be about one side of the main point. They are only about the magnet clause, so subpoints will be principle or application, because they only develop the one side. Whatever that one side was, you typically know that is what the subpoints will be about. To put it another way, subpoints are generally not weddings of principle and application, because only the magnet clause of the main point is being proven, which is either principle or application.

This means that subpoints are usually short sentences or sentence fragments. We will see why that is in just a moment. How we set them up will determine whether they are sentences or just portions of sentences, and we will talk about that in just a minute. Sometimes subpoints are not complete sentences. They may only be sentence fragments. Here is the idea of what you are doing with subpoints. For the average listener, the sermon is coming to them like a wave or a mud wall of words. There are all these words, words, words, words coming at the listener. What subpoints are is a way of saying, "Here is a way to navigate through there." To change the metaphor, subpoints are like a peg that you nail into the wall and then you hang the rest of the explanation on that peg. Instead of just telling you a series of facts, which would make you wonder why I am telling you all these things, I have subpoints to help you make sense of my explanation. I hammer a peg on the wall, and then I can hang lots of information on it. Then the audience understands why you are telling them the things you are telling them in your explanation. Subpoints are the thought-pegs that we begin to hang all our exegetical explanatory information on.

A brief rule of thumb is that if the explanation is longer than a long paragraph on a page, if you are getting beyond a third of a page or so, then you need another subpoint. That is a general rule of thumb. However, you do not always need subpoints. Sometimes you can function without them, because your main point may be fairly clear. If that is the case, you can just move on, but usually, if you know that you have more than a long paragraph of explanation, then you need another subpoint. Subpoints say, "Here is a large paragraph of thought. I will give you the general thought first—the peg on the door—before I start to hang all this information on it." So subpoints give people a way to navigate through as we give them that information.

Let us go on to some of this other material that will help us, and then we will go on to look at lots of examples. Subpoints exhibit unity—that is, they are about one thing. Subpoints exhibit uniqueness—that is, they are not coexistent. We should not say to ourselves, "I thought you just said that," when we hear the next subpoint. They are unique. They exhibit parallelism. They reflect one another in wording. They also exhibit progression. They consistently lead to the larger concept, so they are progressive as well.

Subpoints are not required, but if they are given, they must be multiple. If you have only one subpoint, it should be the main point. Subpoints are subdivisions. You do not have just one subdivision. There have to be at least two, so if you have subpoints, there should be at least two. If you have only one, look at your main point again and reword it somehow. You may decide that you do not need subpoints. You may say, "This is so clear. God says you should pray and not give up. What that means is that regardless of your circumstances, you should not give up seeking God." Now I probably do not need to tell you about the iterative nature of the Greek present tense if that is my main point. I do not need a paragraph of explanation. I just probably need to say that, and then it is time to illustrate and apply and move on. In other words, not all main points need multiple paragraphs of explanation, which means that not all main points need subpoints. However, if a main point does have multiple paragraphs of explanation, then it typically does need subpoints for the hearers to be able to navigate through the main point.

Subpoints usually point to a specific portion of the text. That is, we often show the verse after the subpoint in our outline. We will say, "You should honor God (v. 3)." I will generally tell what portion of the text supports what I just said. However, can you think of some exceptions, where there might not be a verse reference that supports the subpoint? What other information might you import that might need to be a subpoint? The key idea here is context. There may be some historical or literary context that is not a verse in this passage, but is something that you would say, "You need to know this in order to

know what that main point is about." Most of the time there will be a direct verse reference in the text to every subpoint. We will talk more on that later, and I will show you some examples in just a bit.

Subpoints are usually symmetrical and proportional. They are similar to each other in length, and they are proportional—that is, they divide the explanation fairly evenly. I do not have one subpoint that runs a third of a paragraph and another subpoint that runs five paragraphs. They roughly evenly divide the explanation of a main point.

This final one is the really difficult one here. Subpoints develop the homiletical outline rather than outline the text. That is, subpoints do not merely describe the text. The classic way that homileticians describe this concept is by saying, "subpoints are stated as principles, not mere statements of fact." I will give you an example, because I know it is often confusing and difficult to understand what it means to say that subpoints do not merely describe a text.

