

Developing Redemptive Messages

Last time we talked about the importance of redemptive or Christo-centric preaching, and we said that the goal is not just to have some new science of hermeneutics—how we interpret better than the next guy—but rather, to understand that the essence of Christian preaching is not just to have standards whereby we do better than the next guy, or some basic moral message, but rather to understand the distinction of the Christo-centric nature of all Scripture as the power, as the motivation for the true Christian message. Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” Just a quick review of those importance principles, why is it important to have a Christo-centric prospective. We’ll do a quick review of that and then we’ll move into: “All right, if it’s important, how do we do these messages that are redemptive and true to our expository ethic?” So, a quick review.

First, we talked last time about the necessity of a redemptive focus in all Christian preaching. Expository preaching is committed to revealing what the Word says, and Jesus says the whole Word presents his person and work; that is, by disclosing God’s grace that becomes fully revealed in him. We’re not trying to make Jesus magically appear from every text, every tract and mud puddle, but rather we’re saying, Christ says all the text is in some way disclosing him. It’s not by magical appearance, but rather by disclosing how the whole story is unfolding for the purpose of revealing the redemptive work of God himself, ultimately fully disclosed in Christ.

But of course it’s not just the fact that the story is about Christ, but our ability to do what the Scriptures require is also from Christ’s provision. Jesus said in John 15:5, “Apart from me you can do nothing.” So if our messages are simply moral instructions but we have not found a way of incorporating God’s redeeming activity, his power to do what he requires, then we ultimately fail God’s people by telling them to do what they cannot do apart from Christ. If Christ is necessary, his redeeming work, the grace that is exemplified in him, is necessary for Christian preaching, then we also need to have the identification marks of non-redemptive preaching, so we don’t go there.

And we talked about some of those identification marks in the last lecture as well. Messages that are simply “sola bootstrapsa,” that is, you pick yourself up by your own bootstraps and do better. There is a rather famous appendix in a book that I won’t name particularly, but the appendix is entitled “The Menace of Sunday School,” and the menace that’s being described is this: where the teacher with all good heartedness and apparent good teaching says, “Now Sally, if you’re just a good little girl, Jesus will love you.” It sounds so sweet; but it’s actually deadly to our faith. “If you’re just a good person God will love you.” It’s not on the basis of our goodness that God’s love comes to us but on the basis of his goodness and his provision. And that Sunday school message of “God’s love follows our goodness” is actually deadly to our faith; in fact it’s not a Christian faith at all.

“Sola bootstrapsa” messages are also identified by “the deadly be’s.” We talked about the messages that are simply “be like,” or “be good,” or “be more disciplined.” Again, with the caveat that we’re not saying that these are wrong messages in themselves; but they are wrong messages *by themselves*, if all we have said to people is “be better” or “be more disciplined.”

Now, having another message, not simply giving moralisms, not simply giving the imperatives of Scripture, but reminding people of the necessity of God's grace in their lives, to be and do what he requires, ultimately can become very difficult to preach; not just it's hard to see in the Scriptures, but because it's a notion that wars against the human reflex that says, "I will fix my own situation, I'll do what God requires and then God will reward me for it."

In a famous sermon by Martin Luther, he gives his own summary of why this is so difficult, in a message entitled "The Son: A Conclusion of the Christian Life." Here's what he said: "It is exceedingly difficult to get into another habit of thinking in which we clearly separate faith and works of love. Even though we are in faith, the heart is always ready to boast of itself before God and say, 'After all, I've preached so long and so well and done so much, surely he will take this into account.' But it cannot be done; with men you may boast, but when you come before God, leave all that boasting at home, and remember to appeal from justice to grace. Don't ask God to be just, don't ask him to be fair, you don't want God to be fair. What do you want? You want God to be merciful, you want his grace."

"But let anyone try this," says Luther, "and he will see and experience how exceedingly hard and bitter it is for a man who all his life has been mired in his works-righteousness to pull himself out of it and with all his heart rise up through faith in the one mediator. I myself have been preaching and cultivating grace for almost 20 years and still I feel [this is how you know it's Luther; listen to these words], I feel the old clinging dirt of wanting to deal so with God that I may contribute something so that he will have to give me his grace in exchange for my holiness. Still I cannot get it into my head that I should surrender myself completely to sheer grace. Yet I know that this is what I should and must do."

It is so hard, I mean it really is, particularly when you've been out of backgrounds of performance or whether you're just trying to say, "But surely God will be pleased if I do X." And the answer is he will be pleased, but it's not the reason he loves you, it's not the reason he forgives you, and it's not why his mercy comes. And just to kind of put all that together is so difficult: to separate pleasing God from acceptance before him. And think of how those things function.

So we go down correct paths today, I want to talk about some distinctives of Christ-centered preaching. We talked about non-redemptive preaching last time. What are some distinctives of Christ-centered preaching? First, again, what it's not. Christ-centered preaching is not allegorical preaching. We are not talking about that; it is not allegorical preaching. Christ-centered preaching does not attempt to make the person of Christ appear in every Old Testament mud puddle and camel track by allegory or analogy through paralleling Old Testament accounts with New Testament experiences of Jesus: what Sidney Greidanus calls "Leapfrogging to Golgotha." It's so easy to do this, right? Rahab warned the spies and told them where she was and the cloth she put outside of her home which was to be her rescue, what was the color of the cloth? It was scarlet, which of course indicates what? The blood of Christ. And you kind of, well, maybe it means she was a scarlet woman. Maybe it doesn't indicate shed blood, maybe it indicates present sin. Could it mean either? The idea is we're not trying to impose our imagination on what the text says. We're trying to say what the text says and that's part of Christ-Centered preaching, not allegorical preaching.

