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PREPARING SPIRITUALLY TO PREACH
THE WORD AT FARMVILLE BAPTIST
CHURCH AUBURN, ALABAMA

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Thomas Howell McClendon, Jr.

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PREPARING SPIRITUALLY TO PREACH THE WORD

AT FARMVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

AUBURN, ALABAMA

Thomas Howell McClendon, Jr.

Read and Approved by:

Brian Johnson Vickers (Faculty Supervisor)

James Parker, III (2nd reader)

Date _____

I dedicate this project to my wife, who endlessly and patiently walked with me through the valleys and up the mountains. May God bless you, my dear lady. I love you.

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PREFACE

When I first moved to Farmville Baptist Church in July 2012, I realized that the move might mean an end to this project. Instead, I was amazed to come to a church that was excited about my work. Both the deacons and the congregation overwhelmingly encouraged me to finish and allowed me the time I needed to complete the work. My secretary, Marianne Foster, was gracious with her support and expertise.

I have had a double blessing because Cuthbert First Baptist had also encouraged me in my work, and many were more than willing to be sermon evaluators and survey takers. The church body deserves much praise for allowing me to be their pastor for ten years, especially the five or so while I was working on this doctorate. I consider it a privilege to shepherd these two fine churches.

I owe much to men like Pastor John Hartzell, who radiated Christ in the pulpit, and Derick Bingham, who taught me about the “Christ in you, the hope of glory” life. John Stokes, who gave me the TRIUMPH acrostic, is an invaluable friend and mentor. He loved me when I was not so loveable, taught me to seek Christ with all of my heart, and answered question after question about the deeper Christian life. Dr. Chuck Lawless laid the foundation, encouraging me that this could be a significant project, and Dr. Brian Vickers did more than I could ask in helping me finish strong.

Lastly, and most importantly, I want to thank my family for their love and support during this project. Betty, my wife and best friend, has been invaluable.

Thomas H. McClendon, Jr.

Auburn, Alabama

December 2013

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purposes of this ministry project were to learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God at Farmville Baptist Church of Auburn, Alabama, and to train lay leaders and local church ministers in this approach to preach the Word of God in their sphere of influence.

Goals

This project aimed to accomplish five goals that served as the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of this program. The first goal was for me to learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God. Over the years, I have studied diligently to learn how to exegete a text, but there seemed to be something missing. What was missing was power. Like the Apostle Paul, I desired my preaching not to be with “lofty words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:1-4). I believed this desire could be accomplished by preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God. The Holy Spirit who inspired God’s Word also illumines it in the heart of the preacher who is willing to prepare spiritually, in order that the people’s faith “may not rest in the wisdom of man but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5).

The second goal was to lead a “Preparing to Preach” focus group of five congregational lay leaders to understand and apply the truth that spiritual preparation is a key ingredient in rightly dividing the Word of God. This congregational focus group of teachers and lay leaders were to learn the importance of preparing spiritually to preach the Word via a ten-sermon series on biblical leaders and preparation. Leaders must

present themselves to God as approved (2 Tim 2:15), as those who have been tested and found genuine and sincere. Spiritual preparation and exegesis go hand in hand and can best be viewed as a two-sided coin where both are necessary for the message of the Word of God to reach the heart of the listener. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Word in the study as well as empowers the preacher and teacher in the pulpit.

The third goal was to develop a curriculum to train others to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God. This curriculum was based on principles gleaned from the life and writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “one of evangelical Christianity’s immortals.”¹ Through the study of his books, sermons, and lectures, seven factors were identified as crucial in Spurgeon’s spiritual preparation for preaching. The curriculum that was developed is based on the acrostic, TRIUMPH,² as an aid in remembering the seven key factors.

The TRIUMPH acrostic is based on a study of Spurgeon’s works and 2 Cor 2:14-17. The seven letters of the acrostic stand for the following concepts: Travail for souls, Rest in the finished work of Christ, Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Unsearchable riches of Christ, Minister’s self-watch, Prayer and providence, and Holiness.

The fourth goal was to use the curriculum developed in goal three to train a TRIUMPH focus group of five pastors from the Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association in methods of spiritually preparing to preach the Word of God in the power of the Spirit. The goal was to equip these pastors with the seven important spiritual preparations necessary to become powerful preachers of the Word of God.

The fifth goal was to implement in my own life the principles of spiritual preparation in order to improve as a preacher of the Word. I have been effectively taught

¹Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1992), 11.

²My friend John Stokes gave me the idea for the TRIUMPH acrostic.

how to exegete a text and preach in an expository manner, but I needed more insight into the spiritual dimensions of preparing to preach the Word of God. This process was to enhance my preaching by maintaining accountability in my personal life so that I might “not [only] preach in persuasive words of wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Cor 2:4).

Context

Farmville Baptist Church is located in Auburn, Alabama, a thriving college town. The name Farmville is derived from the community that was once located in the area. Now, however, the community has been swallowed up in the sprawling subdivisions of north Auburn, and newcomers to the church commonly ask about the reason for the name. Most of the younger generation associate Farmville with the popular Facebook game by the same name.

The church was established in 1835.³ The first church structure was an unpainted, one-room building which was replaced with a larger, white frame building on the same site in 1893. Fire destroyed that building in 1951 along with much of the early history. A new brick building was completed in 1954, and this building houses the church today. The present facilities also include an educational wing, added in 1967, and a parsonage that was built in 1960 and now serves as a youth house. Farmville Baptist Church also maintains a cemetery that occasionally serves both the church family and community.

The health of Farmville Baptist Church has been unstable for the last two decades. In 1994 the church called Bob Baggott, a charismatic and well-loved pastor,

³The data in this paragraph was taken from “History of Farmville Baptist Church,” in *Farmville Baptist Church Homecoming Brochure* (Auburn, AL: Farmville Baptist Church, 1996), 1-2.

and the church grew dramatically until his sudden death in February 2000. Since that time, Farmville has had four pastors, each serving only an average of two years. Presently there are still a number of members who were attracted to the church under the leadership of Bob Baggott, but since his pastorate, the church has experienced several periods of contention and disunity with at least two large exoduses from the congregation. At one point, almost the entire deacon body left.

In spite of this tumultuous history, I felt God's leading to accept the call to Farmville Baptist Church as their senior pastor in July 2012. Surprisingly, I have found an incredibly sweet-natured body of believers who are hungry for the Word and long for leadership and solid biblical teaching. They are eager to put the past behind them and move forward as God leads. The future is bright, and we have already added a number of very solid families and new members.

Farmville Baptist Church is well-situated for growth on the north side of Auburn. Auburn is a progressive college town, but FBC also draws its membership from the larger Lee County area, which is more industrial. The city of Auburn has a population of approximately 54,000 with the population of Lee County nearly 144,000.⁴ Since 1960 Auburn has been steadily growing and has averaged a growth of more than 3 percent per year.⁵ Auburn University attracts over 25,000 students, including a large number of international students and staff.⁶ The city estimates that two of every three residents are either from a different part of the country or are foreign nationals.⁷ The

⁴U.S. Census Bureau, "Auburn, Alabama," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/01/0103076.html> (accessed January 4, 2013).

⁵AuburnAlabama.org, "City of Auburn Community Profile, 2012" <http://www.auburnalabama.org/ed/pdf/communityprofile.pdf>, 6 (accessed January 4, 2013).

⁶Ibid., 10.

⁷Ibid., 3.

university also serves as the largest employer in the county.⁸ Farmville Baptist Church has many members who are associated with Auburn University, but one area that can be targeted for growth is the student population. Few university students attend FBC at this time.

As would be expected, the population of the city of Auburn is more highly educated than average, with over 94 percent of the population holding a high school diploma and 60 percent having a bachelor degree or higher.⁹ The wider Lee County area is lower but still above average, with over 85 percent having a high school degree and 32 percent a bachelor degree or higher.¹⁰ The population at FBC tends to reflect the higher educational trends, with the large majority of adults holding at least a four-year college degree.

Racially, the city of Auburn is predominantly white, with 75 percent Caucasian and 16 percent African-American. The third largest people group in Auburn is Asian, with 5.3 percent, followed by Hispanic or Latino origin, with not quite 3 percent.¹¹ Auburn has attracted a large Korean population both to the university and to nearby automotive industries. There is a large Kia plant just across the Georgia border and a Hyundai plant in Montgomery, both of which have spawned a number of supportive industries. The congregation at Farmville Baptist Church is a racially homogenous group made up entirely of whites; however, it does host a Korean church plant that uses the FBC facilities as its church home.

⁸Opelika Economic Development, "Lee County Largest Employers," <http://www.opelika.org/Default.asp?ID=1665&pg=Largest+Employers+MSA.html> (accessed January 4, 2013).

⁹U.S. Census Bureau, "Auburn, Alabama."

¹⁰U.S. Census Bureau, "Lee County," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/01/0103076.html> (accessed January 4, 2013).

¹¹U.S. Census Bureau, "Auburn, Alabama."

Farmville Baptist Church is ideally situated for potential growth. North Auburn is an area of rapid growth with new subdivisions and retail complexes appearing even in the midst of national economic downturns. The population within a three-mile ring around FBC has more than doubled from less than 3,000 in the year 2000 to 6,700 in 2011.¹² The growth has also brought higher wage-earners into the three-mile radius with the median household income increasing from \$38,750 in 2000 to \$64,180 in 2011.¹³ Growth in both indices is projected to continue into the future.¹⁴

Located on the north end of College Street, the main road running through Auburn, Farmville Baptist enjoys high visibility to passersby. In the last few months, a land swap was finalized with Auburn University in which FBC swapped a little less than two acres of land across Farmville Road for over three acres directly behind the church, giving the church a contiguous acreage on which to build and grow. This land swap had been attempted several times during the past seventeen years, but now has been finally realized.

While Farmville Baptist Church seems poised for growth, because of its turbulent past two decades, much foundational work needs to be done before it is ready for rapid growth. Administrative policies need to be reviewed and improved, but more importantly, strong discipleship programs need to be set in place for all age groups. Current positive indicators are that the people seem eager to grow in their understanding of the Scripture, and they have exhibited a willingness to change behavior based on God's Word. A key to church growth will be to identify and train leaders who will then be able to disciple others.

¹²Scan/US 2011, "Demographic Trends 2000-2011-2016, Farmville 0017871: 3mi ring," 2000 Census, Scan/US 2011 Estimates, provided by Alabama Baptist State Convention, May 31, 2012.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

The context of Farmville Baptist Church provided an ideal setting in which to develop the project, “Preparing Spiritually to Preach God’s Word,” and by extension, spiritually preparing lay leaders to teach within the church. The spiritual disciplines which were developed in the project served as useful foundational tools to equip the future leaders of FBC to be prepared to teach God’s Word in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and to have hearts submitted to the Lordship of Christ.

Rationale

I began with the presupposition that most preachers and teachers desire to make a real and eternal difference in the lives of their hearers, but they must first be right with God in order to help others.¹⁵ An inward preparation and a willingness to obey God’s Word is a must. Divine results occur when sermons are preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Charles Haddon Spurgeon gave his students at the Pastor’s College this warning:

If there is to be a Divine result from God’s word, the Holy Ghost must go forth with it. As surely as God went before the children of Israel when he divided the Red Sea, as surely as he led them through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire, so surely must the Lord’s powerful presence go with his Word if there is to be any blessing from it.¹⁶

Some pastors who preach the Word of God are used in spite of themselves. This is the exception and not the rule. The Word of God is powerful and does not return void (Isa 55:11), yet the Word of God is to be both spoken and lived out in an incarnational way. In other words, the messenger embodies the message (1 Cor 2:1-5; 2 Cor 2:14-17; Gal 2:20).

God’s Spirit speaking through one person to another person is what produces

¹⁵While the principles of preparing spiritually to preach the Word apply as well to lay teachers of the Word, in this paper I will primarily address the pastor in order to avoid the repetitive use of the awkward phraseology “pastors and teachers.”