Here is an example of subpoints that merely describe the text. My main point is "Because God blesses faithfulness, we should obey Him." My first subpoint is "Israel confronted Jericho." My second is "Israel marched around Jericho." My third is "The walls of Jericho fell." Are these true? Yes. Are they taken from the text? Yes. Do they describe accurately what happens in the text? Yes, but they are simply statements of fact. There are no principles being developed, as there are in my next example. Now recognize that this is about the same passage. The main point is "Because God blesses faithfulness, we should obey Him." The first subpoint is "Faithfulness requires confronting God's enemies." That is a principle, and the fact that supports that principle is that Israel went up against Jericho. So I will bring those facts into this explanation paragraph, but the subpoint itself is worded as a principle of biblical truth. It is not just a regurgitation of the facts of the text. It is the principle the facts will support, because the idea you are ultimately developing is "We should obey Him." So you are developing the principle in the main point, and the subpoints need to be worded as principles, also. The second subpoint is "Faithfulness requires obeying God's Word." The simple fact that supports this principle is that Israel marched around Jericho, and God told them to do that. Now, rather than merely stating that the walls of Jericho fell, the third subpoint is "Faithfulness results in seeing God's hand." That principle is supported by the fact that the walls of Jericho fell.

So subpoints should not merely restate the facts of the text. The subpoints should develop the homiletical outline, which is made up of the principles that the facts will support. The place that we will deal the most with this is actually in the next part of this course when we begin dealing with narrative passages. As we begin to look at the accounts of Scripture, that is when people are tempted to make the facts of the text the points of their outline. This semester, you are dealing with didactic passages from the epistles, so you will not typically fall into this problem of only describing the facts of the text, and that is okay, but I want you to hear that language so it can begin to develop in your brain. That is, we are developing the message; we are not merely describing the text. We are developing the message in the homiletical outline, not merely describing the text. Description of the text will certainly go into the sermon to support the principles that we say are there.

Let us move on to some basic types of subpoints to begin to think how this will occur for us. You have done main points and propositions. You have done introductions. We are moving toward conclusions and subpoints. What we are doing today is saying, "What is the nature of these subpoints?" even as we are moving toward "what is the nature of conclusions?" So let us talk about some of the specific kinds of subpoints that there are.

The first, very basic, form of subpoint is analytical question responses. These are, as the name implies, answers or responses to analytical questions. What happens with these is that for all subpoints in a main point, we ask—out loud—a question, an overarching question, like, "How do we know that this is true?" or "When should this apply in our lives?" Then we answer the question with short statements that introduce the explanations. Here is an example. The main point is "Because Jesus provides the only hope of salvation, we must present Christ despite our difficulties." Then we ask a question about that. This is known as "interrogating the main point." We ask an analytical question about it: "In what types of difficulties must we present Christ?" Then we answer our question: "In circumstantial difficulties, in relational difficulties, and in spiritual difficulties." These subpoints are not complete sentences. They are sentence fragments, but they are answers to this question, which is a complete sentence. So the answer to the analytical question is what makes the thought complete. We ask a question about the main point, and then we answer that question with the subpoints. Do you see why these have the name "analytical question responses"? You have an analytical question, and the subpoints are the responses to one overarching analytical question. You might wonder if the analytical question itself is considered a subpoint. The answer is no. The analytical question gets the subpoints ready, so the analytical question just sets up the answers, which are the subpoints.

That was an analytical question response. The next major type of subpoint is very similar to them. These are interrogative subpoints. With these, we ask a new question for each subpoint. Rather than having one overarching question that we answer with the subpoints, we ask a new question for each subpoint. Now this is very important: we answer it immediately. We answer the question immediately with a concise statement, and then we show where the statement was derived and give the explanation that supports the statement. Do not delay the answer until after the explanation. The ear does not have the patience of the eye. Again, this is where sermons will differ from essays. Many of you have been taught to write essays with that very powerful method of asking questions, then developing the answer, and only then giving the answer. So the eye will say, "Here is an important question. Why is the population of Greece diminishing today?" Then you begin to list all the things that happened in Greece, and then you give the answer to your question. So we first get all these explanation and then we get the final conclusion, and the conclusion comes at the end of the paragraph or maybe even after two or three paragraphs later. We do not do that in preaching. In preaching, we say, "What types of difficulties may we face? Christ's enemies. Look in the verse. It says …" and then I begin to explain my answer. The question sets up the answer that is given immediately in an interrogative subpoint, and then we begin to explain how we got that answer. Again, the question itself is not a subpoint. The answer is the subpoint, which means that we will try to keep our answers, as well as the questions, as parallel as possible. It is not just the question that is parallel. We need the parallelism of the question so the ear is saying, "Oh, he is beginning another subdivision here." So we have "What types of difficulties may we face? Christ's enemies. What helps us to face these difficulties? Christ's armies." Do you hear how I am striving to get parallelism? I will explain what "Christ's armies" means in the paragraph that follows, in looking at the text and developing what is there about Christ's armies.

