

Hearing the Application of Redemptive Principles

In this lesson we will listen to Edmund Clowney. You are preaching on narratives. When you are in narrative passages, you exegete truth from stated and also exhibited truths. You are looking at a narrative and determining the principles that are there. Remember that you should principalize the text rather than just chronicalize it. You are asking what principles are there. Those principles may be from something stated, but they also may be from something exhibited. You will begin to see as we progress through Clowney's message that much of what we have talked about in terms of illustrations being effective is also what happens in narratives. You will have descriptions of time, place, people, situations, or plot developments. All of those things are communicating in some way. We will hear how Clowney uses the aspects of the narrative to build what he is saying. We will also hear that on occasion in dialogue, in the way that one character speaks to another or even the way the narrator speaks to the reader is significant. There are ways we use illustrations to make points that you will now see in biblical narratives. They are doing very similar things. Clowney is great at retelling the story in contemporary terms so that we see the truth. I will point out some of these things as we listen to Clowney.

I am not asking you to follow Clowney's method. We will still have main points and subpoints from the text. We will still have explanation, illustration, and application, or some version of that. For much of his ministry, Clowney was the voice crying in the desert. He was the first major theologian in Reformed American circles to talk about the redemptive-historical method. He thought that for much of his career no one heard him. Later in his life, particularly when he hooked with Tim Keller and John Sanderson, who was a student of his, things began to multiply. One of the reasons it struggled was that even though Clowney could exhibit the redemptive-historical method in amazing and wonderful ways, there was not a homiletical method that was easy to follow. You will discover that when you listen to his message. Regardless of what method you follow, you must still have organization and unity. We are going to follow the broad strokes of Clowney, but I am not asking you to follow his method. Listen for the principles in his message.

Let us start listening to Clowney's message. I will stop it frequently and make observations as we go.

I would like to talk with you tonight about a very important word from the Old Testament, the word devotion. It is a word that is often used in the context of the love of God for His people in the Old Testament. It is a word that is translated "lovingkindness." It is the Hebrew word *chesed*. Of course, on academic occasions you have permission to use the Hebrew word to make that clear, but on no other occasion. On an academic occasion like this, however, we can bring in a Hebrew word. The word is *chesed*. It is a good idea to get used to that word because there is not an English word that is an exact equivalent. "Lovingkindness" does not quite give the precise meaning. I want you to think about that word, and maybe we will get a little better understanding of it as we reflect on it together in the Scriptures.

That was an introduction. What is this message going to be about? It is going to be about *chesed*, with the English word being “lovingkindness” or the word he used the most, which was “devotion.” He told us what he was going to be talking about. We get the theme announced, the unifying concept of the message, as it begins to unfold.

In order to understand the word a little better, I would like to read a passage from the Word of God. It is a passage in which the word does not occur. Nevertheless, it is a passage that will help us understand the word. It is found in the twenty-third chapter of 2 Samuel, beginning with verse 13. This is 2 Samuel 23:13-17: “And three of the 30 chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam. And the troop of the Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in the stronghold and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed and said, ‘O that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!’ And the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate and took it and brought it to David. But he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord. And he said, ‘Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?’ Therefore he would not drink it. These things did the three mighty men.”

I think it is clear to you that here is a passage that describes for us the devotion that David’s men had for him. It is a passage that also shows us the devotion that David had for the Lord.

Now we have his organizational scheme. He said this passage is about two things. First it is about the devotion of David’s men to David. So first of all it is about the devotion of men to man. He said the other thing it is about is the devotion of David to the Lord, the devotion of man to God. Even though it went by quickly, that is his organizational scheme for what is going to happen. We are going to follow that organizational scheme as we go.

In this passage, there is a gift of devotion that is brought to the king. There is also a gift of devotion that the king offers in his devotion to the Lord. I want to think with you about this matter of devotion, for the term *chesed* means, to begin with, something like “loyalty.” It is the kind of term that could describe tribal loyalty.

Whenever you start something by saying, “The meaning of the term is,” what form of argument are you doing? What are you doing with your terms? You are simply defining them. To define what *chesed* is, we now have an argument that is proceeding by the form of definition.