¹⁶C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (repr., Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 339.

eternal results, whether for salvation or sanctification in the lives of hearers (1 Cor 2:10-11). How then does one become a message-bearer of God? How does one preach Spirit-empowered messages? My belief is that spiritual preparation is the key to becoming God's vessel ready to deliver a message with eternal results. It is God's choice to bless the messenger, but as G. Campbell Morgan said concerning revival, "We cannot organize revival, but we can set our sails to catch the wind from Heaven when God chooses to blow upon his people once again."¹⁷ Preachers must prepare spiritually to effect divine change.

A plethora of books teach the expository preaching method,¹⁸ but only a few make mention of the importance of preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God.¹⁹ In a survey of fifty-three homiletics textbooks, about one-half mention prayer only in passing or not at all.²⁰ My desire was to better understand the Holy Spirit's role in sermon preparation and to define biblical principles that help the preacher deliver a Spirit-empowered message from God to the ears of the listeners. I long to see preachers set their sails of spiritual preparation to catch the wind of God's Spirit.

Over the years, I have wondered what I could do to "set my sails" so my

¹⁷J. Robertson McQuilkin, *Life in the Spirit* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 150.

¹⁸For example, Dennis Cahill, *The Shape of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001); Walter Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981); Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

¹⁹See Arturo G. Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publishing, 1998), 124-28; Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007); John MacArthur, *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 78-89; Stephen Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 214-28.

²⁰John Koessler, *The Moody Handbook of Preaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 117.

preaching was not just in persuasive words of wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power (1 Cor 2:4). After reading *Spirit-Led Preaching* by Greg Heisler and *Spirit Empowered Preaching* by Arturo Azurdia, I renewed my journey to prepare spiritually to preach the Word. This process led me to study other books including C. H. Spurgeon's *Lectures to My Students*. This project provides an answer as to what it means to prepare spiritually in order to preach in the demonstration of the Spirit and power. It was designed to enhance my own preaching as well as others who handle the Word of God so that the faith of those to whom we preach "may not rest in the wisdom of man but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:5).

Definitions and Limitations

In his book, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, Azurdia asserts that one of the great dangers facing preachers today is an "over-intellectual" approach.²¹ Preachers are careful to exegete the passage but are weak in exegeting themselves. There must be a renewed vitality that accompanies expository preaching, and that vitality begins with preparing spiritually.²²

In this project, I used the following definition of expository preaching from Greg Heisler's book, *Spirit-Led Preaching*:

Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered proclamation of biblical truth derived from the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit by means of a verse-by-verse exposition of the Spirit-inspired text, with a view to applying the text by means of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, first to the preacher's own heart, and then to the hearts of those who hear, culminating in an authentic and powerful witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ, and obedient, Spirit-filled living.²³

²¹Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*, 11.

²²Ibid.

²³Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*, 21.

Whether it is called “Spirit-empowered,” “Spirit-led,” or “Spirit-anointed” preaching, it is imperative that one experiences this empowerment in order to preach in the line of Moses, David, Ezra, Peter, and Paul.²⁴ Although I have recognized the difficulty of measuring this empowerment, the preacher must strive with ever-increasing vigor to spiritually prepare to preach the Word of God. I have used the terms “Spirit-anointed,” and “Spirit-empowered” preaching as synonyms.

Because the Word of God is so vast and deep, to claim that there is a single mode of “Preparing Spiritually to Preach the Word” would be foolish at best. Such a disclaimer does not mean, however, that we cannot glean from God’s Word particular principles that prepare men to preach in the “demonstration of the spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:4).

Certainly the principles in this project can apply to all Christians. However, since pastors have a greater accountability to God (Jas 3:1), it is imperative that pastors examine ourselves more diligently. Our preaching is not done for our own advancement but to ensure that the congregation’s faith “does not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Cor 2:4-5).

We dare not touch the glory that belongs only to God. But how can we be attuned to become the vehicles of such power? Certainly we must not neglect the basic spiritual disciplines of the Christian life such as study of the Word, prayer, and fasting. We must be careful to allow the disciplines to break us, mold us, and fill us with the conviction of the truth of God's Word. Above all, we must remember that apart from Christ we can do nothing.

One area that I did not address was the equal necessity of the members of the congregation preparing spiritually to receive God’s Word with open hearts. Even the

²⁴Ibid.

most spiritually anointed preaching can fall on cold hearts and deaf spiritual ears. Sadly, such a situation was clearly evident in Stephen's final sermon to Israel's hard-hearted religious leaders (Acts 6:8-7:60). Both the pastor's spiritual preparation and the congregation's spiritual preparation are equally important. Many of the spiritual disciplines for both groups are the same, though some differences exist. An examination of the spiritual preparation of the congregation would make an interesting study, but it is beyond the scope of this project.

Because the project was fifteen weeks in duration, some long-term results were not measurable in that amount of time. The assessment of whether the preachers and lay teachers continue to prepare spiritually for the long term was not possible. The hope was to lay a solid foundation that will not easily be forgotten or laid aside.

Research Methodology

The primary aspect of this project was to make preachers aware of the importance of spiritual preparation in order for God's Word to flow through them and reach into the souls of their listeners. The first goal was for me to learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God. This goal was accomplished by investigating the lives of Moses, David, Ezra, Peter and Paul, by reviewing books about spiritual preparation, and by researching how C. H. Spurgeon prepared spiritually to preach the Word. My plan was to interview five pastors by phone or e-mail.²⁵ I chose pastors who have spiritually impacted my life, and I wanted to find out how they prepare spiritually to preach the Word. I used my findings from these men and my research to help improve my preaching skills, develop the training curriculum, and impact every area of my project for preparing spiritually to preach the Word.

²⁵Wayne Barber, Alistair Begg, David Howle, David Jeremiah, and John McArthur. Alternates were Michael Catt, John Hartzell, Charles Price, J. Robert White, Tom Kinchen, Al Jackson, and Peter Doyle.

The second goal was to lead a focus group of five congregational lay leaders to understand and apply the principle that spiritual preparation is a key ingredient in rightly dividing the Word of God. These five were chosen from lay leaders and Sunday School teachers in our church, both male and female. I expected them to fill out the pre and post-sermon questionnaire, attend the majority of my ten-part sermon series on preparing spiritually to preach the Word, take notes, and critique the sermons.

The lives of Moses, David, Ezra, Peter and Paul were studied and preached. A sermon on each man was preached in the Sunday morning service, answering four questions: (1) How did God use this man to proclaim his Word? (2) What character quality most made him effective in proclaiming God's Word? (3) What did it cost him to acquire that quality? (4) How does the preacher incorporate spiritual preparation into his personal life?

In order to measure whether this focus group was convinced about the importance of spiritual preparation, a survey was administered both before and after the sermon series. Personal contact was made before, during, and after the series so that verbal and written feedback could be used to improve project effectiveness. This survey measured the group's understanding of preparing spiritually to preach the Word and assessed whether there was any change in their understanding.

The third goal was to develop a curriculum to train others to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God. Spurgeon's books, sermons, and lectures were used to design a written curriculum of seven principles with seven lessons consisting of one hour each. The acrostic TRIUMPH²⁶ identifies and makes memorable these key factors exemplified in Spurgeon's spiritual life. The curriculum encourages those who desire to teach or

²⁶The TRIUMPH acrostic stands for Travail for Souls, Rest in the Finished Work of Christ, Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Unsearchable Riches of Christ, Minister's Self-Watch, Prayer and Providence, and Holiness.

preach God's Word to incorporate the TRIUMPH model in preparing spiritually to proclaim God's Word. They were asked to read, mark, and underline key points in one of two books on spirit-empowered preaching and be prepared to discuss with the group.²⁷ This group was also asked to read a Spurgeon sermon related to the topic of that week's session and to be prepared for discussion. They were also asked to memorize the TRIUMPH acrostic and review it just before preaching or teaching. A pre-survey and post-survey was administered to measure the curriculum's effectiveness.

The fourth goal was to use the TRIUMPH curriculum developed in goal three to train a focus group of five pastors from the Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association in methods of spiritually preparing to preach the Word of God in the power of the Spirit. I was to use Spurgeon's sermons and books as my primary source to develop this training.

The goal was to equip these pastors with seven important spiritual preparations necessary to become powerful preachers of the Word of God. We were to meet weekly for one hour for eight weeks. Using the TRIUMPH curriculum, we were to discuss one principle each week for seven weeks. The eighth week we were to conclude with book reviews of the two assigned books.²⁸ One spiritual preparation survey serves as both a pre-survey and post-survey to measure the effectiveness of this training. The survey measures the preacher's understanding of preparing spiritually to preach the Word. The same survey is given after the TRIUMPH class to measure any change. Each member of the focus group is required to memorize the TRIUMPH acrostic and say it to themselves before they enter the pulpit. This will remind them of what they have already learned in the class.

²⁷Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*; Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*.

²⁸Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching*; Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching*.

The fifth goal was to implement in my own life the principles of spiritual preparation in order to become more effective as a preacher of the Word of God. The focus group from goal two evaluated my preaching to see if my preaching changed due to my preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God. I chose this evaluation group from the various ministries and demographics of Farmville Baptist Church. These five were Sunday School teachers and lay leaders in our church, both male and female. They evaluated my five-week sermon series on preparing spiritually to preach the Word. I provided a survey form for each sermon that evaluated my presentation, content, delivery, and effectiveness in reaching the hearts of the listeners. This process helped me to enhance my preaching skills and to maintain accountability so that my preaching might be in “the demonstration of the Spirit and of power” and that my congregation’s faith might not “rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:4-5).

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces the context of Farmville Baptist Church, which is poised for growth with a solid financial base, an excellent locale in an area of rapid growth, and a highly visible location on a major thoroughfare. However, the church is hampered by its less than stellar reputation arising out of a rather tumultuous couple of decades filled with contention and lack of consistent leadership. The people that have remained at FBC have been humbled, and they are hungry for spiritual leadership and solid biblical teaching. This desire to see the Spirit work at FBC makes it an ideal setting for the development of this project. My hope is that renewal and revival will come to FBC as I (as senior pastor) and the lay leaders learn to spiritually prepare ourselves so that we might preach and teach the Word of God by the power of the Spirit.

Chapter 2 addresses biblical and theological issues concerning the training of aspiring pastors and teachers to prepare spiritually to preach the Word. Biblical texts were chosen from the lives of Moses, David, Ezra, Peter, and the pattern set by the

Apostle Paul to help establish the biblical basis for this training. Each of these men allowed God to use the trials of life to equip them to preach in the supernatural power of the Spirit.

Chapter 3 focuses on the sermons and writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as an extra-biblical source for instruction in preparing spiritually to preach the Word. The patterns found in the life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon are presented using the acrostic TRIUMPH. The interviews of pastors who have inspired me make up an important but smaller component of this chapter. The TRIUMPH focus group was encouraged to apply the principles to their own teaching as well as teaching it to others.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology used in accumulating the research as well as outlining the results of the research. The primary tools used to evaluate the success of the seminar were the pre-seminar and post-seminar questionnaires which were distributed to the focus group. The questionnaires evaluated the effectiveness of the eight-session seminar on the training of aspiring ministers and teachers in the basics of preparing spiritually to preach the Word. A survey was also distributed to a focus group from the church to evaluate my sermons from the five-week sermon series mentioned above.

Chapter 5 of the project focuses on analysis and evaluation of the project. This chapter examines the strengths and weaknesses of the project by addressing the following questions: (1) Did the project fulfill its purpose? (2) Were the goals met? (3) What were the strengths and weaknesses of the project? (4) What would I do differently if I were to do the project again? (5) What did I learn about God, his church, and his Word through this project? And lastly, (6) What did I learn about myself as a minister? The evaluation includes theological concerns as well as personal and church-wide impact of the project.