In interrogative subpoints, the questions are as parallel as possible, and the answers are as parallel as possible, too, because, technically, the answer holds the subpoint. The questions get us to the subpoint. Here is that example again. The main point is "Because Jesus provides the only hope of salvation, we must present Christ despite our difficulties." The first clause is the anchor clause, so we are developing the second clause, "we must present Christ despite our difficulties." If that is the main idea, we have obvious questions. "What types of difficulties may we face? Christ's enemies." Another main question is "Well then, what helps us face those difficulties? Christ's armies." So it is a way of moving through the explanation by repetitive questions. It is actually a very engaging way to preach. It is typically not the way you think of developing outlines when you write them. Most of us do bullet statements when we

do an outline, so the way we write outlines is as bullet statements, but you will often find that the way to present your outline very engagingly is to keep asking questions. Ask questions out loud and then respond to your own questions. This deals very sympathetically with the hearer. It is as if you are saying, "If I were sitting in your seat, what question would I be asking at this point?" Then you go ahead and ask it, and people are thinking, "He knows what I am thinking. That guy reads my mail! He knows exactly what is in my mind," and all you are doing is asking the questions that you would naturally ask as a listener, but you are asking the questions for the listener and then answering them as a way of developing the thought of the passage.

The last basic form of subpoints is what we probably thought would be the first form, and that is bullet statements. These are sentences or sentence fragments that are not set up by questions. They are simply statements in themselves. For example, if the main point is "Because Jesus provides the only hope of salvation, we must present Christ despite our difficulties," then the subpoints might be, "In the midst of busyness, in the face of fear, in the storm of anger." So I am simply using bullet statements to move through and develop what we do to present Christ despite our difficulties.

Now I just wanted to show you conceptually the difference between analytical question responses, interrogatives, and bullet statements, but I think you recognize that if we were actually developing this in an outline, what is missing? Verse references. There would be verse references going with each of the subpoints, so that they would typically look more like this: "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must present Christ in difficult situations, facing circumstantial obstacles (v. 12), facing spiritual obstacles (vv. 13-14)." Now, of course, just seeing it here in an outline does not mean we are going to say it all that way. We have paragraphs of explanation now to explain verse 12 and to explain verses 13 and 14. We will begin to develop those in that paragraph of thought that falls under that subpoint. But again, the subpoint is the thought peg that we hammer on the door so we can now hang lots of information on it.

Let me show you some examples and then answer some common questions about subpoints. I will show you positive things and then negative things and begin to consider them. Listen to these subpoints and think about what type these are: "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ to difficult people. Who are these people? Those without mercy. How must we deal with these people? As those with mercy." What type of subpoints are these? They are interrogatives. You have a different question setting up each of the subpoints. You will notice that these subpoints are not exactly parallel, but you do see that there is an attempt to make them as parallel as possible, to try to make them as similar in wording as we can. The first was something about "without mercy," and the next is kind of a contrastive parallelism, "with mercy." We are trying to get the ear working to hear the concepts behind the main point. We recognize that though difficult people are those without mercy, we must deal with them as those who have mercy. We are those with mercy. So we are trying to get parallel wording as much as possible.

What about this one: "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ despite our difficulties. What sorts of difficulties? In the face of present frustration, in the face of past failure." What kind of subpoints are those? They are analytical question responses. There is one overarching question and then the responses to that one question. So those are the different types.