Let me give you the big picture for this lesson. First we are going to hear Clowney preach a very traditional message. Then he is going to tell us why it is not redemptive. Then he will move back across it. It is a great message to hear what redemptive versus non-redemptive messages will be like. We are going to try to get his scheme in front of us. Here is what he is going to try to do. He is going to retell this story, and he is going to say, “Here is what *chesed* was like back then. Here

is what it would be like in contemporary terms.” He will give positive and negative points for both. He is not just going to speak in terms of then and now, but he is also going to give negative and positive examples. He is going to give a long explanation that is definition by retelling the story. The definition is what *chesed* is, what biblical devotion is. He already gave you one example. He already said that *chesed* is like tribal loyalty. That is an understanding that is removed from us culturally. He will have to bring that closer. Listen for how he does it, because he is really a master.

It is the sort of thing that we encounter in our civilization mostly in the sports world. Here [in Saint Louis, MO] you have the team known as the Cardinals. In Philadelphia we have the team known as the Phillies. Obviously, if the Phillies become the champions, they will earn it by seniority. They are called the “Wheeze Kids.” The Philadelphia Phillies demand loyalty of their fans. It is not enough to be mildly loyal. You are supposed to be a fanatic. You see this in the sports world. We have much of that in the United States, but in England it is worse. They tear down the stands at soccer matches in Liverpool. There has to be this intense loyalty for a team. We have some understanding of it there in a strange kind of caricature in modern life. It could also be said, however, that there is more patriotism around these days than in earlier times. So maybe there is a little loyalty also to our country. There is loyalty to America. Around the world, nationalism certainly expresses the loyalty of men for which they are willing to live and die. You see there is a loyalty that can be carried to the pitch of devotion.

That is what you find in these men that were with David. We are not sure just what period this was in the life of David. Perhaps it was in the time after the death of Saul.

All he has done so far is say that loyalty you might know, but it is *chesed* that we are talking about. Devotion might be something that is tribal, but we can compare it to sports and compare it to patriotism. Yet actually we are talking about David’s men. Now we are going to ask what devotion looks like among David’s men. To make us understand that, he will use many of the same patterns. He will begin to tell us the narrative. What is the time of this? David is out in the desert. Saul’s troops are out after him. He begins to describe time, place, people, and situations. Listen to him for a while, because it is all going to be “back there” somewhere. Then listen to how he comes into our reality. He helps us understand how that would be understood in today’s terms.

It was during the period the period before David had begun his wars against the Philistines. In any event, David is out in the wilderness, in his old haunts where he had been when he was hiding from King Saul. He is beginning to rally men to him there in the desert. He is at a strong point in the desert. Men are coming to volunteer for his cause. Among them there are these three men.

The passage that I read is not given to us in Scripture at the time that it happened. It is given where we have a kind of recap of David’s mighty men. We are given the account of

the knights of David's "round table," those who had done great exploits in the service of David. We are told that these men came to David as volunteers out in the desert, and when they came these three men heard David say on one hot afternoon, "O, that somebody would get me a drink of water from the well in Bethlehem." David was only expressing a wish here. Even the form of the language makes that clear. The three men, however, hear him, and they are loyal. They have *chesed* with respect to the Lord's anointed, with respect to the king, David. They hear him say, "I would like a drink of water from the well in Bethlehem." So one of them said to the other, "You heard what the chief said?" "Yes, I heard him." "He wants water from the well of Bethlehem." The other fellow said, "Let us get it." He puts on his sword. They get a clay pot. They go to get the water.

The problem is that Bethlehem is in a town that is now occupied by the Philistines. When David said he wished he had water from the well of Bethlehem, he was wishing for something that seems completely unattainable. It is a garrison city of the Philistines. He cannot get water from Bethlehem. I do not know what David was thinking about when he wanted to have that water. I do not know if it was nostalgia. You know that Bethlehem was his hometown. He knew the well, and he had often had a drink there.

All he is talking about is David wanting a drink from Bethlehem. It is all David's experience. He has already done something to help us better understand the situation. He said that David's men are like the Knights of the Round Table. We get something tied to our experience more. Listen to how he is going to push everything, including taste, smell, feeling, and sentiment, in order to make us understand what this ancient account is about.

Maybe he liked the water. Some of you are nostalgic about a spring from the land of your youth. Since I was raised in Philadelphia, I get nostalgia only when I go to swimming pools because only there do you get the chlorine density that filled Philadelphia water. Nevertheless, there are some people who are quite nostalgic. Maybe they had great water in that well in Bethlehem. Then, maybe he really wanted to taste some of it.