CHAPTER 2

A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR TRAINING MINISTERS AND LAY TEACHERS IN HOW TO PREPARE SPIRITUALLY TO PREACH THE WORD

The worthy preacher desires to be used of God to make an eternal difference in the lives of his hearers. Yet, desire is not enough. Inward preparation is of utmost importance. The effective preacher must prepare his heart and his life in such a way that he might be enabled by the Holy Spirit to preach with supernatural power. Truth preached must be truth lived out in obedience to God's Word and through the power of God's Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Word of God must illuminate his Word and anoint the messenger. Charles Haddon Spurgeon gave his students at the Pastor's College this warning:

If there is to be a Divine result from God's word, the Holy Ghost must go forth with it. As surely as God went before the children of Israel when he divided the Red Sea, as surely as he led them through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire, so surely must the Lord's powerful presence go with his Word if there is to be any blessing from it.¹

There are at least two major areas of preparing spiritually to preach God's Word. First, the preacher must properly respond to life's experiences, mindful that difficulties can either serve to embitter the messenger or to enhance his message. He must receive the trials and difficulties in his life as though they were filtered through the nail-scarred hands of Christ. If he allows these trials to crucify his flesh, those experiences will spiritually prepare him to preach God's Word (Rom 8:28). Second, the preacher

¹C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 339.

must understand the specific spiritual disciplines that he can follow to spiritually prepare him to preach in the power of the Spirit. These are addressed in chapter 3.

Chapter 2 examines the lives of five biblical characters whom God prepared through trials and difficulties to be his spokesmen. These five great biblical giants of the faith will show us how to grow deeper in our walk with God so that we can bring others to maturity in Christ (Col 1:28). Through these men we will learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word. Moses will teach us about a “face to face” encounter with God (Ps 90; Exod 33:7-23; 34:29-35; 2 Cor 3:7, 13, 15; Rom 10:5; 1 Cor 10:2). David will teach us the importance of reacting correctly to “brokenness in life” (2 Sam 12-13; Ps 51). Ezra will model the importance of being a “man of the Book” (Ezra 7:8-10; 10:1-17). Peter’s “spirit-empowered focus” will help us gain boldness and power (Acts 2:14-47; 3:11-26; 4:23-31). Paul’s “triumphant in Christ” attitude will prepare us to preach the Word with power (1 Cor 2:1-5; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 2:14-3:18; 2 Tim 4:1-8).

Four questions will be asked and answered concerning each man studied:

1. How did this man proclaim God’s Word?
2. What character quality most made him effective in proclaiming God’s Word?
3. What did it cost him to acquire that quality?
4. How does the preacher incorporate this quality into his personal life?

Moses: A Face-to-face Encounter

“Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (Exod 33:11). This verse gives us a glimpse into one of the most intimate relationships between God and a man revealed in Scripture. So who was this man Moses and how did such an intimate relationship with the God of Glory prepare him to be mightily used by God?

Moses, the Law Giver, became a powerful spokesman for God. He led the nation of Israel out of slavery, bore them through the wilderness for forty years, taught them how to behave as God's people, and took them right up to the brink of the Promised Land. Under his leadership, the massive and unwieldy nation of former slaves was transformed into a nation specially chosen by God to bear his name and to exhibit the power and glory of God to a watching world.

Surely such an amazing feat was not accomplished by the power of one reluctant, stuttering human being (4:10). No, Moses became an instrument through whom God demonstrated his power because Moses received his instructions directly from God as to what he was to speak and how he was to lead. How did he receive these instructions? Moses met with God personally. Again and again, God spoke to him until gradually Moses began to know Him intimately.

What Character Quality Most Made Moses Effective in Proclaiming God's Word?

Moses' friendship with God grew out of his face-to-face encounters with God in three settings: the burning bush, Mt. Sinai, and the tent of meeting.

Burning bush. Moses' first recorded encounter with God was at the Burning Bush. There God revealed to Moses his name, "I AM" (3:14), and it was there that Moses received his call—he was to return to Egypt and be used by God to deliver his people from slavery (3:10). When Moses complained that he was not eloquent enough for the task, God answered: "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say" (4:12). God assured Moses that He would equip him for the assignment. Moses need not fear that he would have to go alone. "Certainly I will be with you," (3:12a) God assured him. However, Moses still had trouble trusting God. God's anger burned against Moses, and He sent Aaron to serve as a spokesman even

though God would still speak directly to Moses instead of Aaron: “You are to speak to him [Aaron] and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what to do” (4:15).

Mt. Sinai. Moses met twice with God on Mt. Sinai to receive the law of God for the people. “Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel’” (19:3). On this mountain Moses not only received God’s commandments for the people, he also experienced the glory of God as the cloud of God’s presence covered the mountain (24:15-16).²

Tent of meeting. Most frequently Moses met with God in the tent of meeting:

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting....Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the Lord would speak with Moses....Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. (33:7, 9, 11; emphasis mine)

The pillar of cloud that descended when Moses entered the tent symbolized God’s presence coming to meet with Moses (33:9).³ It was in this Tent of Meeting that Moses experienced God in a more intimate relationship, hearing God speak to him “face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (33:11).

“Face to face” should not be taken literally, but rather as an idiom. This can be especially understood in light of verse twenty in which God tells Moses, “No man can see

²As Moses came down the mountain after meeting God, the skin of his face shone, reflecting the glory of God. He was both a Word-bearer and an image-bearer of God to the people. It is significant that for a time Moses did not realize that the skin of his face shone after having a face-to-face encounter with God. While the people recognized a holiness in him, Moses walked in humility. Later Moses would put a veil over his face after being with the Lord (Exod 34:29-35).

³It is noteworthy that the tent was erected outside the camp (33:7), indicating to all the people God’s holiness and his separation from the sin of the Israelite nation following their making of the golden calf.

My face and live!” Douglas K. Stuart suggests the meaning “up close and personal” or the English idioms, “person to person” or “heart to heart.”⁴ In other words, Moses experienced friendship with God. Friends share common experiences, and they trust one another, telling one another things deeply personal and meaningful.⁵

Going deeper. Moses longed to know God’s ways: “Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found favor in your sight, let me know your ways that I may know you, so that I may find favor in your sight” (33:13). Psalm 103:7 reveals that God granted this request: “He [the Lord] made known his *ways* to Moses, his *acts* to the sons of Israel” [emphasis mine]. Israel saw the mighty acts of God such as the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the provision of manna in the wilderness, and the water gushing from the rock at Meribah. They saw the miracles. They saw the provisions of the Lord. They saw the mountain shake and the thunder and lightning. But Moses went deeper. He learned the ways of God. He achieved an intimacy with God far deeper than just witnessing his powerful works.

As Exodus 33 progresses we further see Moses’ compelling drive to know God deeply, recognizing him as his only source for power and successful ministry. After the Golden Calf incident, God instructed Moses to continue leading the people towards the Promised Land, but indicated that he would not personally go with them—he would send an angel instead (32:34). His angel would do mighty works; he would drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite (33:2). While it might be wonderful to have the promise of God’s angel to do great and mighty

⁴Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 698-99.

⁵In Num 12:7-8, God himself acknowledges that he spoke openly with Moses: “My servant Moses, he is faithful in all my household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the Lord.”

things on behalf of the sons of Israel, Moses would not be satisfied. God's miraculous works were not enough. He was willing to settle for nothing less than the presence of God Himself. One can feel Moses' desperation as he cries, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here" (33:15). Moses had learned enough in his years of ministry to know that he dare not attempt to lead the people apart from God's presence with them. May every preacher of the Gospel know the same.

How Did Moses Proclaim God's Word?

How did a man like Moses become so effective in his calling as deliver and giver of the Law? Surely his personal encounters with Jehovah God were a crucial key in shaping Moses to become a powerful spokesman of God's Word. Just a quick perusal of the book of Exodus reveals that over and over God spoke to Moses, instructing him as to what to say and what to do. Moses also spoke directly with God, sometimes asking for direction, sometimes complaining about the difficulties of his task.

Exodus 6 relates one example of the interchange between God and Moses. In this passage Moses had approached Pharaoh for the first time, but his demands had only resulted in increasingly difficult labor for the Israelites. Scripture records the interchange with God that followed:

1. "Then Moses returned to the Lord and said" Exod 5:22
2. "Then the Lord said to Moses" Exod 6:1
3. "God spoke further to Moses" Exod 6:2
4. "Say therefore to the Sons of Israel" Exod 6:6
5. "So Moses spoke thus to the Sons of Israel" Exod 6:9
6. "Now the Lord spoke to Moses saying" Exod 6:10
7. "But Moses spoke before the Lord saying" Exod 6:12
8. "Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge" Exod 6:13

Nor is such an exchange an isolated incident. A study of the type of content in the book of Exodus reveals that God indeed fulfilled his promise to Moses that “I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to say” (4:12). If we count the number of verses that record specific dialog between God and Moses, we find that there are 254 verses or 21 percent of the book. If we add to that the specific commandments and ordinances that God gave to Moses to deliver to the people, we find 413 more verses for a total of 55 percent of the book. Next, if we count the verses that relate the ways in which Moses carried out God’s commands to him and the fulfillment of what God told him would happen, we find there are 410 verses. So altogether 89 percent of the book of Exodus records either a direct conversation between God and Moses or the fulfillment of God’s instructions.⁶ Only 11 percent contains other information. Figure 1 illustrates that 55 percent of the book of Exodus records direct dialog between God and Moses, and another 34 percent records the fulfillment of God’s commands given to Moses.⁷ Clearly the book of Exodus reveals that Moses heard from God and acted in accordance.

⁶This fulfillment includes the reactions of Pharaoh to Moses which were the fulfillment of God’s plan to display His power and glory. It also includes the building of the tabernacle according to God’s instructions under Moses’ leadership (35-40).

⁷Table A1 provides the data used to develop Figure 1.

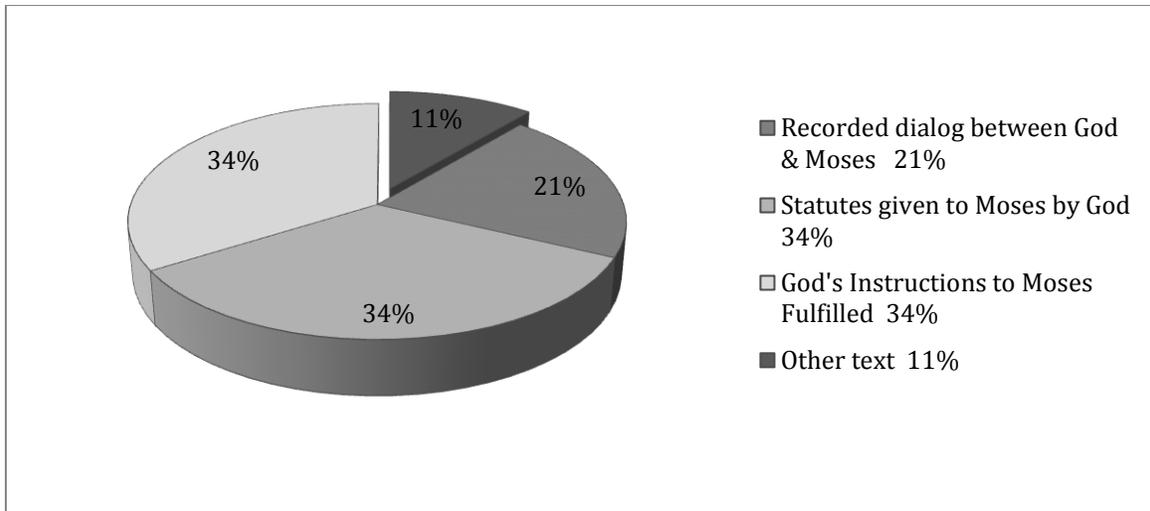


Figure 1. The Content of Exodus

Scripture reveals that Moses was an incredibly meek man (Num 12:3). Moses understood that he was not responsible to create his own plans and programs for leading the children of Israel. After all, he had earlier tried in the flesh to break the Israelite’s bondage when as a prince he had killed the Egyptian (Exod 2:11-14). No, Moses understood that he was a spokesman for God, and as such his mission was to hear from God and act accordingly. He spoke and acted with authority because he knew that he spoke what God had given him and did what the Lord had commanded him to do. His life and message were born out of face-to-face encounters with the living God.

What Did It Cost Moses to Experience “Face-to-Face” Encounters?

God had told Moses, “I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight” (33:12). Such a close personal relationship built on years of trust and communication assured Moses that he had found favor with God. Yet, this favored relationship did not come without cost.