Let me show you a negative example: "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ in difficult situations. Peter ignored the authorities. Peter spoke from jail." What is the problem here? The subpoints merely describe the text rather than develop the message. It is true in the text that Peter ignored the authorities and that Peter spoke from jail. It is true, but these are not "principleized"

subpoints, as a homoletician would say. The principle is not developed. We have described the text, but we do not have wording that enables us to deal with the idea that we must preach Christ in difficult situations. What might be something that would "principleize" the truth that Peter ignored the authorities? Can you make it into a principle? We must preach Christ in difficult situations. We must preach Christ when opposition comes. I have a principle now, and I can support it with the fact that Peter went ahead and preached Christ despite the opposition of authorities. So we must preach Christ despite opposition. How about the fact that Peter spoke from jail? How can I make that a principle? We must preach Christ against all odds. Against opposition, against all odds, so you even have some assonance with the sounds there. So Peter spoke from jail against all odds. We might say, "despite circumstances" or "despite constraint." There might be various ways that we could talk about it, but we are looking for principles, so that would be how we would identify the proper way to go there.

I will just tell you that the first clause is the anchor clause and the second clause is the magnet clause in this main point: "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ to difficult people." Then the subpoints are "First, Jesus died to save the ungodly. Second, Jesus alone can save." What is the problem here? The subpoints are developing the anchor clause, but they should be developing the magnet clause. A related problem is that the subpoints are not developing the obvious question. The obvious question comes out of the magnet clause. That is the clause that the ear says, "That is what the issue is. Why are you not dealing with the issue?" So there you have somebody developing the anchor rather than the magnet clause.

Let us try one more. "Because Jesus is the only hope of salvation, we must preach Christ despite our difficulties." The first subpoint is "Our preaching will bring hate," and the second is "Our prayer overcomes opposition." What are potential problems here? What is lacking in those two main points' wording? There is no parallelism. The subpoints are true, but once you see the importance of this and begin to speak to people regularly, you will automatically hear the need for parallelism. Most ears would not even have picked these up as subpoints. They would not even have heard them as anything but part of that "mud wall" of words coming at them. Because they are not distinguished by parallelism, we do not even pick them out of the mud wall. They are just part of the mass. We do not even hear them as anything different, because they are not worded in parallel. They have no audio flags to make us say, "Oh, that is the point you are making." Because they are not worded in parallel, they are just like every other sentence that is going by.

Now I want to answer some common questions about subpoints. Should you be very concerned in the introduction to establish the anchor clause? I think the answer is "Not really." The anchor clause is typically something that everybody sees right away, so if you have to spend three or four paragraphs to develop the anchor clause, it probably should not be the anchor clause. The anchor clause is something that I think your instincts will tell you needs to be very obvious from the text. People are almost going to agree from the first time you say it. They should not need a lot of proof. So if your statement is something like, "Because God is sovereign, we should honor Him," and if your real message is about what it means for God to be sovereign, then that probably ought to be the message and not, "we should honor Him." Maybe you just need to say the anchor clause is "We should honor Him," so the introduction is about how we should honor whoever is sovereign. People will agree with that. That does not need a lot of proof. We should honor the one who is sovereign. So you establish—I actually use the word "establish" more than I use the word "prove"— the anchor clause just before or after the proposition. If it needs a paragraph, fine. What does "sovereign" mean? It means God is in charge and you are not. That is what it means. Then we are ready to go. I probably do not want to spend a whole lot more time on the concept of sovereignty. However, if I am dealing with a congregation that has no concept of what "sovereign" means, then I may have to do a whole sermon on what it means for God to

be sovereign, and then I will really be particularizing a lot more. However, if you are simply wondering whether you need to be very concerned about developing the anchor clause in the introduction, I want to say that you should establish it, but you do not spend sentence upon sentence upon sentence doing that. If you are doing that, it is probably not the right anchor clause yet.

The next question people often ask is what the real difference is between bullet statement subpoints and analytical question responses. It is a good question, because if you actually look at them on paper, they are pretty much the same, except for the fact that there has been that overarching question. Really the only answer is that the difference is the overarching question. It is the way you get into them. Bullet statements typically are not set up by questions, whereas analytical question responses are set up by that one overarching question. Do you remember that language of "interrogating the main point"? You have a main point, and you actually ask a question about it, and it shows why you are developing the subpoints that you are. Bullets without the overarching question are usually just subdivisions of thought that do not need questions to set them up.