B. It's also not antinomian preaching, OK? It's also not antinomian preaching. Tell me, you all know this, standard objection: If you begin to say that there's grace in all the Scriptures, and grace should be the motivation of our preaching, and grace should work its way into our sermons. Now what are people concerned about? Too much grace, which is going to lead to what? It'll lead to license. And you have to say, "Is that true?" It certainly can be. I almost feel like there is a time in everybody's life if they come to an understanding they are made right before God and kept right before God by his grace alone that the pendulum swings. You know, you kind of go, "Oh, you mean he'll still love me if I do X?" that people kind of slide over into X. And then they say, "Oh, oh, he warned me about X because he loved me." And the pendulum starts swinging back, but it seems like that almost everybody kind of makes that shift. And we say, "Is it a danger?" Of course. But you have to say, those in whom the Spirit dwells—and that's a caveat—those in whom the Spirit dwells, grace is the vitamin of holiness. It is the grace of God that teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions. Remember how Paul writes Titus—grace rightly perceived is the motivation and the enablement of Christian obedience. Without grace you cannot do anything. And so rightly perceived grace is not antinomianism; it actually is the power of holiness.

Christ-centered preaching does not negate the necessity of law in believers' lives but teaches that our obedience has no power to redeem or grant merit before God. That's usually a shock to people. "My obedience does not give me merit?" Your best work is only what before God? Filthy rags. Our obedience does not gain us merit before God. Christ-centered preaching reveals the grace in all of Scripture to motivate people according to Christ's precept, "If you love me you will obey what I command." It's a very different concept of how grace is used. If what we're doing is instilling greater and greater love for Christ, then we will love what he loves. That's why Jesus said, "If you love me." It's why love is the greater compulsion and ultimately the greater power of the Christian life. By the way, for those of you very sharp, that reference there is totally wrong. It's not John 12:14, it's John 14:15.

C.S. Lewis phrased it this way, just kind of a wonderful summary of these thoughts: "All the initiative has been on God's side, all has been free unbounded grace, and all will continue to be free unbounded grace. Bliss is not for sale, cannot be earned. Works have no merit, though of course faith inevitably, even unconsciously, flows out into works of love at once. The Christian is not saved because he does works of love; he does works of love because he is saved. It is faith alone that has saved him, faith bestowed by sheer gift. From this buoyant humility, this farewell to the self with all its good resolutions, anxiety, scruples, and motive-scratchings, all the protestant doctrines originally sprang." That's a wonderful statement: that ultimately it's the putting aside of self in justification but also in sanctification that he says was the driving force of the protestant ethic and doctrine.

That means it's very important and we have to think about what redemptive preaching is. It is this: it is recognition of all Scripture as a unified revelation of God's redeeming work. Hear that? All of Scripture is a unified revelation of God's redeeming work. Sidney Greidanus, in his book *Sola Scriptura*, puts it this way: "In opposing the fragmentary interpretation which reads the Bible as a collection of biographies, the redemptive-historical side [and that's really what we're talking about, redemptive-historical preaching] stresses the hermeneutical significance of the

unity of redemptive history. The unity of redemptive history implies the Christo-centric nature of every historical text. Redemptive history is the history of Christ. He stands at its center, but no less at its beginning and end. Scripture discloses its historiography, that is, the theme of its history, right at the beginning. Genesis 3:15 places all subsequent events in the tremendous battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between Christ coming into the world and Satan, the ruler of this world. And it places all events in the light of the complete victory which the seed of the woman shall attain. In view of this, it is imperative that not one single person be isolated from this history and set apart from this great battle. The place of both opponents and coworkers can only be determined Christologically.”

Now, they are just wonderful words but there is a lot there, so let me just say: what it’s saying? It’s saying everything is connected to the great battle whose theme was announced right at the beginning of the Bible. What’s the Bible’s theme? It’s not John 3:16. Go to Genesis 3:15. Remember God’s speaking to Satan after the fall: “I’ll put enmity (hatred) between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed.” What’s going to happen? “You will strike his heel, he will crush your head.” And now the battle is engaged. Everything from that point forward is about the great battle—every person, every event, every chapter is another part of that unfolding battle as God is redeeming, reclaiming the world and Satan is trying to stop him. It’s all part of the battle.

Our goal—let’s just look at the brackets beneath that paragraph—our goal is not to make every passage mention Christ, but to show where every passage stands in relation to the grace ultimately revealed in Christ. If Genesis 3:15 is your interpretive high hill over which to look at the rest of history, it’s almost as though—some of you have done this—that you’re standing on a hill overlooking a Napoleonic battlefield. Can you kind of picture it? You’re on this high hill and you’re trying to explain everything that’s in front of you, this grand battle that’s going on. And you say, all right, here’s the infantry up close, and there is the cavalry back behind that hill, the artillery on the hill, there’s a supply train further back, there are spies on both sides, and your trying to explain any person, any feature without relating it to the battle is not to understand what it’s really about. So in this great battle whose commencement has already been announced—and by the way whose end is known—in this great battle everything has a place and the goal in Christo-centric preaching is to say, “Where does it fit? What’s happening here? What’s the role of this spy? Or that horseshoe? Or that warrior? Where does it fit in what’s going on here?” Which is not to impose something on the text that isn’t there, but rather to find the place of the text in the great battle.

Now there are wrong ways to do it, and I just put here what’s on your sheets. It’s not this: what Greidanus called this “Leapfrogging to Golgotha,” where the preacher in essence says, “This passage reminds me of something in Jesus’ life.” All right? Rahab’s cloth was red and that reminds me Jesus’ blood was red. Moses met the daughters of Jethro at a well and Jesus met a woman at a well. You know. And so somehow, this leapfrog that reminds me of something in Jesus life, is not what we’re talking about. Rather, what we’re talking about is this: Christ-centered exposition where we are saying everything from Adam and Eve to the consummation is part of this great battle of the King ultimately crushing the serpent. And there have been chapters along that history. And our goal is to say where are we in the redemptive battle? Where are we? Where does it fit? So I’m not imposing something that is not there; I’m finding the place of the

story in the overarching plan of God's purposes. The preacher explains the role that says of any epoch, event, person, and passage within the divine crusade of redemption that is the sovereign victory of the seed of the woman over Satan. You think of that, what's really happening, there's a divine crusade that's going on through Scripture. God is ultimately conquering. He's bringing all things to bear. Now sometimes there are defeats, sometimes there are false hopes, there are false messiahs, there are idols, there are lots of things that will be put aside, destroyed as God is making progress in the battle. And our goal again is to find out where we are in that great battle.