I do not think, however, that it was only nostalgia, if it was that. I think it is an expression of David's longing. He is the Lord's anointed. He knows that God has made him to be king over all the land. Here he is, God's king, but he cannot even control his own hometown. He cannot even go to the well of his own hometown to get a drink of water. It did not mean that they did not have any water where David was. They could not have had a strong point without some source of water. On that hot afternoon, however, when David was thirsty, he was saying in his heart, "O Lord, when will I prevail? When will your promises be sealed to me? When will I be able to go again to Bethlehem and drink the water from that familiar well by the gate of Bethlehem?"

By now, however, the three men are on their errand. They are heading out across the desert. They have to go to Bethlehem. I do not know how the Philistine army was

organized. I do not know where they had the first line of defense or where there were people on guard or on watch duty. We know, however, that they had to break through the host of the Philistines. At some point their approach was noted. At some point they had to begin fighting. By battle they had to make their way. Perhaps they broke through one line and then went running up the road that led to Bethlehem. They had to go right to the gate of Bethlehem. The gate was always the command post of an ancient city. That is where the generals would be. That is where the captains of the host would be assembled, near the well in Bethlehem. It is roughly analogous to saying, "Go get me a drink of water from the cooler in the Kremlin." It is not out on the periphery somewhere. It is all the way in. They had to go fight their way in to get to the well of Bethlehem. I do not know whether they pulled up the water or whether some woman drew the water for them as they fought off Philistines. Yet they got the water. Then with the water in their possession, they had to get out again. I expect they had to fight their way out as well as fight their way in. At last they were clear of the Philistines and going back across the desert. Perhaps that was the most difficult part of all, the last miles carrying that water without drinking it after all that fighting. Yet they had the water, and they brought it back, and they came to David.

They said, "Chief, you said you would like a little water from the well in Bethlehem. Well, here it is. We got it for you. Here it is." Then David did something that distresses some of the commentators. David took the water, and he poured it out on the ground—all of it. There was a little wet space in the sand. Then the sun came out, and it was a little dry space.

That is so simple, but it is so effective. Can you not see it in your mind's eye? First there is a little wet spot. Then after the desert sun there is a little dry spot. All he had in the text was that David poured out the water. Yet he wanted you to feel what that was like. What are other things he did to engage your present understanding of this Old Testament account? What are some other things he did to bring it in close? He does much rephrasing. In his retelling, he also rephrases things outside the biblical language so you can understand. He also fills in the action. They fought in and they fought out. He really is a master. I listen to him sometimes and think, "The Bible does not say that." Yet he usually says, "I imagine," or "I do not know, but." He fills in necessary details. In other words, in order for the account to have happened, something like that would have had to happen. If he merely filled in the gaps, by saying something like, "They met a woman there, and she said this," then we would say, "It does not say that." Yet it is creative storytelling within limits. It may be near the boundaries sometimes, but it is probably within limits.

What are other things he does to engage you? When he is retelling the story, what are thing he does to say what it means in our time? By the way, this was from the 1982 graduation ceremony here at Covenant Theological Seminary. I suppose the Phillies and Cardinals were in some kind of pennant race at the time. There was also the dialogue: "The chief wants some water; he does. Let us get him some." Those words are not in Scripture, but they had to say something to one another that reflected that. So Clowney retells the story in a way that engages us. All we are

doing right now is asking what devotion looks like. What is the definition of devotion, and how do we see it exemplified or exhibited in this passage? That is all we have done so far.

Those men, at the risk of their lives, had got David that water he wanted to drink so much. Yet when they brought it to him, he would not drink it. How thoughtless David was! Well, you know better than that. It was not thoughtless at all. David did exactly the right thing. Why? It was because David said, “Men, I do not deserve this. This is not just water. This is, as it were, your blood. You put your lives on the line to get this water for me. I cannot take it from you and drink it just like that. David said, “There is only one thing that I can do with this water. I can only give it to God. It is too holy for any other use.”

What wonderful tact David had. What wonderful understanding he had. What a wonderful leader among men he was. What a wonderful king among God’s covenant he was. You see what he did. He saw that this was not his right. He saw that this was not something he could take for granted, the kind of loyalty that these men had shown. He saw that this was God’s work in their hearts and in their lives. Therefore he wanted to give it back to God, from whom it had come. It is a wonderful lesson in leadership.