Another common question concerns whether you would ask the question explicitly before every subpoint. I think it is your option. If it is the same question over and over again, you might very well ask it two or three times within the development. By the way, this is also the standard way of developing main points from propositions. We interrogate the proposition. For example, "We should honor God. How do we honor God? Because he is sovereign, we obey Him. Because he is sovereign, we trust Him. Because he is sovereign, we worship Him." That first question—"What should we do in response?"—was the overarching question even to set up the main points.

What I would love for you to do is something that our English essays have trained us not to do, and that is just to get in that oral medium of asking a lot of questions. That is the way you proceed through the message, with question upon question. As a preacher, I ask a lot of questions, and I often find that when I am in Presbyterian circles and I am asking questions, people start talking back to me. Then they get embarrassed because they are in Presbyterian circles and they think they are not supposed to do that, but it is actually, in a certain sense, the mark that I am communicating. They are so much with me now that they are starting to throw the answers back to me, and I actually like that engagement a whole lot. I think the more you communicate, the more you will find the value of sitting in the listeners' seat and asking out loud the questions they would ask if they felt they could, so analytical question responses are just a way of getting us into that.

Another common question concerns interrogative subpoints particularly. How important is it to have parallelism in the question as well as the answer? I will just tell you what typically happens when people are writing sermons. Almost everyone puts the questions in parallel. The ear just knows to do that. Even as you are writing it out, you hear how important that is, but what people typically forget and fail to do is put their answers in parallel. We recognize that the answer should be in parallel, but we might ask whether the question needs to be in parallel. When you are writing the sermon, the opposite typically occurs. People almost always know to make their questions parallel, but they sometimes forget to make their answers parallel, so my big emphasis is on making the answers parallel. I think your instincts will tell you to make the questions parallel as well.

Someone might ask what happens if what I need to do in my subpoints is not only identify what I am saying but also what I am not saying? Just say exactly that. It is very powerful. Everybody knows exactly what you are doing and why. In fact, I think you will often find in the future, as you are preaching, that "here is what I am not saying" is a very important technique to learn. So often what people do is they impose their thoughts on what you have said. You know they are going to do it, so it is

helpful for you as a preacher to actually anticipate not only objections but also aberrations. You actually anticipate them and you say, "I am not saying this, I am not saying this, I am not saying this, I am saying this." That is actually a very powerful strategy for communicating truth. That would not have to be in the subpoints. It could be in the main point. We will not do this in this class, but you could even say in a two-point sermon, here is what I am not saying, and here is what I am saying. You could even set up that contrast in the overall sermon, so it is often very powerful to do those things.

Are the subpoints the places that you can begin to introduce references to other passages? The answer is yes, definitely, with this qualification: so long as you prove the idea was present in the text you are preaching first, before you go over to another text. So if you are preaching from 1 Corinthians 5, and you say that we should honor God, and I see in that parenthesis after your subpoint a reference to 1 Thessalonians 4, I will say, "Now I know there is something in 1 Thessalonians 4 that supports that statement, but I want to see it first in 1 Corinthians 5 before you jump to another passage." So you use other references to support what this text says, not to establish what this text says. They are supporting references, which means that I first have something in my text that gets me going down that path. Yes, we definitely will recognize the power of supporting texts. We will also recognize the danger of eisegesis, importing texts onto the text we are preaching on to make it say what it does not say. So establish that it is here and then support it over there, but first establish that it is here.

Here is a good question: if you use interrogatives in the first main point, do you have to use interrogatives in the second main point? The answer is absolutely not. In fact, it is really a good technique to use different kinds of subpoints within the sermon itself. The same answer applies to the number of subpoints. If you have two subpoints in the first main point, do you have to have two in the second main point? Absolutely not. Each main point is autonomous. You do whatever allows you to best explain that main point. One main point may have no subpoints. It may have three or two. They may be interrogatives or bullets or analytical question responses. Whatever allows you to best explain that main point is what you use, regardless of what you have done or will do with the other main points. That is an important question, because I know that causes confusion.

When we talk about the subpoints being parallel, you might ask whether they are parallel to each other or parallel to the main point and proposition. The answer is that they are parallel to each other. They are parallel in wording to each other, not necessarily to the main point and proposition.