The quote at the bottom of the page I think is a really neat one. "Christian preaching is simply the proclamation of the divine crusade of redemption of God's way out of the human predicament." That's Simon Blocker and that was done in the '50s, but you think, "Wow, that's really perceptive." Here's the fallen condition, right, in which we live; the human dilemma. And all truly Christian preaching is saying, "What's God's way out of there?" That's really why we started with the FCF, because it is real fallenness, right? You require a divine solution. What's the problem in this text? What's it addressing? How is God bringing his answer to bear rather than just what do we just do to fix it?

1. If you thought on page 3 of a basic process for Christ-centered preaching, the three-step process, in some ways you already know this; this is kind of old hat to you because you are kind of ready instinctively for these steps, from what we've done in the past. The first step in this three-step process for Christ-centered preaching—that is preaching Christ, or again, think semantically, that is par for the course—of God's redeeming work, from each text; the first step: What is the FCF? What does the text say? What's the Fallen Condition Focus? That is the burden of the text that requires God's intervention and rescue. You're going to read an article a little bit later by Tim Keller in which he talks about one of the nice things about redemptive or Christ-centered preaching in a post-modern era where everybody loves narratives so much. He says there's always an implicit story and the implicit story is always that Christ is coming to the rescue. All preaching that is truly Christian has that implicit narrative that somehow God's got to get you out of this. A true FCF requires a divine solution and thus exposes the inadequacies of legalistic, moralistic messages—that is "the deadly be's" by themselves.

2. Having identified the FCF we ask, "What redemptive or grace principles are evident in the text? OK, there is the dilemma—what are the redemptive or grace principles that are also here? We examine historical context, genre, narrative features, doctrinal statements, divine actions, surrounding passages, whatever it is that underscores the necessity and the presence of God's redemptive work on behalf of his people. We're looking for how grace is getting on the scene to get out of the fallen condition and then . . .

3. In light of how these principles fit into the overall plan of redemption, how should we respond to these principles in our lives? Long ago, you heard me say that what we're trying to do in preaching is take truth to struggle and that becomes a little bit more evident now; that if we're starting with FCF, with the Fallen Condition Focus, we're ultimately saying what truth is dealing with that, but inevitably there would have to be grace principles involved. The truth is never going to be, "You fix it." Somehow there has to be grace on the table to deal with the Fallen Condition Focus. Now often questions start to come: now does grace go with the first point, the second point, or the third point? And the answer has to be, there are all kinds of *Christ-*

different strategies, right? The real point is that by the end of the sermon we have to know that it's God's supply, right? And sometimes we'll say, now recognize that's because God has delivered his people that they were to obey him, and because God has delivered, maybe I'll lay the foundation early.

We're going to listen to Clowney two meetings from now in which he will kind of take people through an entire message of performance doing, and then get way down here and say, "By the way, you can't do that." And he'll kind of turn the tables by the end and talk about the necessity of Christ. I don't think there is a perfect place. I think you just have to have the understanding that if you left people with themselves, there isn't much hope there. So there are different strategies for where it will fit. I think that most of the time you'll find that you'll start integrating and then it builds as you go. But you'll see different strategies evolve as you start preaching this way.

Now I've said that what you want to do is find the redemptive or the grace principles in the text, but that kind of delays the question, which is: "All right, how do I find those principles?" So let's start to go there with Roman numeral III on page 3.

III. How do you find the redemptive principles in the text? Well, there are some traditional approaches that are useful for some texts.

1. And the first is simply a direct approach; that is, you expound the text's direct mention of Christ or his Messianic work. All right, let's just presume that you're in Matthew 26, the crucifixion scene. Is there any redemptive truth there? Just say what's there. Just tell us what's there. There's direct reference where there has been direct explanation, where there has been direct reference to some aspect of God's redeeming work. So a Gospel account, a Messianic psalm, an epistolary reference to the work of Christ on our behalf: he himself died in his body on the tree that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. I mean, just expound that and you'll get redemptive truth where there is direct mention.

2. A second approach, which you'll read a little bit of Clowney on, and which will scare you to death, so we're not going to do a lot of it this year, is the typological approach, OK, where you look for types. And that certainly is a legitimate way. And we recognize the New Testament identifies types. Kind of the standard Reformed understanding of types is that we do not say something is a type unless the Bible says that's a type. All right? Otherwise, many things can be modified different ways.

Now you don't recognize, I just stepped around all kinds of landmines. We don't identify as a type unless the Bible says it's a type. What's the question, "How does the Bible say that?" Right? And there are the clear ones at times. You get David and you get the water from the rock; those are clearly identified as types. The big question for a lot of theologians these days is, "What about those types that are not said to be types but are literary parallels?" I can remember once hearing a pastor in my youth. I may have been early in seminary at that time, I don't know. But I can remember almost just laughing out loud as he talked about Isaac being a type of Christ. He said, you know, wood goes on his back, and he goes up a hill, and his father is going to kill him. He was very serious. I'm kind of "Ha, ha," you know. How silly. Well, I don't think it's so

silly any more. I mean the parallels are so striking, and I think, all right, now the Bible does not say that this is a type. But if we were reading *Moby Dick* and we saw Queequeg pick up a spear of a certain shape in chapter 2 and in chapter 42 that same spear reappeared and Queequeg held it the same way, we'd say, same author? Oh, there is a connection here. And then we say, what if it's different authors? That's Moses and this is Paul. Well, it's God. It's the Holy Spirit. Was there something intended? And I'm not going to solve that before you today. I will just tell you that study of typology, if you want to do your PhD, is a real hot place to go these days, OK, and I think very fruitful. As a lot of Old Testament narrative studies are unfolding and we're seeing how Hebrew narratives work, there's something there. But right now, I'm saying you don't have to go there, OK? Obviously some texts will work typologically, some texts work by direct mention of Christ because he's mentioned right there. I'm more concerned in these lectures to talk about, if you will, the more common occurrences of how you interpret texts that are the usual texts in Scripture. So I want to talk about item B.