While Moses learned to experience the heights of knowing God intimately in face-to-face encounters, he found himself experientially living in the midst of a sinful and

obstinate people. As Moses came down from the mountain, fresh from a prolonged experience of God and His glory, Moses encountered the people at one of their worst moments, cavorting in revelry around the golden calf, sunk in idolatry, drunkenness, and immorality (32:5-6). Moses' first reaction was righteous indignation, smashing the tablets, grinding the calf to powder, throwing it into the water, and ordering the people to drink it. After calling for the slaughter of the unrepentant Israelites, Moses announced, "You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin" (32:19-30).

As Moses returned to God's presence, we see the depth of his love for both God and the people whom God had sent him to serve. Moses became a mediator, standing between God and the people. He told them, "Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread or drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger" (Num 9:18). Fasting and praying, Moses approached God, bearing the awful weight of the people's sin upon his shoulders. He made no excuses for the people's sins; he simply pled for mercy: "But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written" (Exod 32:32).

Moses was willing to become an incarnational messenger of God, ready to give up his own life in order to make his people right with God. Like Christ, Moses became a mediator between God and the people, willing to even to sacrifice himself for them—"blot me out of your book" (32:32). Of course, Moses in his human sinfulness could never atone for Israel's sin; such atonement would take the spotless Lamb of God.⁸ Yet in this sincere entreaty, we see the incredible burden Moses carried for his people no

⁸In his intercession for the people, Moses also acted much like a high priest as he entered the Holy of Holies, bearing the people's sins before God and pleading for atonement based on blood sacrifice.

matter how obstinate and stiff-necked they had become.⁹ Rawlinson in *The Pulpit Commentary* believes that this willingness of Moses to sacrifice himself for his people is a key to understanding Moses: “Of all the noble acts in Moses’ life it is perhaps the noblest; and no correct estimate of his character can be formed which does not base itself to a large extent on his conduct at this crisis.”¹⁰

This incident was not the first time God had offered to blot out the people and build a new nation from Moses’ lineage. After the spies had returned with fearful reports, God told Moses, “I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they” (Num 14:11-12), but Moses would have none of it. In his response to God there was no hint of desire for personal gain or glory for his own name. No, Moses was consumed with God’s glory and reputation among the nations.¹¹ In both instances, Moses’ great concern was that the nations not be given reason to believe that God was powerless to bring the people into the land nor that He be known as a God who failed to keep His promises (Num 14:13-17; Deut 9:25-29; Exod 33:16). Moses was clearly concerned for God’s reputation, not his own.

⁹Paul felt a similar burden for the Israelites as recorded in Rom 9:1-3: “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

¹⁰George Rawlinson, *Exodus*, *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence-Jones and Joseph H. Exell (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 2:343, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004).

¹¹Moses was concerned for God’s glory because he had personally encountered the glory of God at the Burning Bush, Mt. Sinai, and the Tent of Meeting. Now having been assured that he had found favor with God, Moses requested a new revelation of God’s glory: “I pray you, show me your glory!” (Exod 33:18) God warned Moses that no one could see His face and live, but God agreed to put Moses in the cleft of the rock, cover him with his hand while his glory passed by, allowing Moses to see only his back (33:20-23).

How Does the Preacher Incorporate “Face-to-Face” Encounters Into His Personal Life?

Seeking daily encounters with God. First, to prepare spiritually to preach the Word, it is imperative for the preacher to set aside daily times to seek face-to-face encounters with God. The more he encounters the glory of God, the more he will seek to go ever deeper in the Lord—never content with simply seeing the acts of God but desperate to truly know him and his ways. In this intimate relationship the pastor can learn to hear the voice of God and discern his will.

In the pastor’s personal “tent of meeting,” he must hear God speak through his revealed Word. Having received his message from time spent alone with God and his Word, the pastor can then boldly proclaim his message with authority, knowing that he does not speak his own mind, but rather is serving as God’s spokesman.

Feeling burdened by the sins of his people. Secondly, as the preacher becomes more intimately acquainted with the Lord and his glory, he will become increasingly aware of the stark contrast between God and the people whom he is to shepherd. As a result, he will likely find himself increasingly burdened for the sins of his people and the resulting consequences, all of which will drive him to intercede for them in prayer. As he kneels as mediator between God and the people, bearing the incredible weight of the burden of shepherding a wayward and often obstinate people, he will find himself more and more broken over their sin. In that brokenness, he will discover a willingness to die daily for them. He will find himself coming closer to saying in effect along with Moses, “Lord, if my people will not come to know you and your presence, I don’t want to continue; I don’t even want to live.” The pastor will jealously desire God’s power and glory to be evident in the lives of his flock so that the watching world will see the reality of the living God at work in the church. Then God will receive all the honor and glory.

Walking meekly. The preacher must be careful to watch over his character. His love for his people, his jealousy for God's reputation, and his passion to see the spread of God's glory should prevent the encroachment of any taint of desire for personal gain from his position as pastor. Instead, meekness should be a determining mark of his character. Like Moses, he will speak and act with great authority and may even at times be filled with righteous indignation, but he will always keep his zeal under control.

Depending on the Spirit. The preacher must be always mindful that he is entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit's presence. He must stand with Moses and say in effect, "If you do not go with me into the pulpit, I will not go." As C. H. Spurgeon mounted the long curving stairs to the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle each Sunday to proclaim God's Word, he is said to have often muttered with each step, "I believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe in the Holy Spirit."¹² Like Spurgeon and like Moses, the preacher must be utterly convinced of his inability to speak for God without God's presence and anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

What pastor has not had moments of asking God, "Who am I that I should go?" (3:11). "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?" (4:1). "Please Lord, I have never been eloquent . . . for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (4:10). It is precisely at such moments that every pastor who is called of God can hear Him reply, "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to say" (4:12).

¹²John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 334.

Ezra: Man of the Book

The appearance of Ezra in Scripture is a mere cameo appearance when compared to the volume of exposure given to men like Moses and David, yet Ezra was a mighty man of God whose influence is still felt today. According to Jewish tradition, he is credited with writing most of First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Psalm 119, as well as leading the council of 120 men who formed the Old Testament canon.¹³ Ezra is often referred to as a second Moses, leading his people out of slavery to the Promised Land, and delivering to them the Law of God. Scripture bears witness of Ezra that “The hand of the Lord was upon him” (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28).

How did Ezra Proclaim God’s Word?

Teaching as priest and scribe. Ezra first appears in chapter 7 in which he is credentialed as a priest (whose lineage is traced back to Aaron) and as a scribe “skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given” (7:6). Ezra was born in Babylon where his parents had been taken into exile. There in a foreign land amidst a pagan culture, Ezra faithfully applied himself to the work of a scribe, building the reputation of a man whom Scripture records as a “skilled” scribe, an expert in the law.¹⁴ At that time scribes had become more than recorders of the law; they were also teachers and guardians of the law. It was their responsibility to preserve the law not only on the sacred scrolls but also on the tablets of the hearts of the Jewish people.

¹³Fuller contends that since Old Testament revelation ceased with Ezra’s generation, his role as final “editor” of the Old Testament is not merely tradition, but is necessary. Ezra served as the final priest and scribe of the Old Testament, its text and its interpretation. Russell T. Fuller, “Ezra: The Teacher of God’s Word and Agent of Revival,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9, no. 3 (2005): 53-54.

¹⁴Fuller states that as a highly skilled scribe, Ezra would have mastered not only the content but also the meaning of the Scripture. Like many scribes, he had most likely memorized the entire Old Testament. Although Scripture describes him as skilled in the Law of Moses, he also demonstrated knowledge of the book of Jeremiah (Ezra 1:1), quoted from a Psalm (Ezra 3:11) and recounted biblical history from Genesis to his day (Neh 9). *Ibid.*, 53.

In 458 B.C., Ezra desired to return to Jerusalem because he recognized the impoverished spiritual condition of the remnant that had returned eighty years earlier. These returned exiles were in desperate need of the Word of God, and Ezra felt God's call to bring it to them. He recognized God's good hand upon him in that King Artaxerxes' directives to him included the teaching of the Torah to all who were ignorant of it (7:25). Ezra's faithful work as scribe in the land of his captivity had uniquely prepared him for this critical mission.

Part of the problem for the Jewish people in learning the Law was the language barrier. During the exile, the Jews had begun to speak Aramaic, the Semitic language spoken throughout the Middle East. The Hebrew Scriptures were becoming increasingly unintelligible to the new generations. Into this picture steps Ezra, the scribe and scholar, who accepted the God-given call to bring the Word of God to the people in a clear and comprehensible manner. Nehemiah 8:8 describes Ezra's mode of preaching: "They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading."¹⁵

Teaching that brought conviction. As Ezra began to bring the Word of God back to the forefront of the minds of the Jewish people, they became convicted of sin among them. The princes of the people approached Ezra, confessing the problem of mixed marriages, a sin especially prevalent among the princes and rulers of the people. Ezra was devastated. He tore his clothes, plucked out his hair, and sat down overwhelmed and speechless. When he finally found voice to begin praying, he bore the burden of the people's sin, confessing not "their" sin but "ours." As Ezra prayed, weeping and making

¹⁵Insight into the Hebrew שָׁפַט "gave the sense" can be found in Prov 12:8, where the same word is used in a Hebrew antithetical parallelism: "A man is commended according to his good sense (שָׁפַט), but one of twisted mind is despised." The opposite of giving the "plain sense" would be delivering a message that is twisted and confusing.

public confession, a large crowd of men, women, and children joined him. Ezra 9:4 describes these people as “all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel.” The people publicly confessed their sins and formulated a plan to put away the foreign wives and their abominations. The book of Ezra ends with a list of those who were convicted of their faithlessness to obey God’s law in marrying pagan women—all of whom (except for four) repented and put away their wives.

Teaching that brought revival. As a result of the people’s confession and repentance, revival emerged. Ezra’s clear and careful teaching of the Word of God brought a new concern for attention and obedience to the Law. A spiritual movement began to sweep the nation. Nehemiah 8:1 records the people asking for “the book of the law of Moses.” They stood attentive to the book for the entire morning, and their hearts were moved to worship (8:6). Fuller summarizes the revival that occurred:

Ezra’s revival bore full fruit, strengthening the nation spiritually and preserving the nation from apostasy and idolatry. The people began to obey God’s word, keeping the feast of booths to an extent not seen since the days of Joshua (Neh 8:17), repenting and confessing sin (Nehemiah 9), covenanting not to marry non-Israelites, supporting the worship of God (Nehemiah 10), and restoring the tithe and the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13). The people were now as spiritually strong as at any time in Israel’s history.¹⁶

May God raise up a contemporary army of faithful men who will accurately and clearly proclaim God’s Word, planting the seed for a revival to sweep across Christendom.

What Character Quality Most Made Ezra Effective in Proclaiming God’s Word?

It is apparent that Ezra’s ministry was effective for “the good hand of his God was on him” (Ezra 7:9). The next word, כִּי, translated “for,” indicates the reason for

¹⁶Ibid., 59.

God's favor: "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel" (7:10). With zeal for the Law, Ezra had "set his heart on" three objectives: studying, obeying, and teaching God's Law. His advance towards these goals was resolute, determined, and unshakeable. His pursuit was not merely a matter of pleasure or of passing interest. It set his course for life.

Study. The focus of Ezra's pursuit began with a commitment to study. As a scribe, Ezra was much more than a copyist or a curator; he was a scholar. Daniel I. Block states,

He committed himself to its study with the whole of his being, his intellect, his passion. . . . Ezra could have spent his time studying the scriptures of the Persians, or the traditions of the Canaanites, or the oral interpretations about the Torah that circulated among his fellow priests. But no; for him the authoritative will of God was revealed in the canonical Scriptures. . . . For Ezra, these Scriptures provided access to the mind and will of God.¹⁷

The study of God's Word was his life and the hope of Israel. Ezra had "set his heart" to know and understand God's Word thoroughly.

Obey. For Ezra, becoming a "Man of the Book" not only meant knowing the Scriptures, it also meant submission to its commands. Application was paramount. His was not merely an academic study; his was also a personal study which led to godly living. Herein lies the key to Ezra's finding the good hand of the Lord on him: he set his heart to both study and obey. It is futile to look for God's blessing if one is not willing to live in conformity to the Word.