Is not David a great guy? Is not David a wonderful leader and example? Do you not just wish that you could only be like David? Be careful. You are being led down the primrose path, and he knows exactly what he is doing. As he does it, he begins to give us application. He said, “Here is what such devotion would look like in leadership.” He begins to apply it to various forms of leadership. So far everyone is nodding their head. You see devotion. That is what you should be. That is what David was. Therefore we should be leaders just like this. Now he is going to apply the various places in which such leadership should be.

Think of the strength of this. It is instructional. We have a principle of the devotion of sacrificial leadership. We have a devotion to work from. Now we are going to get situational specificity as well. He is going to tell us where you should apply this. In terms of the four questions of application, he is doing great on the first two. Listen to how it unfolds. Regarding what to do and where to do it, he will be very clear.

You young men are preparing to be ministers of the Gospel. All of you, whether that is your purpose or some other form of leadership in the church of Jesus Christ, others will honor you for the work in which you are engaged. Particularly those of you who may be called to the ministry of the Gospel, the members of your congregation will show to you often great devotion. You must, like David, receive that for what it is—devotion given to you in the name of the Lord. Therefore it is devotion to God. You must receive that gift of their devotion, and you must offer it to God in devotion to Him. Remember that is what the apostle Paul did in the letter to the Philippians. The Philippians had sent him a gift. You remember that the apostle Paul said that the gift they had sent was like “an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well pleasing to God.”

So when people serve you, you should recognize that it is ultimately service to God. Devotion to God means accepting human service as ultimately what is being offered to God's honor. These are good universal truths. These principles are fine.

Beware of the Jim Jones mentality. If you are thinking, "Of course people will be devoted to me," beware of thinking that you deserve to be treated with great respect and great sacrifice on the part of other people. For what is it that binds the church of Jesus Christ together? It is this kind of *chesed*. It is this kind of loyalty that its members have to one another and to their leaders. Their leaders must also have it to them. There are some people around who are so ready to serve, so ready to show real devotion, that you have to be careful what you say in front of them. Do you know some friends like that? You say you want something, and they will just go get it. They are like David's mighty men.

If it were not for people like that, the ministry of the church would never go forward. Do not think the ministry of the church really goes forward because so many ministers have learned the art of arm-twisting. Do not think that the church goes forward because people can be cajoled or brow-beaten into doing the things that they have to do if the work is to get done. No, what brings the work of the church forward is devotion. It is *chesed*. It is people who show that kind of dedication. It is the kind of people around who are always ready to go and get water from that well.

Some of you may know that movement that is spoken of as the Washington Fellowship movement. It is a movement that has majored in that very quality. They are men who meet together for breakfast once a week and pray together and share with one another and become accountable to one another in their Christian lives. Men in those groups are ready to do anything for their brothers, to drop anything, to go anywhere, to make any sacrifice for one of their brothers for whom they pray every week. That is a good example to all of us. We must show the attitude of David's mighty men.

Now it is not just be like David, it is also be like his mighty men. Again, these are not wrong messages in themselves. They are wrong messages by themselves. We have nothing to criticize here. You certainly do not want to be a selfish leader or a selfish person.

When that attitude is shown, then it has to be received in this same spirit. For how sad it is when you do find the attitude among Christian leaders who think that they have everything coming to them. When you bring some Christian leaders water from Bethlehem, they say, "Where is the ice?" You never can do enough. No matter how well you try to serve them, there is always a criticism. There is always something you did not do right. Christian parents, beware of that attitude. Sometimes we are so critical of our children that even when they do something for us we only can criticize the way they did it instead of realizing what they were trying to do to serve us. What tact, what wisdom David shows, for he takes their devotion, and he offers it to God.

Is not David a great guy? Look again at 2 Samuel 23. He is going to take you somewhere that is

important if you were only going to say, “Be like David.”

Of course in doing that, David is also claiming God’s own promise. He wanted the water from Bethlehem because he wanted the sign of the victory that God had promised to give him. If by God’s power three men can go through the whole Philistine army, then he knows that God is going to give him the victory. That water from Bethlehem becomes a pledge of the victory that David knows will be granted to him by God.

