

**THE BOYCE SOCIETY of
THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

DOCTRINAL PREACHING

**a lecture presented February 18, 2004
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Introduction

- A. “There have been few times in the history of the church when solid doctrinal preaching and teaching have been more needed. Yet seldom has such preaching been more difficult and problematic” (Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World*, p. 9). “No longer can we take for granted a fundamental understanding of the basics of the faith” (Robert G. Hughes and Robert Kysar, *Preaching Doctrine for the Twenty-First Century*, p. 1)
- B. the importance of doctrine
- sound doctrine important for the church
 - The sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:10-11)
 - For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3)
 - If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing (1 Tim. 6:3-4)
 - What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:13)
 - sound doctrine important for leaders of the church
 - Command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer (1 Tim. 1:3)
 - The overseer must be...able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - He (the elder) must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1:9)
 - You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1)
 - Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Tim. 4:16)

- given the specificity of the doctrine referred to by Paul, I refer not only to a general concept of sound doctrine but especially to concrete and specific doctrines (such as those outlined by the *Abstract of Principles* and the *Baptist Faith and Message*)
- the importance of sound doctrine is particularly pronounced today with the rise of familiarity with other religions (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.) with their competing doctrines; the increasing popularity of pluralism further underscores this importance as people—both Christians and non-Christians—wonder: “What is distinctive about Christianity?”
- I (perhaps naively?) see signs of increasing interest in doctrine, especially in doctrine that flows from the worship of God and that impacts life (perhaps especially notable among some young people today)

C. various connotations of “doctrinal preaching”

- “boring” preaching
- “irrelevant” preaching
- “cognitive-only” preaching
- “impositional” preaching
- “topical” preaching
- “divisive” preaching
- “the unilluminating discussion of unreal problems in unintelligible language” (Blackwood, *The Preparation of Sermons*, p. 30)

D. doctrinal preaching: doctrinal framework preaching; doctrine-driven preaching; and expository doctrinal preaching

I. doctrinal framework preaching

- A. “Theological reflection in the new century will address the issue of the framework of experience....What we believe will be of interest to our listeners, regardless of their location in the swirl of cultural change, is something that has possibilities as a structure of reference for their experience....We propose that North Americans are desperate for a framework, a perspective, a worldview, that enables them to make sense out of their ordinary, daily experience. In our secularized society at the close of the twentieth century, life suffered dismemberment, the likes of which may not yet be fully understood....What is lacking is an overarching structure within which to interpret all of these dismembered pieces of life. Life lacks a whole picture, a total pattern that knits the threads of experience into whole fabric....Doctrinal framing occurs when the preacher’s words conjure an image that might hold the fragments of life together....The preacher will understand theology to be essentially about a structural reference into which all experience can be fitted and through which it is interpreted. (*Preaching Doctrine*, pp. 10-11)

B. Calvin on the purpose of the *Institutes*

Moreover, it has been my purpose in this labor to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling. For I believe I have so embraced the sum of religion in all its parts, and have arranged it in such an order, that if anyone rightly grasps it, it will not be difficult for him to determine what he ought especially to seek in Scripture, and to what end he ought to relate its contents. (“John Calvin to the Reader,” the 1559 edition, *Institutes*, p. 4)

I can at least promise that it (the *Institutes*) can be a key to open a way for all children of God into a good and right understanding of Holy Scripture. (“Subject Matter of the Present Work,” from the French edition of 1560, *Institutes*, p. 7)

C. the framework of doctrine for preaching

- tracing the biblical story line: creation—fall—redemption—consummation
- building a theocentric worldview:
 - kingdom of God
 - faith, hope, and love
 - Great Commission
 - glorifying God
 - WWJD?
 - “war plan”:

The Scriptures reveal that the driving passion of God is the preeminence of Christ in all things (Eph 1:10; Col 1:17-18; Phil 1:10-11). The storyline of the Bible is the invasion of this Warrior-King into the enemy-occupied territory of a fallen cosmos. And, in the church, God is signaling to the principalities and powers what the entire creation will look like -- when every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed (Eph 3:10).

The Great Commission is not a program. It is the crushing of the Serpent’s head. The church is not a “faith-based organization.” It is a declaration of war. Theology is not a science for religious intellectuals. It is a war plan. And the ministry is not a “helping profession” designed for people too religious to be social workers. It is a call to take on the domain of darkness with the sword of the Spirit. (Russell Moore, Towers interview, Feb. 9, 2004)

- imaging God: “God created us in his image so that we, like a mirror, would reflect him in the world in which we live” (Gen. 1:26-28; Rom 8:28-30; Eph. 5:1)

II. doctrine-driven preaching

- preaching that is doctrinally responsible (reflective of sound doctrine)
- my own theological method model (diagram)