Teach. As a "Man of the Book," Ezra burned with a passion to teach its precepts to God's people. His impetus for going to Jerusalem was his concern for the

¹⁷Daniel I. Block, "Scribes in the Tradition of Ezra: Ezra 7:1-10" (lecture presented at Chapel, Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, IL, January 10, 2007), 3.

impoverished spiritual state of the returned exiles. He could not keep to himself what his sanctified study had taught him; the soul of the people and the welfare of the Jewish nation were at stake. The people were adrift without God's Law. Ezra well understood that they had already suffered God's wrath, being sent into exile in 586 B.C. because they had earlier neglected God's commands. Surely it could happen again. As a "Man of the Book," Ezra set his heart to re-teaching the Law of God to the people of God.

The order of Ezra's trifold objective to study, obey, and teach is not accidental but should set the course for any who desire to spiritually prepare to preach the Word of God. The study of the Word of God must first enlighten the preacher's mind and heart, after which it will shape his life and determine his character. Only then is a man truly prepared to teach that word to others.

What Did It Cost Ezra to be a Man of the Book?

Two primary areas should be observed in answering this question. First, for a man to "set his heart" requires resolute determination and a single-minded focus. He must put aside other activities which may be of some value, yet only serve as a distraction for him. Ezra is called a skilled (quick or ready) scribe (7:6), adjectives which can only be applied to one who has steadfastly pursued his task with diligence. To put it simply, Ezra worked long and hard to become proficient in the Scriptures.

Secondly, Ezra was willing to give up a more comfortable life to pursue the call of God to take His Word to a people in need. Although Ezra was a captive, Babylon was his birthplace and a land of great cultural achievements. He evidently enjoyed access to the court of the king and even to King Artaxerxes himself, for we know that Ezra had spoken to him of his God and the needs of the returned remnant in Jerusalem, a city still very much in ruins after Nebuchadnezzar's invasion over one hundred years before. Although the temple had been rebuilt, it was smaller than the original, and there were no

protective walls. Ezra willingly left the comforts of Babylon behind and led nearly two thousand men and their families on a slow and dangerous journey. They faced danger from difficult terrain, inclement weather, wild animals, and bandits attracted by the great wealth entrusted to them by the king. But Ezra found courage as he sensed the good hand of the Lord upon him. He realized that his was a God-given call (7:28), and he went, trusting that God would protect and lead (8:22-23).

How Does the Preacher Incorporate Becoming a Man of God Into His Personal Life?

The spiritually-prepared preacher will follow Ezra's three-fold commitment to faithfully study, obey, and teach God's Word. He will study with a heart eager to be transformed by that Word, and he will work diligently to prepare messages that are clear and understandable to his people.¹⁸

Paul: Triumphant in Christ

The Apostle Paul, the bondservant of Christ originally known as Saul, zealously fought to destroy the Way; yet on the road to Damascus he found himself conquered by the very Person he tried to destroy—the resurrected Christ, the ultimate General (Acts 9). Paul described this conquering as “being led in triumphal procession” (2 Cor 2:14-17).

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not like many, peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. (2 Cor 2:14-18)

¹⁸In deference to the space limitations of this project, a study of a third Old Testament character, David, has been attached as Appendix 1.

Ironically, after becoming a slave to his Captor, Paul was transformed into one of the greatest preachers of the gospel who wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament (over 30 percent) and was used of God to turn the world upside down (17:6). What was the secret of the power of his preaching?

What Character Quality Most Made Paul Effective in Proclaiming God's Word?

This study of Paul will focus on his metaphorical description of himself in the above passage. The phrase, “leads us in triumphal procession,” is the verbal form of one Greek word, *θριαμβεύω*, a technical term that the Corinthians would immediately recognize as the ultimate Roman celebration of a mighty military victory. To understand Paul's identity as one led in triumphal procession, it is necessary to first understand the institution known as a “Roman Triumph.”

A Triumph was awarded to a victorious general who had won a major military victory over a foreign enemy and gained new territory for the Roman Empire. As soon as the great victory had been won, the general would dispatch a herald to Rome where he would run through the streets announcing the good news.¹⁹ Preparations for a lavish victory celebration would begin, for the enemy who had once threatened to master them had now been defeated, and there was indeed much to celebrate. Smells of a particular incense reserved by the Roman priests especially for a Roman Triumph filled the air.

The procession itself included the senate and chief citizens of the state, musicians with trumpets and flutes, and a lavish display of the spoils. Next in the procession would be the oxen destined for sacrifice at the temples. However, they were

¹⁹The word *κηρύσσω* “preach” provides an insightful word picture into preaching as a herald going ahead of our conquering hero and announcing to everyone that the victory has been won. To preach is to proclaim the “good news” of the greatest victory that has ever occurred, the cross of Jesus Christ. A herald must remember that he has the privilege to proclaim the victory, but the glory belongs to the one who achieved the victory.

not to be the only sacrifices made that day. Following the sacrificial animals were the captives, kings, and leading dignitaries of the conquered foe along with the mightiest of the enemy soldiers. All were likely headed for execution later in the day.²⁰

The captured dignitaries were driven along in chains in front of the main figure of the triumphal procession, the conquering general. Versnel in *Triumphus* describes the magnificent scene as the general arrives:

In no other Roman ceremony do god and man approach each other as closely as they do in the triumph. Not only is the triumphal procession directed towards the Capitolium, where the triumphator presents a solemn offering to Iuppiter O.M. [Jupiter], but the triumphator himself has a status which appears to raise him to the rank of the gods. Amidst the cheers of *io triumphe* ["Hail, Triumphant one!"] he enters the city via the Porta Triumphalis, standing on a triumphal chariot which is drawn by four horses. He is clothed in a purple toga and a tunic stitched with palm-motifs, together called *ornatus Iovis*, and in his hand he carries a scepter crowned by an eagle. His face has been red-leaded. It seems as if Iuppiter [Jupiter] himself, incarnated in the triumphator, makes his solemn entry into Rome.²¹

There was no higher honor that could be conferred upon a Roman citizen, and the people's elation over the general's victory was filled with adoration and worship.²² The people had been freed from domination by their enemy. Their lives would forever be changed because of the victory won, and they were thankful.

What Did It Cost Paul to be a "Triumphant in Christ" Man?

Paul considered himself as one of the captives chained to the chariot of the victorious general in the victory march entering Rome. Scott J. Hafemann argues that the verb, *θριαμβεύω*, "leads us in triumphal procession," refers to the specific Roman

²⁰David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 142.

²¹H. S. Versnel, *Triumphus: An Inquiry into the Origin, Development and Meaning of the Roman Triumph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 1.

²²*Ibid.*, 2.

ceremony of the triumphal procession, and it always referred to the one who had been conquered and not to the one who had conquered or who shared in the victory.²³ Thus, Paul described himself as a conquered enemy, “a slave of Christ,” who is being led by Christ to death in order that he might be a display of the power of God and the glory of his conqueror. Hafemann explains: “To be led in triumph could thus mean, in a word, to be led to one’s death in the ceremony of the triumphal procession as a display of the victor’s glory and, by implication, of the benevolence of the deity in granting this victory.”²⁴

Paul clearly understood that he had once been an enemy of the cross of Christ (Col 1:21, Phil 3:8) belonging to the “domain of darkness” (Col 1:13). Originally known as Saul, he had been zealous to conquer and annihilate the early Church (Acts 26:14); but it was on the road to Damascus that he was conquered by the greatest General, Christ. At that point, his life as Saul was over; Saul had been defeated and put to death. Yet in being given over to death, he found life. Saul became Paul, a new creation. He declares in Romans 5:10, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” The triumphal procession was a result of what had already taken place on the battlefield—the victory had already been won.

As a conquered man, Paul became “a chosen instrument” to carry the name of Christ “before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel; for I [the Lord] will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:15-16). In his commentary on Second Corinthians, David E. Garland points out that the Corinthians

²³Scott J. Hafemann, *Suffering & Ministry in the Spirit: Paul’s Defense of His Ministry in II Corinthians 2:14-3:3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 34.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 31.

who valued power and success were doubtful of Paul's apostleship precisely because he frequently suffered shame and weakness. How could one who suffered so much be a display of divine power?²⁵

In a passage parallel to the Triumph passage, Paul declares, "For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men" (1 Cor 4:9-13). The constancy of suffering that Paul experienced as an apostle is indicated in the Triumph passage of 2 Corinthians 2:4 when Paul uses the word πάντοτε to describe θριαμβεύω, giving the translation, "always leads us in triumphal procession." Paul understood his life in Christ to be one of continually being led to death in one long triumphal procession. His sufferings were deeper than the litany of hardships described in 2 Corinthians 6:4-5;²⁶ Paul's sufferings served to make him an incarnational messenger of the cross, "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor 4:10-11).²⁷

How did Paul Preach God's Word?

The metaphors of the Roman Triumph as used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 are a rich resource for understanding Paul's overriding philosophy of preaching.

²⁵Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 144.

²⁶In a second passage in 2 Corinthians in which Paul lists afflictions endured while in service to Christ, he concludes the list with the statement: "apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches" (2 Cor 11:28).

²⁷Hafemann notes that the two passages quoted above (2 Cor 4:11 and 1 Cor 4:9) are parallel Pauline passages for 2 Cor 2:14-16. Hafemann, *Suffering & Ministering in the Spirit*, 57-72.

As a captive. As the previous two sections have illustrated, Paul viewed himself as a captive of Christ, the triumphant general, being led along in his Triumphal procession. Paul describes himself as “sentenced to death . . . a spectacle to the world . . . fools for Christ’s sake . . . weak. . . held in disrepute . . . the scum of the world . . . the refuse of all things” (1 Cor 4:9-13).

In an almost unfathomable statement of faith, Paul begins the Triumph passage of 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 with a burst of praise, “But thanks be to God.” Paul could actually give thanks to God for his position as a disgraced slave being led to death, for it enabled him to follow the pattern of the cross. Just as Christ’s death brought life, so Paul understood that in his sentence of death, he was being poured out in order to bring others to life in Christ. Hafemann concludes, “Paul was convinced that he presented men with Christ crucified both in the gospel he preached and in his own life.”²⁸

In weakness. As a captive slave of Christ, Paul understood his position of weakness, and it was from weakness that Paul was determined to preach. In perhaps the key passage describing Paul’s manner of preaching, he told the Corinthians:

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in *weakness* [italics mine] and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor 2:2-5)

Paul’s ultimate aim in preaching was to lift up the cross of Christ, which he described in human terms as “weakness”: “For he was crucified in weakness but lives by the power of God” (2 Cor 13:4). The cross was the primacy of Paul’s preaching, and as such he was determined that his preaching would model the cross. He declared in 1 Corinthians 1:17, “For Christ. . . sent me to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” Reliance on human

²⁸Ibid., 59.

reasoning and human eloquence had to be crucified to Paul in order that the power of God might be manifested. While Paul's letters reveal his superb intellect and rhetorical skills, Paul made them all subservient to the message of the cross. He always kept in mind that "since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21). Paul understood that divine power is best displayed in human weakness.

As a sacrificial aroma. Paul declares in the Triumph passage in 2 Corinthians 2:14 that Christ was spreading through him the "fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere." The knowledge of God is found in the cross as Paul had earlier declared in the first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:18-31). To those who reject the preaching of the cross, the cross is simply folly, but to those who believe, the preaching of the cross becomes "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:24). Just as the special aroma of the Roman Triumph held different meanings for different figures in the Triumphal procession, so Paul's aroma as a "fragrance of Christ to God" held different implications for different people. For those who embraced the cross of Christ, Paul's ministry was an aroma of life, but to those who rejected the work of Christ on the cross, his preaching was an aroma of death.

Not as a "peddler" of God's Word. Paul did not preach for gain or selfish ambition—far from it. He declared, "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's Word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" (2 Cor 2:17). He was a captured man who preached from a position of humility. As a dying man, he preached to the dying that the life of the Triumphant General might be clearly known. He was commissioned to pour his life out for others in the service of the General: "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls" (2 Cor 12:15a).

How Does the Preacher Incorporate Becoming a “Triumphant in Christ” Man Into his Personal Life?