When we look at the devotion of David’s men to him, and when we look at the devotion of David to the Lord, we are tremendously impressed by that bond of *chesed* that ties together the people of God’s covenant.

He has said it again. “My subject is devotion. We have been tremendously impressed by the devotion of men to man. And we have been tremendously impressed by the devotion of men to God.” That is what the account says, and it certainly has moved us.

Yet we are also drawn to something else. We are drawn to the fact that it is God who redeems His promise to David. We are drawn to an amazing truth that the word *chesed*, although it does mean loyalty, and it does mean devotion, is used in the Old Testament scarcely at all about the devotion of men to men, nor even of the devotion of men to God. The Hasidic group of the Jews uses this term today to describe themselves as the devoted ones. In the Old Testament, however, this term is used almost exclusively for the devotion of God to men.

Think about that. God had promised David victory. It was the Lord who gave David water from Bethlehem. It was God’s faithfulness to David that gave him men like that and gave the men the ability to break through the host of the Philistines and give to David the water from Bethlehem. David, the Lord’s anointed, knew the *chesed*, the lovingkindness, of God.

I would like to read to you a few verses from the end of this chapter. Be patient with me. It may seem a little strange, but listen to these verses. “Hezro the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armor bearers to Joab the son of Zeruiah, Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, Uriah the Hittite; thirty and seven in all.” This chapter about David’s mighty men, this chapter about the men that were devoted to David and were ready to lay down their lives for him, this chapter closes with this list of 37 mighty men, 37 devoted ones, 37 heroes of David’s army. The last one to be named is Uriah the Hittite.

You know who that was, for later, when David was well established in his kingdom and had the luxury of remaining back in Jerusalem while his army was in the field, you remember that David saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and he lusted after her and had her brought to him. Then when he learned that Bathsheba had conceived of that

union, David did that despicable thing. Do you remember what he did? He had Uriah brought back from the army, assuming that Uriah would go home and sleep with his beautiful wife. Yet Uriah did not do it. He stayed in the palace. Why? It was because of his *chesed*, because of his devotion to David. He was a soldier on service. David had brought him back from the army. He did not know what the chief had in mind, but he was loyal. He would not go home because he was on duty. When David saw that that was his determined purpose, he sent him back to the army with a message to Joab to put him in the front of the battle and to retire from him so that he died. Joab did what David requested. So that his own generalship would not be criticized later when he described the maneuver, he added the sentence, “Your servant Uriah is dead also.” David murdered Uriah.

So David is not such a good guy. Would David say, “Be like David?” There are certain aspects of his life that are exemplary. Yet there are certain aspects of his life where God surely must rescue him. The story is not complete until the rescue is fully known.

Friends, why do we have this account from the Old Testament? This account shows us God’s faithfulness to David. This account tells us so frankly, so starkly, of David’s unfaithfulness to God, David’s breach of *chesed*. For David, who could show such sympathy and understanding when he poured out that water rather than drink it, that same David could have another man just like that—maybe Uriah was one of the three—he was ready to have one of his mighty men murdered so that he could have his quiet life. Why does the Word of God give us this? You know why.

This is absolutely critical. He is asking the key question. Why is this really here? It is not just to say, “Be like David.” Why is it here?

It is because the Old Testament narratives of God’s dealings with Israel are leading us forward to the great work of salvation that God would do when He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. We are given that image of the kingship under David in order that we might be prepared to know Him who is God’s true Anointed, Jesus Christ. We may praise God tonight, my friends, if we have that picture, that incident from the life of David, to remind us of Jesus Christ, of the King that we have. For we are not called to make our earthly loyalties ultimate. We see the danger of a nationalism that is utter devotion. We see the danger that comes when men are totally devoted to another man. There is only One who deserves our ultimate devotion. That One is the God-man, Jesus Christ.

It is sweet that at the end of that account of David’s mighty man you have the name of Uriah. You marvel at that. It is a skilled biblical writer who has written that material in that way. It is the cherry on top to tell you what to look for. Let me ask you, however, if Uriah had not been mentioned at the end of the message like that, could you still have preached this message redemptively? There is not always going to be the cherry on top. If you had the narrative but not the listing of names with Uriah at the bottom, could you have preached this passage

redemptively? What would have been ways to do that?