III. expository doctrinal preaching

A. what is expository preaching?

- *what* the preacher does in preaching: he *explains* Scripture
- *how* the preacher does his preaching: what *method* he employs to explain Scripture; according to Blackwood, the expository sermon cannot explain
 - a text of one, two, or three verses—called “textual” preaching; “one in which the structure follows the order of the ideas in the text” (Blackwood, *Preaching From the Bible*, p. 37)
 - a general biblical truth—called “topical” preaching; “one which owes its form to the unfolding of the truth wrapped up in the title” (Blackwood, *Preaching From the Bible*, p. 36)

but an expository sermon must explain

- a text of more than three verses; this, and this alone, is called “expository” preaching; “as a rule the structure of the expository sermon follows the order of the ideas in the passage, but not slavishly” (Blackwood, *Preaching From the Bible*, p. 38)
- others would insist that expository preaching is “serial” preaching; that is, a *series of consecutive sermons that explains an entire biblical book* from beginning to end (but may be divided into longer or shorter passages for exposition)

- ### B. according to Erickson and Heflin, expository preaching is “preaching that explains and clarifies a portion of Scripture (the sermon text), the truth of which has been discovered through careful study, with a view to making appropriate application of the truth to those who listen. It is done with an acknowledgement that the Holy Spirit guides the entire process. The length of the Scripture portion claimed as a text does not determine whether a sermon is biblical. Too many preachers employ a text only as a point of departure for the “sermon,” but do not really preach the contents of the text. The substance of the sermon must come from the Bible...in order to have an expository sermon” (p. 170).

C. furthermore, according to Erickson and Heflin, biblical preaching may be:

- *expository-textual*: it explains a phrase (the grace of God), verse (John 3:16), or several verses (Matt. 28:18-20) as long as the unit contains a complete thought; a subset of this category is *exegetical preaching* that is verse-by-verse exposition through an entire book
- *expository-passage*: it explains a longer portion from one chapter using a continuous commentary approach (John 3:1-21) or some other organization (five “not the way it’s supposed to be” elements in Matt. 2); a subset of this category is *pure exposition* that exposit a longer portion with a word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase analysis (Boyce’s fourteen years on Romans)
- *expository-thematic*: it takes a passage/passages and explains its/their central teaching, organizing the sermon to reveal and explain a particular doctrine/theme (the resurrection in Rom. 6:1-11)
- *topical*: it takes a topic of interest (cloning) and scrutinizes and explains it in light of all the relevant Scripture; a subset of this is *topical-doctrinal* in which the preacher starts with a doctrine in mind and then consults Scripture for a text or texts to exposit (general revelation in Acts 17:16-34; also in Rom. 1:18-25; 2:14-15; Acts 14:15-17)

D. proposal: *expository-doctrinal preaching* addresses a Christian doctrine by summarizing coherently and systematically the relevant texts of Scripture and bringing them to bear on the question, “What are we to believe, do, and be today with regard to such-and-such a doctrine?”, then preaches that doctrine by means of expository-textual/expository-passage/expository-thematic and/or topical-doctrinal sermon/s

E. this is not a substitute for expository preaching, but it is expository-doctrinal preaching that takes an expository-textual, expository-passage, expository-thematic or/and topical-doctrinal sermon/s

- it originates as one preaches through a book, and when the text articulates a doctrine, exposition of the doctrine as affirmed in that text is part of that sermon (expository-textual/expository-passage/expository-thematic sermon)
- on another occasion (the next Sunday, Wednesday evening), that doctrine is further explained and expanded as it is addressed in other texts of Scripture (topical-doctrinal sermon)

F. correlative church structures for teaching doctrine

- Sunday evening
- Sunday School/adult Bible classes
- Wednesday night
- small groups/Bible studies
- “seminary at the church”

G. example: Acts 17:16-34

- one of the most “commented on” passages in all of Scripture
- multi-tasking in the passage
 - the narrative itself
 - the foundation of Old Testament biblical theology
 - the connection with New Testament (Pauline) biblical theology
 - the interaction with philosophical theology
 - the contextualized sermon within the narrative
- multi-tasking in the preaching
 - attempting to do justice to the multi-tasking in the passage itself
 - a multi-tasking generation
- a multi-tasking presentation
 - option #1: an expository sermon with everything thrown into it
 - option #2: a series of sermons
 - first Sunday: an expository sermon
 - second Sunday: a doctrinal sermon on general revelation (including discussion of Romans 1:18-32; 2:12-16; Acts 14:8-18)
 - third Sunday: a practical sermon on how to contextualize the gospel with non-believers following the paradigm of the Mars Hill speech
 - option #3: a multi-tasking expository sermon

THREE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FROM ACTS 17:16-34

- Do people who have never heard of Jesus Christ have any knowledge whatsoever of God?
- Is such knowledge of God, if it exists, adequate to save people?
- Does any common ground exist between non-believers and believers that can serve as a springboard for a conversation leading up to the gospel?

IV. expository doctrinal preaching and its perlocutionary effect

- *orthodoxy*: sound belief/thinking (both in terms of framework and specific doctrines)
- *orthopraxis*: formed behavior/practice (more than just proper technique, good intentions, and external conformity)
- *orthopatheaia*: wise affection/passion (a character of impassioned integrity)

Conclusion

THUMBING MY WAY

i have not been home since you left long ago,....
thumbing my way back to heaven,...

counting steps,.. walking backwards on the road.
counting my way back to heaven,.....

i cant be free with whats locked inside of me,..
if there was a key, you took it in your hands.
theres no wrong or right,.. but im sure theres good and bad,..
the questions linger overhead.

no matter how cold the winter, theres a springtime ahead.
thumbing my way back to heaven,....
wish that i could hold you,.. wish that i had,....
thinking bout heaven,....