Understand his position. The preacher must gain a clear understanding of himself as a slave to Christ with Christ leading the victory march. This must be a day-to-day lifestyle so that the man of God might proclaim Christ’s triumphant victory in his preaching and “always” model it in his life as an “ambassador in chains” (Eph 6:20). As the aroma of Christ, the preacher will serve as a fragrance of death to the perishing but as a fragrance of life to those who are being saved (1 Cor 2:14-16).

Remember the primacy of the cross. In preparing spiritually to preach, the pastor must always keep the cross of Christ as foremost in his mind. Our Triumphant General won his victory at the cross. Furthermore, the cross must not only be important to the message content, but the style of preaching must not be a hindrance to the message of the cross (1 Cor 1:17; 2:1-5). The message must not be so filled with rhetorical devices and superior words of wisdom that the cross is of no effect. Power and authority do not come with persuasive speaking styles but with the cross of Christ and the blood of Christ proclaimed (1 Cor 2:1-5). Furthermore, as the preacher becomes an incarnational messenger of the cross, he must not expect to be applauded by the world which first hated and crucified Christ (John 15:8).

Give thanks. Paradoxically, the life lived as one always being led to death is not a life of drudgery, but a life of rejoicing. Paul was not led in Triumph by a cruel deity; he was captured by love. Weakness does not equal inferiority. In his commentary, Garland concludes, “[We] would rather be God’s prisoner and slave than Satan’s vice regent in a promenade leading to eternal damnation.”²⁹ As pastors led in triumph, we have a chance to magnify the power of God by following the pattern of Christ. Preachers

²⁹Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 145.

have been given a ministry of reconciliation just as “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor 5:18-19). While there will be many hardships and afflictions, spiritually prepared preachers will consider themselves as “ambassadors in chains for Christ, God making his appeal through us that we implore others to be reconciled to God” (Eph 6:20). Christ has captured us and put us into service that we might proclaim his power and glory! With this great secret, go and turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

Peter: A Spirit-empowered Man

The life of Peter is a fascinating study of a life transformed. Filled with fervor for the Lord, Peter found that passion and good intentions were not enough. All too frequently Peter experienced the agony of frustrating failure when he meant well. It took the knowledge of the resurrected Christ and his indwelling Spirit to make Peter into the man he always wanted to be. Later Peter would write of the secret of his transformation: “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...that you may become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:3-4).

What Character Quality Most Made Peter Effective in Proclaiming God’s Word?

Simon Peter was not always a Spirit-empowered man. He enters the pages of Scripture as a rough and rugged fisherman, bursting with energy and self-confidence. When Jesus found him plying his trade on the Sea of Galilee, He called Peter to follow Him. True to his impulsive nature, Peter “immediately” left all and followed (Matt 5:20). Jesus looked past the burly nature of the fisherman to see what such a personality tempered by the Holy Spirit would become. When Peter’s brother, Andrew, brought him to Jesus, “Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon the son of John; you shall be

called Cephas' (which is translated Peter)³⁰ (John 1:42). At times Peter may have seemed more like an irritating pebble underfoot than a dependable rock, but Jesus cast a vision for Peter. Jesus looked at Peter not for what he was, but for what he would become—a solid, immovable, and unbreakable pillar of the Church.

It would take the supernatural *δύναμις* (power) of God to transform Peter. That power came in the Holy Spirit who descended on the disciples at Pentecost in the form of tongues of fire accompanied by the noise of rushing wind (Acts 2:1-4). Jesus had instructed the disciples that this power would enable them to become his witnesses. Immediately at Pentecost, we see the fulfillment of that enabling. The disciples witnessed of Christ in various tongues, and Peter especially stood tall, delivering an amazing sermon filled with a boldness and insight far beyond his own.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost initiated the Church Age. From that day forward, the Holy Spirit has indwelt, or baptized, every believer. The Holy Spirit seals every regenerate person as a promise of his belonging to Christ (1 Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13 and 4:30). After the Pentecostal coming of the Holy Spirit, the book of Acts speaks nine times of Peter and other disciples being “filled with the Holy Spirit,” and after each mention, the disciples immediately began to witness boldly and effectively of Jesus Christ.³¹

How Did Peter Proclaim God’s Word?

Peter’s Spirit-empowered focus prepared him to preach the Word of God with boldness and power (Acts 2:14-47; 3:11-26; 4:23-31). Scripture records the specifics of

³⁰“Petros” is the Greek translation of the Aramaic “Cephas,” both of which mean “rock.”

³¹The following are references in the book of Acts to being “filled with the Holy Spirit” followed by giving witness to Christ: 2:4, 4:8, 31, 6:3, 7:55, 9:17 11:24; 13:9, 52. This insight was gleaned from James Montgomery Boice, *Acts: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 42.

three Petrine sermons. Peter preached in the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and three thousand souls were saved (Acts 2). He healed the lame beggar (Acts 3) and then preached so powerfully that all were astonished and the number of saved grew to five thousand (Acts 4:4). Later, Peter, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” testified of Jesus before the council of religious leaders, declaring that there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:8, 12). Even though the religious leaders rejected his message, they were astonished concerning the boldness and power of an uneducated man and recognized him as having been with Jesus (Acts 4:4, 13, 20).

Peter’s newfound understanding of the Scriptures was remarkable. Jesus had spent forty days with the disciples, explaining to them the Scriptures. His pattern of post-Resurrection teaching is revealed in the scene on the road to Emmaus. After opening the disciples’ eyes and transforming them from “foolish men and slow of heart,” he showed them how he was the fulfillment of the Scriptures—from Moses and the prophets throughout “all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:25-27).

Not only do Peter’s sermons indicate that the Master had spent much time teaching him after the resurrection, Peter was also filled with the *δύναμις* that Jesus had promised would equip him to preach beyond his own abilities. Jesus had told the disciples that he would send the Spirit who would “teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). In other words, Peter and the disciples would “have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).

Peter preached each of the three sermons recorded in Acts in response to honest questions from the crowds. He took current, physical events and used them to teach spiritual truths. At Pentecost, Peter answered the question, “What does this [unknown language understood by all] mean?” (Acts 2:12). After healing the lame beggar at Solomon’s Portico, Peter replied to the question, “What does this healing

mean?” (Acts 3:10).³² Soon afterwards, Peter replied to the inquiry of the religious council, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:8). Peter answered each of these questions with Scripture, proclaiming their fulfillment in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

In each of these three sermons, we notice that Peter’s Spirit-empowerment produced preaching that was Word-focused, Christ-centered, boldly proclaimed, and repentance oriented.

Christ-centered preaching. Although his first sermon was an outcome of the signs and wonders of Pentecost, Peter did not glorify the miraculous coming of Holy Spirit—he preached the name of Jesus. He used the miracles of speaking in tongues and the healing of the lame man merely as introductions to sermons about Christ. Peter clearly understood that his mission was to “proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9). In each of the three sermons, he preached the basic gospel facts of the pre-determined death of Christ on the cross, his burial, his resurrection, and his ascension. Both Peter’s sermons and letters were Christ-centered.

Word-focused preaching. Although Peter had enjoyed a close personal relationship with Jesus, his sermons were not an entertaining collection of personal stories and anecdotes. Instead, they were Word-focused, using the Scriptures to reveal Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. His first sermon focused on three texts (Joel 2:28-32, Pss 16:8-11 and 110:11). Peter quoted each of the texts at length and then explained

³²The healing of the lame man served as a physical picture of the spiritual reality that Peter desired for all. Peter proclaimed that he had no power to heal, but boldly pointed all to the name of Jesus which had healed this man.

them. A breakdown of the sermon indicates how strongly Word-focused it was: there are thirteen verses that cite Scripture; eleven verses exposit them; and two verses make application at the end.

In the second sermon, Peter quoted from Deuteronomy and Genesis. He also referred to Jesus as God's "servant" (v. 13), using the word for servant from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. His Jewish audience would have readily made the connection of his terminology to this Messianic chapter.³³ Though only four verses long, Peter's third sermon was based on Psalm 118:22. Because his messages were Word-centered, Peter's messages were based on the authority and power of the Word of God.

Boldly-proclaimed preaching. Peter's newfound boldness is apparent. He preached his first sermon to the very crowds who had cried for Jesus' crucifixion a few weeks earlier. No longer was he hiding in the courtyard or Upper Room; now he was "taking his stand" with the eleven (Acts 2:14). In his first sermon, Peter fearlessly preached Jesus as Lord and Christ, twice pointing to their guilt in His crucifixion. His second sermon was preached in the Temple, the hub of Jewish activity, and again he preached the name of Jesus. Peter's third sermon was delivered after spending a night in jail. Emboldened by the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter saw an incredible opportunity to proclaim the name of Jesus to the Sanhedrin although such a message might well endanger his life.³⁴ Luke specifically mentions the disciples' courage, reporting that the religious leaders were "astonished" and "recognized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

³³Boice, *Acts*, 66.

³⁴Scripture describes the austere group that would have been assembled to hear Peter: the priests, the captain of the temple guard, the Sadducees, the rulers, elders, teachers of the law, Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the other members of the high priest's family (see Acts 4:5-6).

Repentance-oriented preaching. Peter preached the name of Jesus with the primary goal of reaping the fruit of repentance and salvation for his hearers. Peter understood that repentance must be preceded by an understanding of guilt. In each of the three sermons, Peter boldly proclaimed the guilt of his hearers, specifically laying on them the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that in the second sermon, Peter accused them of having “delivered and disowned” Jesus (Acts 3:13), a sin which he himself had earlier committed and which had cost him great agony of soul. He then tenderly addressed them as “brothers,” recognizing that they had acted in ignorance, but continuing to uphold their guilt before God and calling for their repentance. Likewise, in the third sermon, Peter proclaimed the guilt of the religious rulers, followed by the offer of salvation exclusively in the name of Jesus.

What Did It Cost Peter to Acquire the Quality of Being Spirit-Empowered?

Before Peter could become the “Rock,” the pillar of the early Church that Jesus had known he would become (Gal 2:9), Peter had to die to the self-life and learn to live by the Spirit. In Pauline terminology, he had to be “crucified with Christ” so that Christ might live in him (Gal 2:20). The “old Peter” had proven himself insufficient for the task of advancing the Kingdom of God, but the life of Christ in the “new Peter” could accomplish the supernatural work he was chosen to do.

On the night of Jesus’ arrest, the self-confident and self-promoting Peter was finally broken. Addressing Peter by his birth name, Jesus warned, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32).³⁵ Peter responded with heartfelt protest: “Lord, I am ready to

³⁵The first “you” is plural. Satan demanded to sift all the disciples, but the second “you” is singular, indicating that Jesus wanted to assure Peter that He had prayed specifically for him.

go with you both to prison and to death” (22:33). Peter would not go to prison—not that night at least, but he would be sifted. That night would become the darkest night of Peter’s life. As he uttered his final and most vehement denial, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Cut to the quick, he went out and “wept bitterly” (22:62). That night Peter realized that not only had he failed; he was a failure. Any vestige of Peter’s pride and self-reliance died that night. On his own, he could not serve the One he had come to love and recognize as the Christ. Peter learned the truth of what Paul would later write: “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). Peter’s flesh had to be crucified in order to live by the indwelling Spirit of God.

How Does the Preacher Incorporate Spirit-Empowerment into His Personal Life?

The spiritually-prepared preacher will understand that work to which he is called as a proclaimer of God’s Word is a spiritual work that cannot be done in the power of his own flesh. He must maintain a conscious reliance on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and to change lives. As with Peter, the preacher may need to first experience repeated failures to convince him of his own inadequacy. As the preacher experiences the humiliation of failure, he can be comforted by the example of Christ’s instructions to Peter that after failure there should be a “turning again” to fulfill the call on his life.³⁶

³⁶For further study, see Arturo G. Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publishing, 1998); Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit’s Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007); Jim Shaddix, *The Passion Driven Sermon* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).

In conclusion, I would be remiss to fail to remember that the Holy Spirit will always remain a mystery to our finite minds. Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going” (John 3:6). There is no magical formula for harnessing the Spirit. The preacher may do his best to prepare spiritually, but at times he may feel that his work is powerless. At such times he must remember that God may be at work in unknown ways. The work of the preacher is to be a faithful steward of “the mysteries of God,” leaving the results up to a sovereign God.