One final question is this: if you are just dealing with one verse, and you are subdividing it and developing the idea from other texts, is that inappropriate? It is not inappropriate. We will actually look at in just a bit. That is technically called a textual sermon, not an expository sermon, so we will not do it this semester. We will not say that it is wrong. It has its place, but we will first do expository messages. Expository messages, by definition, take main points and subpoints from the text directly in front of us. Textual messages, by definition, take main points from the text in front of us, and they take developmental subpoints from other texts. Textual messages are not wrong. They have a rich history, but the danger of them is that we might make this text say something it does not say by pulling in those other texts first. What we are really doing this semester is locking ourselves down hermeneutically. We are asking if our interpretation is correct, so we are looking at this text, and we are saying what is true and what to do about it. Can I prove that from this text? From this text, can I establish this outline? Can I preach this message from this text? Now we know that we will do lots of other things in the future, but right now we are just making sure that we can say what God says. We are saying, "I will explain this text to you," and that is the goal that we are striving for, knowing that more things will come in the future, but right now we are just saying, "I want this expositor's ethic to be my own. Let me explain this text to you." That is where we are going.

Let me just get some other information in front of you. These are just general order things that I want you to be aware of. As you think of the standard order of the divisions of the text, you now kind of see how the pieces come together. You announce the text, then you have the Scripture introduction, then you reannounce the text, then you have the Scripture reading, a prayer for illumination, introduction, propositions, and main point statements. Now look at that first main point statement. You will have a subpoint, a subpoint, and another subpoint. What we are doing there is dividing the explanation, so we have three subpoints (although it could be two or four) that divide the explanation. We will then move into illustration, then application. However, the elements do not always have to be in that order. You could have one subpoint, then an illustration, then two more subpoints, then the application. There is nothing wrong with that. We might say, "You know what? These second two subpoints will flow very easily if the listeners understand the first one. The first one is the foundation that sets up the next two, so I actually want to use my illustration to make sure this first subpoint really becomes clear to them. Then I will go back to the subpoints." So there is not a canonical order for these elements. We can move them around.

However, I am going to ask you this semester and next semester to use one illustration for each main point. Some of you will not like that because you will not like doing illustrations. It is just not your personality and nature. Others of you love doing illustrations, and some of you will want to do an illustration for every subpoint and every sub-subpoint and every sub-sub-subpoint, and there will be illustrations all over the place. But for right now, there should be one illustration per main point. Use the illustration wherever you think you can make the best use of it. It might be after the first subpoint, before you get to the next two. It might not be there. It might be after all three. As a matter of fact, it might actually set up all three subpoints. So the idea is, wherever you can make best use of that illustration, use it there. We will talk a little bit later about how illustrations do fit and ways that we find to make them mesh with the subpoints and the explanation, but for now I just want you to recognize that you have various options of where they might fit. They do not always have to come right after all of the explanation. They might come after the portion that you think is the most significant.

The next thing I want to do is just for you to get an idea of how sermons fit together. What are the standard lengths of the major divisions of the sermon? You are now beginning to get a sense of these different pieces of a sermon, maybe in a way that you never thought of before. There are these different components of this taxonomy of the sermon. Some of you have said to me after class that you are listening to sermons these days, without a critical ear, I hope, but with a more analytical ear. You begin to hear the proposition and the introduction. You begin to hear how the preacher puts an illustration together with his explanation. You begin to hear sermons for their divisions, but now you may begin to wonder what the actual timing is that it takes to move through all these things.

This may actually surprise you. It is kind of fun to go through the first time. The text announcement and Scripture introduction usually take around a minute or maybe less, so on a page, if you look at the way the example sermon in your book is typed, that is a third of a page or less. It is hard to say exactly because there are so many different fonts, but I am referring to a typewritten page with standard formatting, single-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font. The Scripture reading goes on one or two minutes, so it is half a page if you would type it all out. The prayer for illumination is another minute, or about a third of a page. The sermon introduction usually takes two to three minutes, so a half to two-thirds of a page. The sermon conclusion takes two to three minutes, so again you have a half a page or so. The closing prayer takes a minute or two, so another half of a page. Look at what that means. You have not even gotten to the body of the sermon, and a third of your 30 minutes is gone. A third of it is gone, and you have not even gotten to the body of the sermon, but these are all necessary components in