B. If not direct or typological approaches, what's the most common redemptive-historical approach useful for all texts? That is, identifying where this passage's events, persons, or instructions fit in the overall context of God's redemptive plan, in order to proclaim the redemptive or grace principles that will provide motivation and enabling for the passage's imperatives. Now that last little phrase, "motivation and enabling for God's imperatives," that's all of the next lecture; that's what we're doing next time. For right now we're just saying, "All right, where do you get Christo-centricity in other texts?" In context, every passage either is: a) predictive of the work of Christ; b) preparatory for the work of Christ; c) reflective of the work of Christ; or d) resultant of the work of Christ. Now I'll go back through them.

Certain passages are going to be predictive of the work of Christ. Give me examples: What are passages or types of literature in the Bible that are predictive of the work of Christ? The prophecies, messianic psalms, OK. Obviously, if you're going to preach from Isaiah 40, "Comfort my people," and you are going to give no mention of Christ, you didn't get it. You didn't understand what was going on there. So there are passages that are predictive of the work of Christ.

Other passages are preparatory for the work of Christ; in other words they are preparing us for the person and/or work. Now that's an important slash—they are preparing us to understand Christ's person and/or work. The sacrificial system, why is it there in the Old Testament? Because God's people will be made right with God through sacrifices, right? No, not entirely. Something else is going on. We are being prepared to understand what God would do through the perfect lamb, through his son—the sacrificial system. What about the Law? The Law was preparing us in a different way. How was it our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, our pedagogue, our come-along counselor; how was it preparing us to do that? By teaching us what we could not do. It's why we have in the Sermon on the Mount not only the past iteration of the law, but the highest iteration of the law. As Jesus—you know we say it so sweetly at times—he just said, you know, "Consider the birds and the lilies." Isn't that a wonderful, comforting message? Wait a second. He just said anybody who calls his brother a fool is in danger of hell fire. If you look at a woman to lust after her you've already committed adultery in your heart. If you are a Pharisee, what are you doing now? "Whoa—I thought I was OK. He can't be right." No, it's the thing that's to humble you is the law, and when you understand it fully and state it accurately it drives

everyone to their knees. It's supposed to. There are passages that are preparing us for the work of Christ.

Item C, which we'll talk about the most in a little bit, I think is the most critical category. There are passages that are reflective of the work of Christ; that is, they are reflecting grace principles. There are passages that are reflecting grace principles in words, actions, or relationships. Grace principles are being reflected in words, in actions, or relationships. So there is something that I am going to understand more fully about the life and ministry of Christ and it's because of this ancient example that I'm beginning to understand more about what Christ would do. God delivered his people though they have rebelled against him. He forgave them though they have done it over and over again. He rescued the weak, he fed the hungry. In each case God is taking care of people who can't take care of themselves. There's some sort of relationship by which God is explaining his character that's going to come to full understanding in the ministry of Christ. There are things that are being reflected of grace in words, in actions, or relationships. Doesn't have to mention Jesus—it's preparing God's people to understand what he would do by the reflection of those grace principles.

Finally, certain matters are resultant of the work of Christ. If you can pray now before God, the High Judge of the universe, you can nonetheless approach boldly the throne of grace. How can that happen? It's a result of the fact that someone has already preceded you. Christ has already done a work and as a result of that work that is why you can pray. In each case what's being said is that Christ has done something which we're either being prepared to understand or which we now understand more fully and are responding to.

The next page tries to, if you will, drill down even further into how passages may be Christocentric, redemptive revealing, by saying that there may be macro as well as micro interpretive options. The macro option is the first one: redemptive-historical. That is identifying the place or the function of the text in redemptive history. Now the little graphic I put on the overhead just a little bit ago, that's redemptive history. It's everything from Adam to the consummation and saying, "All right, where do we fit in that redemptive scheme?" So: looking at the big redemptive history and saying, "Where does this passage fit?" And most people are pretty intimidated by trying to do that. I am, aren't you? Oh, oh, have I got it right? Have I figured out is this the right interpretation to that particular event? So here are some hints.

Recognize that some aspects of redemptive history are bridges, that they are bridging our understanding of what Christ would accomplish. There may be events or patterns or persons that advance our understanding of God's redemptive message or means. Take Melchizedek, just there. What do you remember about Melchizedek? King of Salem, which is what? King of peace. Where did he come from? We don't know. When did he die? We don't know. But what was his purpose? Why did he come? OK, he's the high priest to whom? To the father of nations. He's somehow bringing peace to the one by whom all nations will be blessed. God is helping us to understand something. It's a bridge to understanding that Christ will ultimately accomplish and what his ultimate rule will be and his purposes for whom? So there's a bridge to our understanding. Obviously if I said something about the temple ceremonial system, right? It's bridging our understanding.

But even as there can be bridges in redemptive history there can be dead ends too. At times recognize there are events, patterns, and persons that demonstrate a false hope of redemption. It could be the law, or the judges, or the kings. We're so Western in our thinking of how the Bible ought to function, you know, it will be just this to this to this—it will be a linear function of things. But it's not always that way. There can be false hopes and dead ends. Think of it. All right, we'll give the law and everyone will perfectly obey the law and everything will be OK, right? No, that doesn't work. OK, ya'll just go do it and everyone just do what they think is right in their own eyes. Period of the judges. Well, that doesn't work very well. Listen, here's what we'll do. We'll get the biggest, brightest, smartest, best-looking guy we can get and we'll make him the king and he'll make all the right judges and that'll fix it. Right? Well, look here. You know what, we may need another judge, we may need a better lawgiver and keeper, maybe a better king, not this, not this, not this, but this. Sometime if you just remember it's Hebrew, it's oriental thought, it's not just linear this to this to this. Sometimes there's this circle navigation where the point being made is circled by all the events that surround it. And God through the course of history is saying, "That doesn't work and that doesn't work and that doesn't work. You'll need another priest, you'll need another prophet, you'll need another king. And there he is." There are dead ends as well as bridges and we begin to see how they function in the course of biblical history.