CHAPTER 3

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR PREPARING TO PREACH

A model of spiritual preparation developed from Charles Hadden Spurgeon's sermons and books will be evaluated and implemented using the acrostic TRIUMPH¹ as a memory device. The letters of the acrostic stand for: Travail for Souls; Rest in the Finished Work of Christ; the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the Unsearchable Riches of Christ; the Minister's Self-Watch; Prayer; Holiness. This model will assist preachers and lay leaders in preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God. In chapter 2 the preacher was encouraged to receive trials and difficulties as though they were filtered through the nail-scarred hands of Christ and to allow those trials to do their transforming work in his life. In this chapter 7 specific spiritual disciplines are outlined that will assist the preacher as he strives to prepare himself spiritually to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.

T—Travail for Souls

Travail is a rather antiquated word that was used to describe the anguish of a woman's labor in giving birth, and it provides a powerful analogy for the intensity of anguish in a pastor's heart as he longs to see new spiritual life and vitality birthed in his congregation. As the pastor prepares to preach, he must bear in mind the solemnity of the task before him. He must see behind each face in his congregation the eternal soul within and earnestly consider the spiritual health of each. Although the honest pastor will be

¹But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere (2 Cor 2:14).

keenly aware that he himself is unable to bring about spiritual life or health, he will fervently desire to see each soul released from its prison walls of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ's transforming power, and he will labor in earnest and persistent prayer to that end. Spurgeon writes of this travail for souls:

We believe in the Holy Ghost. We know that we can do nothing without his power, and we are also well persuaded that all things are possible to Him; . . . For us still the daily *testimony* of the old, old gospel, the hourly *watchfulness for souls*, the constant *agony* and *travail in birth*; for our brethren still the gathering of the children and *instructing* them in Holy Scripture, the *warning* of every man, the entreaty and the *prayer* for friend and neighbour: these are the *modes* of service our fathers followed, and they are ours [emphasis mine].²

Should preachers be content to preach to the saints only? No, consider Christ's vivid parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, all of which demand that we not be satisfied until lost souls are found (Luke 15). Spurgeon writes,

As the captain of our salvation, in bringing many sons unto glory, he was made perfect by sufferings. Even Christ went not forth to preach until he had spent nights in intercessory prayer, and uttered strong cryings and tears for the salvation of his hearers. His ministering servants who have been most useful have always been eagerly desirous to be so.³

How does the preacher come to have such an intense longing and anguish for his people? He must continue in intercessory prayer for the souls of his congregation until a supernatural passion for the hearts of men comes upon him. He must not be satisfied until love floods his soul, and his heart breaks for sinners. The pastor must watch his heart, carefully nurturing a tenderness towards the lost while guarding against the encroachment of coldness or apathy. Spurgeon warns: "If any minister can be satisfied without conversions he shall have no conversions. God will not force usefulness on any man. It is only when our heart breaks to see men saved, that we shall be likely to

²C. H. Spurgeon, *The Sword and Trowel: 1876* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876), 8, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

³C. H. Spurgeon, "Travailing for Souls," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), 495, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

see sinners' hearts broken. The secret of success lies in all-consuming zeal, all-subduing travail for souls."⁴ But what is this "travailing for souls?"

Birth Pangs of Soul Travail Defined

Travailing for souls is a scriptural analogy comparing the excruciating birth pangs of a mother in delivering her child to a pastor's deep longing for spiritual birth and health in the lives of his people.⁵ The Hebrew word for travail is also translated in the English Standard Version of the Bible as "anguish, labor, great agony, distressed, burst forth, and writhe." For the woman in travail, every fiber of her body experiences intense anguish and pain in anticipation and labor to birth new life. This pain and sorrow of travail precedes the new life. She willingly, even joyfully, enters into travail for the reward of seeing the fruit of her womb enter into new life.

Likewise, soul travail is a deep longing deep within the soul, a longing for God to redeem and free the souls of men through movement of the Spirit in the preaching of the Word of God. Spurgeon speaks of the absolute necessity of agonizing in prayer over the lost souls in our care:

We shall never triumph till our image is struck kneeling. The reason why we have been defeated, and why our banners trail in the dust, is because we have not prayed. . . . Go to your God and tell him that if souls are not saved, it is not because he has not power to save, but because you have never travailed as it were in birth for perishing sinners.⁶

Like a mother in labor delivering her child, the preacher must toil with mighty entreaties to see God bring men, women, boys, and girls enter into a born-again experience.

⁴Ibid.

⁵See for example Isa 23:4, 54:1, 66:7-9, and especially Gal 4:19.

⁶C. H. Spurgeon, "True Prayer—True Power!" in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1860), 339, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

Spiritual Labor Precedes Spiritual Birth

Spurgeon briefly traces how travail has preceded spiritual birth throughout history. The whole nation of Israel cried out in agony for deliverance before their birth as a free nation ready to inherit the Promised Land. David poured forth petitions for his beloved Zion, and Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Israel flourished. Josiah rent his clothes in anguish for the sins of the people and a glorious reformation was born. Nehemiah longed for the re-establishment of Jerusalem. The land was watered with his tears as the wall was built with a sword and trowel. After a period of prayerful waiting, Christ sent the Comforter at Pentecost and the Church was born (Acts 3:14-41). Luther and the Reformers travailed for the purity of the church, and a new day dawned. Periods of anguish and deep longing have preceded the birth of major spiritual movements.⁷

While it is possible that some preachers without this agony of soul may appear to have success, as true undershepherds, pastors must set their hearts to follow the Great Shepherd who agonized over the souls of men (1 Pet 5:1-4). Jesus took upon himself the weaknesses of humanity, spent nights in intercessory prayer, wept over Jerusalem, sweat drops of blood in Gethsemane, found his agony and suffering perfected at Calvary, and now serves as our high priest who perfectly sympathizes with our weaknesses. Likewise as followers of the Master Teacher, preachers must earnestly travail for souls. Spurgeon speaks of being broken over his people lost in their sins:

With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus. It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this: — bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness, that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God.⁸

⁷Charles H. Spurgeon, “Travail for Souls,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

⁸Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Minister’s Farewell,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 6 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

Spurgeon believes that the key to travelling for souls is intercession in its deepest meaning. Before the preaching must come a godly intercession of weeping over the sins of our people. The spiritual condition of our people must break our heart. Would we be willing to take their sin and die in their place as was Moses (Exod 32:32) and, more importantly, Christ Jesus our Lord?

Blessed are Those Who Travail for Souls

Just as a mother experiences an intense agony, so the preacher who learns to travail for the souls of others will find his heart will also be watered. In God's kingdom, death is followed by life, a resurrection life with power. In his travail, the preacher can find encouragement that he is lifting up his people to the one who has already travailed for them and has been satisfied:

In that fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins there is a fullness that never can be exhausted by all the sin of man. He has finished the work which his Father gave him to do. Now the covenant is ratified with him that he shall see of the *travail of his soul* and *shall be satisfied*. In these respects we are convinced that there is an acquired as well as a personal fullness in our precious Lord [emphasis mine].⁹

The spiritually prepared preacher will travail in the secret place with God before the sermon is proclaimed. As he bears the burdens of his people and covers his prayers with weeping and travail, the results of God will come (Isa 53:3-11, Gal 4:19).¹⁰ He shall see the fruit of the travail on his soul:

“If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears.” To such pathetic appeals the Lord's heart can never be indifferent; in due time the weeping intercessor will become the rejoicing winner of souls. There is a distinct connection between importunate agonising and true success, even as between the travail and the birth, the sowing in tears and the reaping in joy. “How is it that your seed comes up so soon?” said one

⁹Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Fulness and the Filling,” *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 63 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos, 1998).

¹⁰“He shall see of the travail of his soul, by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

gardener to another. “Because I steep it,” was the reply. We must steep all our teachings in tears, “when none but God is nigh,” and their growth will surprise and delight us.¹¹

May your prayer be as mine, “Father, teach me to travail as you travail for souls.”

R—Rest in Christ

The pastor who enters into a travail for souls and whose endless list of duties relentlessly press upon him will surely grow exceedingly weary if he does not find rest for his soul. Spurgeon recounts an incident in which he watched a horse straining to pull a load which could easily have taken three horses. “There is a good horse being ruined,” he thought to himself. Thinking how much better it would have been for some of the load to be relieved from the horse’s back or for more horses to be brought in to help shoulder the load, a spiritual truth dawned upon Spurgeon:

Does our Lord and Master treat us in this fashion? No; we overload ourselves. We get tugging away as if the salvation of the world depended upon our straining ourselves to death. Now I do not want you to get away from feeling a due measure of responsibility; but then you are not God, and you do not stand in God’s place; you are not the rulers of providence, and you have not been elected sole managers of the covenant of grace; therefore do not act as if you were.¹²

As ministers of the gospel, we must find rest in the omniscience of God, careful not to take on burdens that were never meant to be ours. The heaviness of ministry can adversely affect preaching and its preparation unless the pastor comes daily to receive the rest that only Christ can give.

Rest for Your Souls.

Christ calls to the weary pastor: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy

¹¹C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 1, *A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors’ College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), 45.

¹²C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 215, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2009).

laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29). The invitation is to “all who labor and are heavy laden” and the command is a simple one: “Come to me.”¹³ The command to come precedes a call to learn or a call to study or even a call to labor. It is a call to leave someone, something, or someplace and move to another. The call is to leave our self-effort, self-labors, our sin, and our heavy burdens and to come unto Christ. The call is to concern ourselves with Christ—with his life, his death, his resurrection, and his power.¹⁴ It takes great faith to turn away from the pressures of life and the work clamoring for our attention and to rest in Christ, but in trust we must come.

As I write, I am watching some men outside my window working diligently to put a new roof on a house across the street. One of the men is walking the roof line as if he were walking a tight-rope. As another man is working towards the edge of the roof tacking down the tar paper, he is holding on to a single rope. How often does the pastor feel like these roofers, tiptoeing along a tight rope or straining his weight at the end of a thin rope as he works closer and closer to the edge? Spurgeon proclaims, “Advance, ye slaves, flee from your taskmaster now! Weary ones, recline on the promise now, and take your rest! Come now! By an act of instantaneous faith which will bring instantaneous peace, come and rely upon Jesus, and he will now give you rest.”¹⁵ He will be our strong rope and our strong tower of safety at our worst moments.

Christ’s rest is a gift. We put out our empty hand by faith and receive it freely.

¹³Christ issues several other calls to come: to come a wedding feast (Matt 22:4), to come inherit the kingdom prepared for you (Matt 25:34), to come away by yourself and rest (Mark 6:31), to come and have breakfast (John 21:12), and to come gather for the great feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:17).

¹⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, “Rest, Rest,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

¹⁵Ibid.

In the spiritual principle of the “already-but-not-yet,” there are two rests spoken of in Scripture. This first rest is a rest of regeneration. It is complete in itself because Christ’s blood was shed once for all; his sacrifice is complete. But there is another rest, a daily walk of rest.

Rest After Rest

This second rest is a rest found in the midst of serving and learning, and it must be a part of the preacher’s daily diet. “Take my yoke upon you.” What irony! After we are told to give up our heavy burdens and come to Christ, then we are commanded to take up a burden. Notice, however, that the burden is light. “I will give you rest” comes before “you shall find rest.” The preacher must experience the first rest before he can gain the second. This second rest is a rest of a learner. As Christ entreated, “. . . learn from me and you will find rest for your souls.” Spurgeon says it well:

I have looked at this rest after rest as being a treasure concealed in a precious box. The Lord Jesus gives to his people a priceless casket, called the gift of rest; it is set with brilliants and inlaid with gems, and the substance thereof is of wrought gold; whosoever possesses it feels and knows that his warfare is accomplished and his sin is pardoned. After awhile the happy owner begins to examine his treasure. It is all his own, but he has not yet seen it all, for one day he detects a secret drawer, he touches a hidden spring, and lo! before him lies a priceless Koh-i-noor surpassing all the rest. It had been given him it is certain, but he had not seen it at first, and therefore he finds it. Jesus Christ gives us in the gift of himself all the rest we can ever enjoy, even heaven’s rest lies in him; but after we have received him we have to learn his value, and find out by the teaching of his Spirit the fullness of the rest which he bestows.¹⁶

Rest in Christ

The pastor who experiences this second rest finds that it causes him to become more like Christ who describes himself as “gentle and lowly of heart.” Instead of being like the fiery apostle John who was ready to call fire down from heaven, the preacher at rest will be much less angry and irritable as well as much quicker to forgive. Like Jesus,

¹⁶Ibid.

the preacher must not allow the faults and grumblings of the sheep to discourage him. He must not allow the snide remark, the contentious spirit at a committee meeting, or the last minute change of a service to turn his focus off Christ. As he rests in Christ, the flow of living water will spring from the depths of his soul. Scripture likewise admonishes, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted” (Heb 12:3). As the pastor rests in Christ, he will see Christ formed more fully in him (Rom 8:28-29).