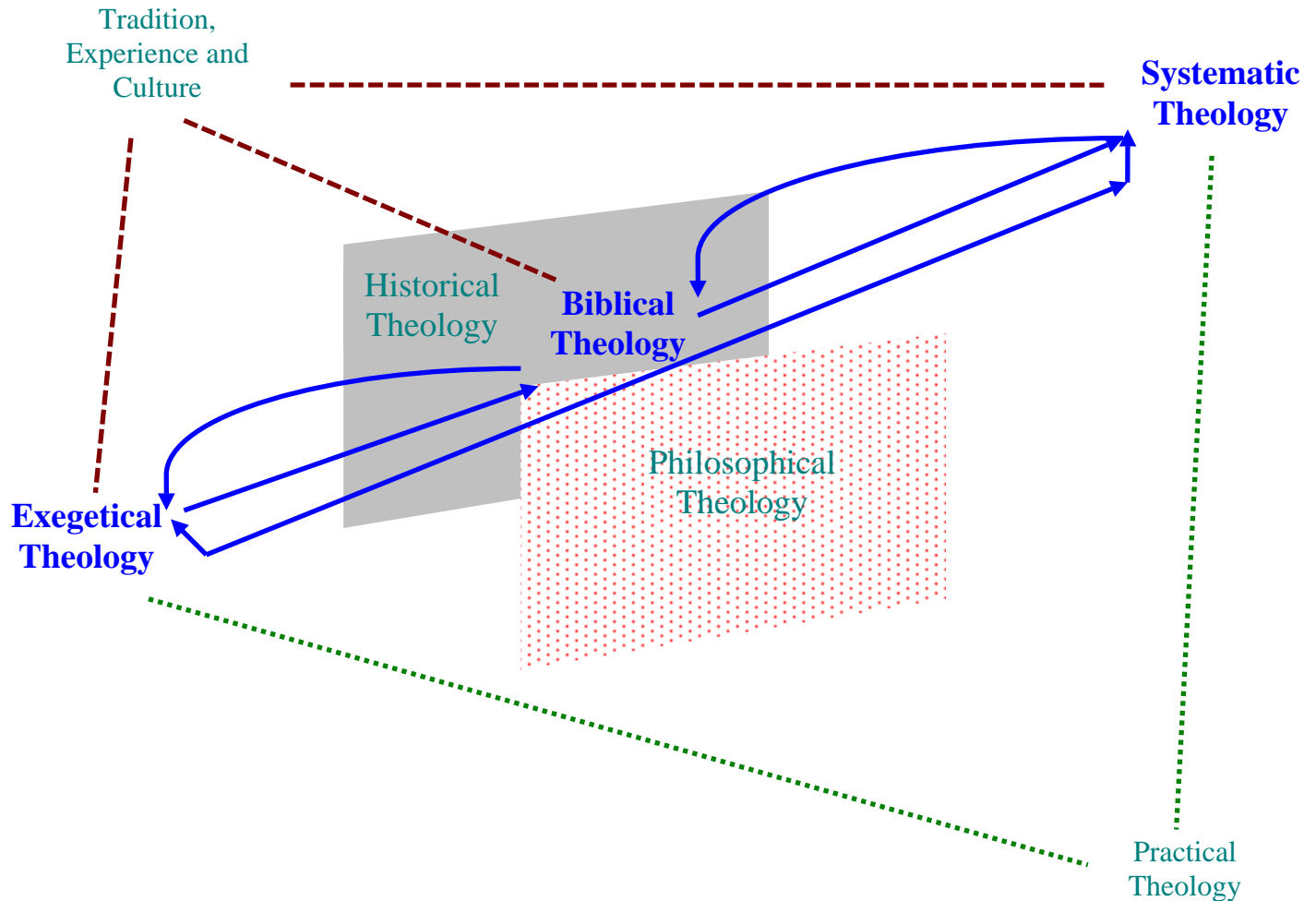
i let go of a rope,.. thinking thats what held me back,..
and in time ive realized,.. its now wrapped around my neck.
i cant see whats next,.. from this lonely overpass,..
hang my head and count my steps, as another car goes past.






all the rusted signs we ignore throughout our lives,....
choosing the shiny ones instead.
i turned my back,.. now theres no turning back,....

no matter how cold the winter,.. theres a springtime ahead.
i smile,.. but who am I kidding?
im just walking the miles,.. every once in a while, get a ride.
thumbing my way back to heaven.

words/music by Eddie Vedder; PEARL JAM "RIOT ACT" 2002

Model of Integration



-  Line of authority (Scripture)
-  Line of (transformable) influence
-  Line of projection/contribution
-  Scripturally-confirmed theology from the past
-  The laws of logic, coherence and consistency; careful and reasonable thinking; interaction with current world views