You still know how the story of David is going to go. You still know that David is going to fail. His children are going to fail. At the end of his life, he is going to number his troops in a step of arrogance. Nothing in interpreting this passage says that you have to suddenly go blind to the rest of David's life. To interpret this passage apart from David's life is not truly to interpret it. It has a context within the life of David. That is near context. If we were doing micro redemptive-historical method, we would say that we understand that David is not the ultimate leader.

Even though David is not the ultimate leader, what promises have come to David? He is going to have an eternal kingdom. He is going to sit on the throne forever, and his progeny will. We know all the awful things about David, and still we know, despite his unfaithfulness, even to the people who have been so good to him, his own people, God is still going to be faithful to David. That is expanding things a little further. That is taking the redemptive-historical method further out. The redemptive-historical method lets us offer another way that God is showing his grace to David.

What else could I do? Could I extend further? I could go backward as well as forward. David is a chapter in the life of the covenant people that is much more extensive. That covenant-keeping God is again the hero of the text, despite David's failures here. Clowney used the language that "this account is leading us forward to a greater King." That is very familiar language. God provided His king in this covenant succession. Yet this account is leading us forward to the need of a greater king.

Quite often when I am preaching on Old Testament narratives, I will say something like, "Here is grace in Old Testament clothes." There is some way that God is acting that is showing us His nature in this account. We know that about David. Does David lose his kingship because of his affair with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah? No. God still maintains his promise.

Are there other ways we could go? There are cues throughout the passage. What if you had not told the whole account? David is outside his own home city, which is Bethlehem. Without leapfrogging to Golgotha, is it significant that the Lord's anointed is not able to get into his own hometown? How is he ultimately going to get into his own hometown and rule over it? God is going to have to provide it for him. The king of Israel is outside, and he cannot do it. God has to act on David's behalf.

I want to say there are different ways of doing this. You could use the macro interpretation. You could also come in much closer. You could say there may be things here that show me the grace principles and patterns most fully represented in the grace of Christ. Yet what grace principles can be seen here as well?

You may be asking how to identify grace principles and patterns in different types of biblical genre. We have looked at narrative and recognized the problem of saying, "Be like David." How do you begin to see grace in other forms of biblical material? You can expound various

biblical genres with Christ-centered lenses.

How are redemptive truths evident in historical narratives? God's plan may be evident in historical narratives in various ways—symbol and sacrament, promise leading to deliverance, an unconditional covenant being established, and engrafting of the undeserving, such as Ruth or Rahab. There are various ways in which God's plan is exposed in biblical narrative. God's character may be evident in some way in the biblical passage. It may be through His interaction with His people or through the behavior of some individual representing God. God's grace may be stated in some way in a biblical narrative. Maybe the narrative will say it or a character within the story, or it may just be the way the plot unfolds that shows that God will be gracious to the undeserving.

How are redemptive truths evident in the Gospels? It is identifying how Christ is being presented to His people and the role of that particular narrative in the Gospel passages. As a reminder, sometimes the miracles serve as proofs of Christ's authority or identity rather than a promise of repetition for all people for all time.

How are redemptive truths evident in the epistles? It may be by statements, by context, or even by key terms that are used. Sometimes the epistles will have key terms, the most key of which is "in Christ." That is the union with Christ terminology. There are also all the doctrinal terms that you are familiar with.

How are redemptive truths evident in poetry and wisdom literature? Candidly, that is the most difficult. Where it is simple instruction, such as "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is older he will not depart from it," you may ask, "Where is redemptive truth there?" The way you begin to see it is to recognize that you have to read the redemptive truth from the whole of a wisdom genre, not just from individual verses. Redemptive truth is often a response to or a journey to an understanding of God's mighty acts, His faithfulness, His love, or His wisdom. Redemptive truth in prophecy is more obvious in terms of the prophecy when it deals with God's provision through Christ.

I am going through that quickly, because I recognize that if I went through it in detail it would not stick. You are going to have to work through and preach those passages. You may have to work through it with some reference material in order to see it.

In this course, we are still going to do main points and subpoints from the text. We are still going to ask what in that account is proving that principle you just said. That is not going to change. Main points have to be from that text, and the subpoints that you are establishing have to be exhibited or stated in that passage. We will still have an illustration for every main point. The narrative itself may serve as the illustration. If you retell that portion of the narrative, then it is possible that the narrative itself can serve as the illustration. There still has to be an illustration for every main point. We are still going to rain down key terms from these principles in the main points and subpoints to the illustrations. We do that because we have to apply these things. These truths ultimately have to be applied.