Now, my trying to comfort you a little bit may have done none at all. 'Cause I recognize, OK, oh boy, I hope I can do that. So what are maybe narrower ways to look at a text and still think redemptively? One way is to look at the text and consider it in terms of doctrinal instruction. Is there some doctrinal instruction there that is telling me redemptive truth? That is, we're trying to expound redemptive doctrine, some understanding of grace that is exemplified, stated, or taught in the immediate text. This is a micro approach, OK, not trying to go out this way, but right there. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him, credited to him as righteousness. Any grace principles in there that you can think of? Just say what it says, you know? There may be doctrinal instruction that's right there, and so if you say, "He was the worst of all the kings and God forgave him when he repented." Is there a grace principle there? I want to keep us from thinking that Christo-centric preaching is always macro-level preaching. Sometimes you can come in close just by looking at the doctrinal instruction that may be right here.

Another form of that is looking for literary motifs. Now this is why you pay the big money to come to this class. I've never said this in this section of Christ-centered preaching before. This is new stuff. It's not even in the book! I just sometimes look back at my own preaching and say, "Now wait a second, that's what I'm saying, but what am I doing? What am I doing at times that doesn't fit?" And I recognize at times when I'm preaching about a Christo-centric theme, there may be some sort of literary motif that I'm working off of. OK? Now, you know what a motif is? It's a repeated theme, image, or phrase. So sometimes I think the way in which redemptive truth is coming is explaining how the author uses a literary motif to prefigure or echo an aspect of Christ's redeeming work. Now this can be macro as well as micro.

Paul looks at Moses striking the rock and the water coming out of it and he says that rock was Christ. He says that rock was Christ. God bringing water out of a rock, God blessing people in a desert, God providing for his people where they cannot provide for themselves. He said that's what Christ is. All right, if you were to go throughout the Old Testament, you'll find one of the

most common repeated motifs of wording, not of image, but of wording is, “slow to anger and abounding in love.” Over and over again. When God is wanting to capture his character, how he deals with people despite their failings, he will say, “I’m slow to anger and abounding in love.” It’s a repeated theme that goes over and over again as God is making his point.

Let me just do one or two more. I was in Israel this summer. It just struck me so much again. When Joshua goes into the Promised Land, he ultimately has a conquest, he conquers the territory. Do you remember? From Dan to Beersheba. He goes from Dan to Judah. When David takes over as king, his first conquest is as he ultimately establishes the kingdom from Dan to Judah. Jesus through most of his ministry stays in a little 17-mile radius circle around Jerusalem, goes up to Capernaum, but he’s staying in a fairly small area. Then right before the crucifixion he goes up to Dan and comes down to Judah. What’s happening? He’s taking the land again. Where does he perform his first miracle? Shechem. Why a healing, raising somebody from the dead? Who did that before? Elijah. Who came to Shechem when he first entered the Promised Land and set up camp at Shechem? Who’s the first one who did that? Abraham. Every time God comes to take the territory he goes to Shechem. What’s the territory ultimately? Dan to Judah. Now, I’m not saying you have to buy this. The people of Israel did. When Jesus did the raising, what did the people say? He must be Elijah. They recognized the connection. And it sometimes helps us with passages we struggle with.

Remember Matthew says after Jesus had been taken to Egypt because of the persecution with his mother and father, what passage of Scripture was quoted? Do you remember? “Out of Egypt have I called my sons.” Well, that wasn’t talking about Jesus, if you go back to the passage; it’s talking about the nation of Israel. But what they recognized was that whenever God is redeeming his people, the great stories of the Exodus in the Bible, that great redemptive motif has people coming out of Israel. And what did God call Israel in Exodus 5? “My son.” You hear the motifs?

Now, I think you’ll get comfortable in those over time. I’m not asking you to do that yet. It’s really the next one that I think is the most helpful to you and the most common, as you have to get gunned up full. What are the different cartridges you can use for these different passages? Here’s the one that I think is the most helpful most of the time: what I call relational interaction, that is, identifying redemptive truths, grace principles, expressed in God’s interaction with people or his representatives’ interactions with people; that is, you’re looking real micro and you’re saying, “In this passage, I don’t have to go way out to the horizons. I don’t even have to look into motifs as it were. How am I seeing grace exemplified right here? How is God providing strength in weakness? Faithfulness despite unfaithfulness? Provision for need, forgiveness of sin, discipline or correction?” I think this is kind of the most frequently used and often the most powerful interpretive tool. Because what we’re really saying is, “How is God displaying himself as the hero?” Does that help a little bit? You’re just looking and you’re saying, “All right, forget all that stuff about motifs and macro redemptive stuff; how is God displaying himself as hero here?”

Remember what ultimately Christo-centric preaching is? The divine solution to the human dilemma. How is God demonstrating himself to be the hero? It may be through whom he supplies—some representative of his. As David cared for Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth? Remember him? Whose son is he? Jonathan’s. Therefore he’s the grandson of whom? Aaah, the

grandson of Saul. Who's on the throne now? David. Who's his greatest threat? Any heir of Saul. But Mephibosheth can't take care of himself. Why can't he take care of himself? Because he's lame in what? Both feet, remember? He can't take care of himself and he's David's greatest threat. But what does David do with him? He sits him at his table. Honors him. What do we learn? We learn something about the nature of God even toward his enemies, like you and me. The ones who damaged him and then alas are blessed by him. God is the hero, how is he showing us that?

If you will, I always recognize at this point that if you kind of lay out all of the redemptive options, that people are kind of appreciative in the moment but later on you'll be at your desk somewhere, you know, it's going to be about midnight, and you're going to be going, "Oh no, which of those do I pick? Which is the right one on this text?" And I'd like to make it more simple. The simplest for me and what I honestly do most of the time when I get stuck, I take out a different pair of glasses. And this set of glasses has two lenses that I can identify by two questions. You ready? Here they are.