terms of what is going into the normal preaching occasion. I recognize that some of you come from different denominations, and so things can be different in different traditions, but it is kind of interesting to see that just the Scripture reading, the prayers, the introduction and conclusion, everything that is around the body itself, takes about a third of the time. So if that is the case, if a third of your time is in that surrounding material, then you will want to know what the average times and page lengths are for the body of the 30-minute message. Well, of those 20 remaining minutes, each main point in a three-point message is roughly six minutes long. If you have three points, which is fairly standard, then each point can take six or seven minutes, which means that each main point in all its components is about two pages in length. That is about how long it goes, about two pages. How long did you think a sermon was when you first heard it? Did you think it was 20 or 25 or 30 pages? No, it will end up being about seven-and-a-half or eight pages, if you type it all out. Now most people do not type out their entire sermon, but I am telling you these lengths to give you a sense of proportion here.

Therefore if each main point is about two pages or six minutes, then if you just use a standard proportion of a third explanation, a third illustration, and a third application, each component will be about two minutes or two-thirds of a page. If you divide down that two minutes of explanation, then if you have two subpoints, each will be about a third of a page or a good long paragraph. If it becomes longer than a long paragraph, you need another subpoint. If you have a long paragraph, that typically is a subpoint. Then, of course, you have your various extemporized comments—and they are always, by the way, what get you in the most trouble—which take another two minutes or so, so the conclusion of all that is that the written content of the 30-minute sermon that includes only the Scripture introduction, sermon introduction, sermon body, and sermon conclusion, will run seven-and-a-half to eight pages. I have said this before, but a note on subpoints is that in order to accomplish the symmetry of having each component of exposition take up a third of the main point, the subpoints of explanation are usually one paragraph a piece. As a rule of thumb, explanations longer than one paragraph need subpoint divisions.

Finally, here is one more important set of thoughts. What is the standard conceptual progression of a subpoint? In other words, if I am developing subpoints of explanation, what usually happens first? What will happen is that we will say something like this: "We should honor God. Look with me at verse 2. It says, 'In all your ways acknowledge him.' Now what that means is that wherever we go, whatever we are facing, whatever ways God takes us in life, we should be honoring God. To acknowledge God actually in the Hebrew means…." I just did something. I said first, "It means we should honor Him." Then I said, "Look with me at verse 2." Then I began to explain what "acknowledge" means as it relates to "honor.' This is a standard progression that we call "state, place, prove." I state the truth, show where it is in the text, and then begin to prove it with the explanation. So the standard conceptual progression of a point is this: first, we state the truth. We make the main point or the subpoint statement. Second, we place the truth by showing where it is in the text. Third, we prove the truth. We prove that that text says that statement that I just said. Further on, you know, we will begin to illustrate and apply, but the subpoints themselves follow this pattern of state, place, prove. We will talk more about that as we go. There are various ways to do that.

Here is a caution. You now begin to understand that you can start a main point with lots of different things. You can start with a principle statement or an illustration or even a particular application. What is the one thing, however, with which you cannot start a main point? The wording I use is "bald explanation." Here is what you can do in preaching that people will understand precisely what you are doing. You can begin with an illustration and then show its implications. You can begin with an application and then show how you got that. You can begin with a principle statement and then show what proves the principle. What will confuse people, however, is if you just begin to give them explanations with no real particular to anchor your explanations. If you begin to talk about the aorist

tense, or the history of Israel, or the imprisonment of Paul, they will think, "Why are you telling me this?" It has no particular to anchor it. Anything will serve as a particular—a statement of truth, a statement of application, or an illustration—but what you cannot do is just start giving explanation to people without some kind of particular. That is called "bald explanation," when you just begin to tell people things without giving them a basis for why you are telling them these things. So that is the one thing with which you cannot begin.

What we are doing now is a fairly formal approach, learning the pieces and seeing how they unfold. Where we are going is toward main points with subpoints and conclusions, so if you want to begin working toward where we are going, then you should begin to think about subpoints and what you will be doing to develop subpoints, anchoring them in the text.