We are concerned in this course that you answer all four questions of application. The questions what to do and where to do it are still necessary. Ultimately, however, are you motivating through these grace principles that you are discerning in the text? Are you creating love for God that is the motivation for following these instructions? The more difficult question, which you will probably wrestle with for the rest of your life, is how do people do what they are told to do? You want to create the love that is the power. Do you remember “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection”? To build love for Christ that undermines the attraction of sin is the goal. If it does not attract you, it has no power over you. There are other things as well. There are practical suggestions of accountability and Christian disciplines. Even those, however, are about building love for Christ, or they actually destroy true godliness. If they are just about earning merit with God, then they actually destroy faithfulness. What I am doing with these practical means of following God is learning to love Him more.

There are things that I hope you leave with from these lessons. If you get the first one alone, I will be happy. God is the hero of every text. Gideon is not the hero. Joshua is not the hero. David is not the hero. Ultimately God is the hero. The text points to the rescue that God provides. Somehow that is occurring. The reason we started with fallen condition focus (FCF) at the beginning of Preparation and Delivery of Sermons is because if you really identify the burden of the text, the fallenness that requires the truth, then divine solutions must be given. By dealing with an FCF, you will always force yourself to bring God to the rescue. Redemptive truth has to follow from what you are doing.

As you begin to look for redemptive truth, use the two lenses. What does this tell me about God, and what does it tell me about me? What does the life of David tell you about God? He is amazingly patient, faithful, covenant keeping, and true to His promises. All of those things you know about God He ultimately provides for those who deserve none of it. What do we learn about ourselves? Even the best of us can be guilty of horrible betrayal of God. I learn about myself, and I learn about God.

I learn about the “deadly be’s.” I preach these things and still sometimes I walk away from a sermon and say, “What did I just do? All I did was tell them to straighten up and fly right.” At least we have a tool to determine when we do that. At least when I walk away I can recognize it for its error. If it was only moral instruction, then I recognize that is insufficient for a minister of the Gospel. People are Swiss cheese. They have holes in them. Are you going to tell them that simply doing better things will fill the hole? Ultimately it has to be the work of God. That work of God will be revealed as you begin to look in passages for these grace principles. How is God’s grace displayed here? It is ultimately revealed in Christ, but even here, how am I seeing it displayed? What changes you, and changes your preaching, is when you begin to recognize that if you have begun with that FCF, the burden of the text, what the people are struggling with, then your goal in preaching is to take truth to struggle. That is where you begin to become a physician of souls that is so beautiful to your own heart. You are taking truth to struggle, not just heaping more information or more behavior responsibility on people. I am actually bringing the grace of God into their lives by dealing with that hope that they need. The common denominator of all great preaching is that it is about hope. It is giving people hope. If

that is what we are doing, even though we struggle with particular passages, if our aim is to give people hope in their fallenness, then the struggle is well worth it. Your preaching will become a beautiful thing.

What you often find in those who are extreme followers of Vos is such an emphasis on the “why” and the “how” that the “what” and the “where” fall away. There is no instruction. To give instruction is looked down on. The other side of that is straight legalism in which the “why” and the “how” fall away and all we get is “what” and “where.” What I think is the true Calvinist tradition is to say that the Law does not fall away. The Law is the safe path. It is the path not only of God’s glory but also of good for us. What makes us not only walk down the path but also not stray from it is love for Christ. If you ask how to live out love for Christ, we can answer that if you love Him then you will keep His commands. It is glorious to Him and good for us, just as loving my wife faithfully is good for me. I want us to keep both sides together. We do not want to say “law or Gospel,” but rather there is Gospel motivation for what glorifies God and brings us good. It is not ignoring “why” and “how” that would indicate if I do good then God will love me more or make my life better. That is making the Law conditional or God’s love conditional upon your obeying the Law. That is how most people live. I am weighing in against that while weighing in against antinomianism at the same time.