The first question is this: What does this text reveal about God's nature or attributes which provide the work of Christ? And/or two: What does this text reveal about our nature or attributes which require the work of Christ?

All right. It's just this simple. What does this text tell me about God and what does this text tell me about me? Now, those are not unfair questions, OK? You can ask those questions of any text and it's not what everybody fears; I'm going to be required to import the New Testament on the Old, I'm going to do eisegesis, I'm being forced in Christ-centered preaching to do this kind of non-biblical preaching. I'm saying, no, no. Just ask two questions. What does this text tell you about God and what does this text tell you about you? Because if you're doing that you're forced to think redemptively. You are not the answer to whatever is the burden of the text. God is the answer and somehow God is revealing your need as well as his provision. It may not be full-formed, remember; it may just be a seed, it may just be hints of what's going to happen. But ultimately God is revealing something about you and something about himself, and asking those questions, which are very fair questions—what did I learn about God and what did I learn about me here?—is going to force us to think redemptively.

Now at times I fear that guys will be thinking, you know, "I just don't want to impose the New Testament on the Old. The Old Testament should be able to be interpreted with itself." I do agree with that, but at the same time I want to remind you, you live this side of the cross, and it was never God's intention to say, "Now when you interpret the Old Testament you turn a blind eye to what you know about Jesus. Don't you dare think about anything on the cross. Don't you think about that at all. You've got to interpret the Old Testament on it's own basis." That was never his intention. It is not what the Gospel writers would do. They all knew where they were in history and they recognized that to understand their place and what had led them to that place they had to understand that prior history in terms of where they stood in today's history. So, yes, if I say, "What do I learn about me?" I recognize I'm a New Testament Christian. But that was written for me. Everything that was written before my time was written so that through the instruction of Scripture we by patience and the encouragement of the Scriptures might have hope. It was written for me, and I knowing my place in time say, "All right, I know what Jesus had to do and

I'm understanding more of that because of what led to it, and I will look at redemptive history, yes, in terms of what it was intended to reveal. But that means I can ask the question: what does that tell me about God and what does it tell me about me?" And that's fair, that's OK to ask about any text.

The bottom of page 4 says this: "Revealing aspects of the necessity and provision of grace rather than mention of Jesus (or some account from his incarnation) is what makes a sermon redemptive. 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 relation of the text to his person and/or work. Often biblical texts are not directly revealing the person of Jesus but are revealing a dimension of God's gracious nature that will be most fully revealed in Christ and must be grasped by us to know him and to reflect him." OK, so we're not taking out our magic wand to make Jesus appear. We're saying, "What grace principles are evident here that become most fully revealed in Christ's person and/or work?"

Let's talk about some specifics because we'll be using different forms of literature even this semester. How do we use these redemptive lenses to preach the whole Bible as Christian literature? Which by the way is the name of the Goldsworthy book, right, which you're going to be reading, which intends to look at different genres of Scripture and saying, how are they Christo-centric? But here are just some hints as you go along.

If we're in histories or biographies, put those in the same category, how do we speak Christo-centrally? Well first, explain the place of events or persons in the redemptive plan. They may be predictive, preparatory, reflective, resultant, and/or you might expose the grace principles evident in doctrinal statements, literary motifs, or relational interactions, that is, of God or his representatives with his people. But here is the essence: make sure God is the hero. Even when exemplars teach character. That is, David, or Abraham. There are aspects of right character that the exemplars are meant to show us, but even they are blessed because of God's goodness ultimately, not theirs. God is still the hero. Note how God as hero may change the wording of main points. Not, for instance, "Be strong and courageous so that God will help you." Who's the hero here? It all depends on you being strong enough and courageous enough. Rather, it might be something like this: "Because God is your help, be strong and courageous." Because God is, you can live as a result of that. God is the hero.

How do law passages function? Show how the law leads to dependence on grace. Two, show how the imperatives are always based on the indicatives. Again, that may change wording. Not, for instance, "Obey God so that God will treasure you." Rather, "Because God treasures you, obey him." We do it over and over again, but let's just remind ourselves, what's the introduction to the Decalogue say? "I am the God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; therefore keep my commands." What he did not say was: "Keep my commands and then I'll bring you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." There are imperatives. But they are based on the indicatives. There is an order in the law by the lawgiver.

And this is just kind of fun because I've used this example in the past years and now the man is in the room. Jimmy Agan years ago had this course and he spoke to our faculty a couple of years

ago and he said candidly, “Well I kind of questioned it when Dr. Chappell said this.” And he said, “Then, as I was getting my PhD in the New Testament I recognize it was always the case. There was no exception that I could find in the Bible where an imperative did not have an indicative in the context, where the imperative was always based on the indicative. And it wasn’t looking far, it was always in context. Once I learned to look for it, it was always there.” Am I lying, Jimmy? He’s shaking his head. What are you going to say? It’s the president asking you.

But I mean, it was just this wonderful thing for me to say it’s not just created theory. I can think of when I taught my daughter to find geodes when we were living over in Illinois once upon a time, and you know, all over the ground were geoded rocks, but she wasn’t accustomed to seeing them, but I just found a few for her and I said, “Look, it looks like that.” And once her eyes got accustomed to seeing them, she could see them all. But she had to train her eyes a little bit, of course. But once her eyes got tuned she could see them. And I think once you begin to say, “You know what? There are never imperatives in the Bible without indicatives of God saying the reason you’re doing this is because of who you are by my gracious action.” The imperatives just don’t exist apart from that. And once you begin to see that, then you see it everywhere. And it really kind of opens the Scriptures for you. It’s not this imposition, it’s not some kind of fabricated method. It just becomes what is there, and what I’m doing in Scripture is not saying the same thing over and over again—Jesus loves you, so obey him. You begin to see the structure of the passage itself as another dimension of God’s grace is turned another facet to you, and saying as a result of that grace, live this way. And God constantly unfolding more of those indicatives through history so that the imperatives naturally rise out of them instead of saying, we’re doing something that’s not really there. You get your eyes tuned, and you just start seeing it and it’s a great blessing.

Some of the hard places to really see this are the poetry and wisdom literature passages—because there is no mention of Jesus. In fact at times it seems there’s only, you know, more imperatives, right? What are we trying to do? We expose the grace principles evident in doctrinal statements, literary motifs, or relational interaction. I will confess to you, you will need to use redemptive lenses. What does this text reveal about God and me to expose grace principles?

All right, let’s do what I think are some of the hardest things. You’re in Proverbs and the language is simply, “My son, do not be seduced by the beauty of the woman.” What does that passage tell me about God? What does God value? What am I learning about God in that verse? He’s pure, he values it, he requires it, it reflects his own character. What else do I learn? “My son.” He loves; he loves his children. What do we learn about ourselves? We’re vulnerable; despite being children, we fail. If you look at the structure of the book of Proverbs, we learn something else. It is wisdom. Where does the wisdom come from that keeps us safe in these circumstances? It comes from God, so that when we pick up James in the New Testament, he says that “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives generously and upbraideth not.” He’ll give you much and he won’t get after you for asking for his help. I learned more about the book of James by studying the book of Proverbs and understanding, you know, this wisdom that keeps you safe is from a Father who loves you, and he’s the one who provides the wisdom that you can’t provide for yourself. Now, I will confess it’s not the very first reflex of everybody who approaches the book of Proverbs, I acknowledge that. But once you get your eyes tuned, you can say, “Oh, that’s why he told me in the early chapter that the wisdom was

from him, not from me; that's why the safekeeping is from God. It's not ultimately my wisdom, and he gives me wisdom that keeps me safe and then tells me when I'm vulnerable. He loves me still."

I'm going to move really quickly through the rest. The prophecies and apocalyptic literature—obviously these may be revealing the coming Christ. The Gospels explaining the person, work, and demands of the incarnate Lord; ultimately the Gospels are going to show why Jesus said, "If you love me you will obey what I command," as well as "apart from me you can do nothing." I mean, ultimately the Gospels are saying, "Here's the God who sent his Son because he loved you, knowing that when you perceived he was God incarnate, he was God's gospel visual before us, that we would love him, and when we loved him we would want to do what he wanted." That would be our joy, that would be our privilege to do so. And so the Gospels come to demonstrate that love of God for us, knowing that we would love him and also to remind us that if we didn't have him all the imperatives in the world won't mean a thing. "Apart from me you can do nothing."

The Epistles, obviously, are exposing—we preach by exposing the grace principles evident in doctrinal statements, literary motifs, or relational interactions, and we always show how the imperatives are based on the indicatives. In this particular class you have this semester to deal with biblical narratives particularly, right? So you're supposed to be preaching from narratives, and let me tell you why, guys. I can remember, I've been out of Seminary about 10 years and I visited a pastor friend of mine. And, you know we've both been preaching a while, and I preached in his church kind of a series and at the end of that he said, "How do you do that? You did Bible narratives. I always either do the Psalms or the Epistles because I know how to do them. But I don't know how to preach a story." And my contention will be if you learn how to preach grace from the narratives, you will be able to do it everywhere else. Everywhere else it's going to be kind of given to you. Because the Epistles and Psalms are always going to be establishing the imperatives with the indicatives. But it's so easy to become moralistic when preaching narratives. David was a good boy and you be a good boy, too. So if we can begin to preach the narratives redemptively everything else will kind of take care of itself.

So I want to talk about how we approach these narratives that you have preached from this semester most particularly. Tell us and talk about what we do when we approach the narratives. A, under Roman numeral V. We will use our exegetical systematic skills to explain the text and the obedience required; that's nothing new. OK, we'll still look at the text and say, "All right, what does it say? What's it requiring?" But B: we will begin to use redemptive lenses to identify grace principles in the narrative. We'll ask again, "What does this text reveal about God's provision and human need?" OK, there's the Exodus, that's pretty easy to see, God's provision and human need; but there is a prophet in the desert running from a queen and needing to be fed by ravens because he's scared. What is this telling me about God's provision? What is this telling me about human need? I'm asking the provision and need questions because they'll get me to grace principles. And what I'll do when I do that, when I begin to ask about God's provision and human need, I will identify the grace principles or patterns evident in the text.

Now, all of these are varieties of "God is the hero of the text." As we begin to unfold the story of his rescue we may see deliverance before obedience, which again is the indicative before the

imperative. We may see love before and beyond performance like Gideon, who was a coward and then later an idolater and still was used by God greatly. We may see mercy for the guilty, strength for the weak, covenant love for the unlovely and undeserving, provision for the needy, warning for those who are in error, punishment for enemies as God rescues his people from enemies they cannot rescue themselves from. We may see discipline that is redeeming discipline for the wayward-turning people of unsafe paths and turning people back into God's arms. What we're seeking to do is to motivate obedience required by this text with its grace principles. Now we'll do a whole lot more talking about what it says there next time. We're trying to remember applications for questions.

Thus far, up to the elementary practicum we dealt with what to do, where to do it, instructional situational specificity, and we kind of tipped our hats to why to do it and how to do it, but this semester we're not tipping our hats, we're saying this is the absolute core of the message. Why should you do that and how are you going to be able to do that, and what in the text is providing the grace principles that are there? Now we'll talk a whole lot more about that next time, but if I'm saying God is taking care of what you cannot take care of, ultimately that's going to be both motivation and enablement. Here's what we're doing: we're still going to be using homiletical principles to organize the narrative's features. It's going to be a little bit different for you this time because we'll talk about principlizing main points and sub-points. That is, we will identify truth principles that are supported by the text's features and facts.