To what extent does the FCF have to come from the text? The wording of the FCF does not have to come from the text at all. Yet the meaning of the FCF has to be derived from the text. There must be something in the text or context that says why it was written. What was going wrong? What was amiss? What was the burden of the writer? That must at least be determined by the text or its context. You must be able to prove that the ultimate meaning of the FCF is there in the text or context. Yet you can word it 1000 different ways. It is just as we talk about with a proposition. You can word a proposition 1000 different ways, but you have to be able to prove that the proposition is in the text. You have to be able to prove the FCF is actually what the biblical writer had in mind. That in itself is an exegetical task. In any given narrative, there are multiple possibilities for the FCF. The hermeneutics professors talk about a difference between meaning and significance. Meaning does not change, but its significance could have many categories. As I consider the FCF of a passage, I may say, “This passage is meant to deal with peoples’ distrust of the love of God.” That is one possibility. Then I have to consider how I will approach that pastorally. There could be multiple wordings of the FCF that deal with the significance of the truth that is there. I still have to be able to prove that it was the concern of the biblical writer. That basic meaning question cannot vary and still be true to the text.

I stopped playing the brief remainder of Clowney’s message because he simply goes back over his applications and reapplies them redemptively. How do you keep from tacking on the redemptive message? Or worse, how do you keep from doing what Clowney did every week? If you did it every week, then people would just wait for the ironic twist. It is the recognition that there are different legitimate strategies. Sometimes we will say that if Christ has provided His grace for you then what are the implications? So we may lay the grace foundations at the beginning. Other times we will build a case all the way through. What else did God do? What else did God do? What else did God do? Other times we may try Clowney’s method. Here are all

these things you must do, but let me tell you something. If your heart is not right with the Lord, you have absolutely no chance. Therefore I have to tell you what makes your heart right with God, and that gives hope. I will say that a “tack on” is better than none at all. Yet Clowney’s “tack-on” was strategic. He wanted to lead us to where the impact would be the greatest. If your “tack-on” is the method of preaching the Law and then giving the altar call at the end, then there is nothing in the text that gives you the basis for doing that. It is certainly a danger to do the “tack-on” unless you are showing something in the text or context that allows you to point to the culmination of the grace principles. That is the more difficult thing. Yet it is the glory of Gospel eyes. You will hear it soon. If you hear a sermon this week that is nothing but the “deadly be’s,” you will automatically know it. You will not walk away from a purely moralistic sermon and not recognize it for what it is. The hard part is correcting it. How do you see the grace that is there?

How often do you answer the questions “why” and “how?” If I have spent all of this time developing these truths, then I will want to develop “what” and “where” in virtually every main point. The “why” and “how” must be done somewhere before the sermon ends. They are less specific in terms of where they occur. Before the people walk away, you want to make sure you have done the four questions. They may be early, late, or woven through the message. The FCF often gives you insight to how you will be doing the “why” and the “how.” You can say it 10,000 ways, but the “why” is almost always responsive love to the grace of God. How many ways can you describe love? Poets have done it for thousands of years. So the “why” is always the love of God. The “how” is more difficult. You are saying to people, “Here are practical means. Here is information. Here are practices that will help you do it.” Ultimately, even the how is out of a greater love for Christ. That is why the “why” cannot be forgotten. Most of this course is about the “why.” You already have the “what” and “where” in mind, so much of this course is making sure the “why” comes into view.

Questions about time management are common. If you are going to preach Genesis to Revelation every Sunday, then it is going to get long. An old preacher’s rule is that a long main point should be the first one. You want to accelerate for attention and impact. If you are going to do the redemptive truth at the end, then it must carry the whole freight of that main point. So if the redemptive truth is the third main point, then that will be all you will say in the third main point. If it is foundational and interwoven through the message, then your time management is not different than for any other factor. If it is not in view until the third main point, however, then you know it must be the main thing said, because you do not have time in the acceleration process to say much more.

Another time management tip has to do with the wording of main points. You may have three main points: we must obey God, we must honor God, and we must trust God. All the emphasis is on what we must do. That makes it more difficult to interweave redemptive truths. If the truth principles are what God has done—God redeems His people, or God forgives the unforgivable—if some grace principle is the wording of the main point, then even your wording is carrying much of the exegetical weight. You are proving that truth. Then your application is an implication of that truth. It is a natural unfolding of the truth that you have done. Stating your main points as grace principles or redemptive truths carries much time help for you.