Do not state text facts as main points or sub-points that will leave you with no truth to illustrate or apply. Now this isn't so much about being redemptive; it's just knowing how to preach narratives. If you do this: Israel confronted Jericho, Israel marched around Jericho, the walls of Jericho tumbled down. Now as a consequence of that you should march around. . . . What I did is I gave a captioned survey of the facts. All right? Way back in Prep and Del we called this describing the text rather than developing the message. Our goal is not merely to summarize the facts a different way. Our goal is to say, "What truth principle are the facts revealing?" Like, take the same order, the same facts, but we would state it this way: Faithfulness requires facing God's enemies, therefore you should. . . . Well, now I've got something to apply, I've got a principle, a truth principle. Now what's going to support that truth principle? The facts of the text. But main points are stated as principles, not simply as text facts. And that's just kind of a general principle for preaching narratives: word main points as truth principles, not text facts. "Faithfulness requires obeying God's Word." That would be the same as Israel marched around Jericho because God said to. But it's putting in a truth principle. "Faithfulness results in witnessing God's faithfulness"—the walls came tumbling down. So in narratives, to preach them, we put the facts in truth principle statements rather than just as caption surveys of the facts.

We (item number 2), we of course use the text's facts to support the main point and sub-point principles. So it's a little different in didactic passages, the raw material we had available when we were doing the Epistles. What did we have available to us? We had stated truths and propositions, we had a thought flow, we exegeted the thought of that paragraph. What are we doing in narratives? In narratives the raw material available to support the truth claims may be stated truths but they may be exhibited truths—the walls fell down, David was punished. It may be something that's exhibited that supports the truth. It may be a truth that's in the dialogue or that's in the narrator commentary. "The time came when kings went to war and David stayed

home.” That’s just what the narrator says, he wasn’t supposed to; time came for kings to go to war and David didn’t do it. Led to great sin in his life. We may see something in character development or descriptions. There may be something in context, something we know about the culture. What’s the significance of the Passover cup that Jesus used for the Lord’s Supper? There may be something in plot flow. I remember this so much in the conquest as Joshua went in, he was supposed to destroy everything. He didn’t. There may be a pattern. When David was young and was rising as a star in Israel, whenever there was a victory, it says he devoted everything he had to the Lord, he devoted everything to the Lord. He becomes king, he has conquests, but you know it doesn’t say that any more. He stopped devoting things to the Lord. There’s this gap in the pattern of the telling of the story. Some principles being revealed. So there may be story patterns. In narrative passages you exegete actions and events and dialogue. But what you’re looking for is, what truth principle is here? What principle can I establish by the facts of the passage?

Some things to remember as you’re doing these narratives: remember there are legitimate expository options. You can explode a verse or distill a passage. When you’re preaching from the Epistles, what kind of direction are you mostly going? You’re exploding small passages, right? Here are the implications of that verse. But a biblical narrative might run how many verses? Thirty, forty, fifty, seventy, eighty verses, you know; you can’t read all that. So you have to distill. You can’t explain all of it. You say, what are the broad strokes and distill it down.

Just a real quick thing here, it’s not even in the notes I don’t think. It’s where your Scripture intros will help you so much. Remember the Scripture intro? If you’ve got 70 verses please do not read them all. We only have, you know, 25 minutes for you. So what are you going to do? You may summarize a little bit, read a few verses, summarize a little bit more, read another couple of verses, be done, OK? You’re going to read the verses most critical to your sermon. And you’re going to summarize long sections that may not be as critical to the points. So your Scripture intro allows you to deal with large passages in a more efficient way that you can do in your Scripture intro.

Item B, under 3, may be a little bit of a surprise to you. There is not as high an obligation to cite verses as to cite passage content when preaching from a narrative. Now listen, when you’re in Epistles, you want to say, “Look with me at verse 5.” Right? But if you say, “Now, because of this Goliath hit the ground. Look with me at verse 14, it says, ‘Goliath hit the ground.’” You know, chuckle. If everybody knows the story, if it’s plain, there’s not quite as high an obligation to cite the verse. But when you do cite the verse, what are you looking for? Look what it says, “The time came when kings went to war and David stayed home.” You know, there may be very specific things you want people to look to; please don’t get into the habit of not referring to the text at all. Please don’t do that. But recognize if they know the story well you may not have the same degree of obligation to cite the verse as when you were dealing in the Epistles.

Last little hints here. Number 4: Don’t fear miracle passages but remember their redemptive purpose. Lots of you preaching narratives are going to come across miracles and the great temptation is to say, “Well God gave them a great catch of fish, we’re on a fishing trip, so you know. . . .” Chuckle. Is that what it’s about? Look, show how the miracle demonstrates divine status or a divine representative’s authority rather than promising a repeat. OK? So often what

the miracles are about are saying, this is the King of the universe, this is who he is. It's not meant to say, and this will happen to you too. This is who he is. Or this is the spokesman from God who can speak with authority and I'll show you he's got authority. So often, I mean, recognize while there are miracles very present in our awareness, there are long stretches of biblical history, the majority of biblical history has no miracles. They come in cycles, typically when there's some breaking in of some new thing that God is doing, and he's either saying, "Here's my representative" or "Here's my Son." So remember the purpose of the miracles and establish what they were establishing rather than promising a repeat. That will help. Remember, it says there, long periods of no miracles in the Bible. If God is not always promising a miracle, should we?

Last paragraph. By proclaiming the principles of the narrative the preacher is still taking truth to struggle and thus fulfills the purpose of a biblical message. From the beginning we learned that preaching was both about what is true and what to do. Now we're seeing what is true is not simply a doctrinal truth to know or a duty to do, but it's also the redemptive motive and means for God's people to glorify and enjoy him. Most preachers believe that the main goal of the sermon is to tell people what to believe, that is, doctrine; or what to do, more obedience. But the greater goal is hope in him. Only by discerning the grace evident in the text do we provide the hope that makes truth meaningful and obedience possible.

Guess what we're going to do next time? We're going to say, as we now excavate these grace principles out of the text, not importing what's not there, seeing what's actually there in the biblical record for the divine purpose, as we excavate those grace principles: how does it make obedience possible and our hearts willing? That's next time as we'll talk about the import of this in sanctification. See you next time.