I—Indwelled by the Holy Spirit

Although every believer is indwelled by the Holy Spirit,¹⁷ the spiritually-prepared preacher needs the anointing of the Holy Spirit with its enabling power for godly ministry.¹⁸ Luke writes that the purpose of this anointing for Christ was to preach the gospel, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to captives, recover the sight of the blind, set at liberty the oppressed, and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19); and we are to follow in his steps. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is absolutely critical for every pastor engaged in spiritual battle. Spurgeon writes, “There is no rhetoric like that of the heart, and no school for learning it but the foot of the cross. It were better that you never learned a rule of human oratory, but were full of the power of heavenborn love, than that you should master Quintilian, Cicero, and Aristotle, and remain without the apostolic anointing.”¹⁹

This anointing is almost impossible to define, but its presence is recognizable

¹⁷Although the “Indwelling of the Holy Spirit” fits the acrostic, I have chosen to narrow the topic to the anointing of the Holy Spirit as it applies to the preacher.

¹⁸See Arturo G. Azurdia, *Spirit-Empowered Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006), and Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007) for deeper study.

¹⁹C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 1, *A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), 44.

and its absence usually glaring. The Spirit's anointing with enabling power is like dew from heaven and must be sought after as a deer pants for the water brooks. It is a gift from God and is found only in his presence. We cannot claim an anointing for ourselves, rather we must seek it from our heavenly Father through prayer (2 Cor 1:20-22).

Spurgeon attempts to describe this anointing:

One bright benison [blessing] which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something, better understood than named; it is a dew from the Lord, a divine presence which you will recognise at once when I say it is "an unction from the holy One." What is it? I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into words what is meant by *preaching with unction*; yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence.²⁰

A Fragrant Aroma of Christ

Before the anointing can come, the pastor will usually experience one of the more painful works of the Spirit in which the Spirit crushes the preacher, cutting away the dead branches of the flesh and making him into a fragrant aroma of Christ (2 Cor 2:15). Spurgeon describes this process as "the withering work of the Spirit":

The Spirit blows upon the flesh, and that which seemed vigorous becomes weak, that which was fair to look upon is smitten with decay; the true nature of the flesh is thus discovered, its deceit is laid bare, its power is destroyed, and there is space for the dispensation of the ever-abiding word, and for the rule of the Great Shepherd, whose words are spirit and life. There is a withering wrought by the Spirit which is the preparation for the sowing and implanting by which salvation is wrought.²¹

Only as the Spirit puts the preacher's fleshly, carnal self to death will the power of the Spirit be realized in his life. Self-righteousness, the so-called "goodness" of the flesh, must be destroyed in order for the life of Christ to flourish (Isa 40:6-8, 1 Pet 1:23-25). Spurgeon teaches, "When the withering wind of the Spirit moves over the carnal

²⁰C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 1, *A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle*. (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), 49.

²¹Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Withering Work of the Spirit," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

mind, it reveals the death of the flesh in all respects, especially in the matter of power towards that which is good. We then learn that word of our Lord: ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’”²² The fragrant aroma of Christ flows through the air of our soul and into the lives of others only after the death of our flesh.

An Anointing for the Message

Once the pastor’s confidence in the flesh has been crucified, he will be more keenly aware of his need for the extraordinary power of the Spirit’s anointing. Spurgeon declares, “To call men out to a real separation from the world, and a true union with Christ, apart from the power of God, is an utterly futile effort.” The pastor might as well “whistle eagles into an English sky, or beckon dolphins to the dry land.”²³

This anointing power must be sought in the study as well as in the pulpit.

Again, Spurgeon speaks with clarity:

In order to have power in public, we must receive power in private. I trust that no brother here would venture to address his people without getting a message fresh from his Lord. If you deliver a stale story of your own concocting, or if you speak without a fresh anointing from the Holy One, your ministry will come to nothing. . . . You and I are waiting-servants in the house of God, and we are to report what our God would have us speak. The Lord gives the saving message, and clothes it with power.²⁴

The spiritually-prepared preacher must seek to find God’s message and to preach it by the Spirit’s anointing power.

While the movement of the Spirit is compared in John 3 to the wind whose movements no man can harness, Spurgeon urges preachers who desire “to feel a stiff breeze” to go out to sea or climb to the hills.²⁵ In other words, they are to follow the

²²Ibid.

²³Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 324.

²⁴Ibid., 329.

²⁵Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 200.

divinely appointed means for walking in the Spirit which are covered elsewhere in this paper.

Spurgeon also notes several hindrances to the anointing of the Spirit which are especially applicable to pastors, including: a lack of sensitivity arising from a disobedience to the Spirit; a hypocritical dishonesty in preaching what the people want to hear rather than the truth of God's Word; a failure to be spiritually passionate for God; a pride in his abilities; a laziness in preparation; and a neglect of prayer (1 Tim 4:3).²⁶

The Spirit Produces the Actual Effect from the Gospel

In *Lectures to my Students*, Spurgeon lists seven different facets of the Holy Spirit that portray various means by which he assists the pastor in preaching the Word of God: the Holy Spirit is the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of wisdom, the live coal from off the altar, the anointing oil, the spirit of supplication, the spirit of holiness, and the spirit of discernment.²⁷ It is the Spirit that produces the fruit of the planted seed of the Word preached from the pulpit.

The minister must never trust in his own eloquence, but consciously trust in the working of the Spirit to bring about the desired effect of his Word. Spurgeon uses two analogies here. First, he compares preaching to a sword fight, cautioning the preacher against using the pulpit to display his rhetorical skill by "sword play"; instead his object must always be to "drive the sword of the Spirit through men's hearts." His second analogy compares preaching to a ploughing match. The competition must not base success on the appearance of the plough but on the work that the plough accomplishes.

²⁶Ibid., 200-01.

²⁷Ibid., 188-98.

The furrow must be cut from one end of the field to the other.²⁸ Pastors plow the field and plant the seed, but God must send the rain and bring the fruit. The preacher must never forget that only God can sanctify believers and powerfully transform sinners. Spurgeon warns, “The lack of distinctly recognizing the necessity of the Holy Spirit lies at the root of many useless ministries.”²⁹

In his book *Spirit-Empowered Preaching*, Azurdia quotes Gardiner Spring on seeking the anointing power in secret prayer:

If you enter into the ‘secret place’ of the Most High, and get near the heart of him your souls love, plead earnestly that his own power may attend the stated ministrations of the Gospel. . . . Open your desires; . . . tell him of his power and our weakness. . . . With tears of solicitude urge your suit, and tell him that he has committed the treasure of earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be all of God.³⁰

Like the apostles in Acts, the anointing is given of God to those who will wait in the secret place and will continue to seek him for as long as it takes.

When anointed preaching occurs, the Spirit of God seems to settle down on the sanctuary as heaven’s dew. There is a heightened sense of silence and stillness. No one seems to cough or fidget, and there is a sense of being on holy ground. The words from the preacher seem to come from heaven itself, and it can be said, “The Lord is in this place.”³¹

Spurgeon has wise counsel for such times: “When you are fullest of the fruits of the Spirit, bow lowest before the throne, and serve the Lord with fear. . . . Remember that God has come unto us, not to exalt *us*, but to exalt *Himself*, and we must see to it that

²⁸Ibid., 194-95.

²⁹Ibid., 32.

³⁰Azurdia, *Spirit-Empowered Preaching*, 182.

³¹The author is describing real events, once while he was in the audience and once while he was preaching. There have been other similar experiences, but these two were dramatic and clearly the work of the Holy Spirit.

His glory is the one sole object of all we do.”³²

U—Unsearchable Riches of Christ Our weakness, Christ’s strength

The honest preacher will realize that by his own abilities he is quite incapable of fulfilling his sacred call to preach. Is there anyone who can claim to “do greater works” than Christ as he claimed we would do (John 14:12)? No, certainly not in our own power. The only remedy for our powerlessness is the power of God through the energy of the Holy Spirit. Paul, ever-mindful of his heinous acts against the Church before his conversion, wrote, “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). Spurgeon comments on this passage: “If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God, attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ! . . . And you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak unworthy thing you are!”³³

Paul had learned this lesson from the Lord himself who told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in your weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). So too, Christ will make the preacher strong in his weakness. Spurgeon writes,

I give you a text from the 1st of Corinthians, the 15th chapter, and 10th verse: “*I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I.*” “I, yet not I;”—I to the very full, every bit of me: Paul, once the Pharisee, the blasphemer, the persecutor, called now to be an apostle, who finds it cause of joy that this grace is given unto me to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; I, not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles: and yet not I, for I feel myself to be nothing, yea, and less than nothing, and Christ is all and in all. So it is I, yet not I.³⁴

³²Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 203.

³³Charles H. Spurgeon, “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 13 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

³⁴Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 60.

In the preacher's weakness, Christ's strength is magnified. In his sermon, "Strength in Weakness," Spurgeon identifies several particular areas of the pastor's weakness: an overwhelming sense of responsibility, a keen sense of unworthiness due to an awareness of his own sinfulness, a lack of natural abilities, both deserved and undeserved reproaches, and perhaps a particularly difficult place of ministry. Spurgeon confesses his own feelings of weakness:

For many, many years, my own preaching was exceedingly painful to me because of the fears which beset me before entering the pulpit. Often, my dread of facing the people has been overwhelming. Even the physical feeling, which came of the mental emotion, has been painful; but this weakness has been an education for me. I wrote, many years ago, to my venerable grandfather . . . who wrote back and said, "I have been preaching for sixty years, and I still feel tremblings. . . . When we preach and think nothing of it, the people think nothing of it, and God does nothing by it."³⁵

The spiritually-prepared preacher will embrace his weaknesses in order that they might crush him, allowing the fullness of Christ's riches to be released in his life and manifested to his people.

Purpose to Preach the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

Once, when I was unsure of my direction for sermon preparation, I asked my pastor friend from Northern Ireland, Derick Bingham, "What do I preach on now?" In his beautiful Irish accent he answered, "Stick to the Word, and you will never run out of things to preach." Taken to another level, I would add that if we focus on the unsearchable riches of Christ, the preacher will never run out of material. Spurgeon finds the same sentiment in Paul:

Although our Apostle thus knew and confessed his weakness, there is one thing which never troubled him—he was never perplexed as to the subject of his ministry. I do not find the Apostle in all his writings proposing to himself the question, "What shall I preach?" No, . . . he said with solemn decision, "I determined not to know

³⁵Ibid., 199-226.

anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”³⁶

Nowhere are the riches of Christ more evident than in the cross of Jesus and the blood that washes white as snow. Spurgeon further observes that while Paul preached the great doctrines of the faith, they were always rooted in the person of Christ. He notes, “Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ, not the dignity of manhood, or the grandeur of human nature. He preached not *man*, but man’s Redeemer.”³⁷

In his sermon, “Christ Precious to Believers,” C.H. Spurgeon tells the story of a young man preaching in the presence of an older, godly minister. After he finished, the young man went to the elderly minister, and their conversation went as follows:

What do you think of my sermon?

A very poor sermon indeed.

A poor sermon? It took me a long time to study it.

Ay, no doubt of it.

Why, did you not think my explanation of the text a very good one?

Oh yes, very good indeed.

Well, then, why do you say it is a poor sermon? Didn’t you think the metaphors were appropriate and the arguments conclusive?

Yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon.

Will you tell me why you think it a poor sermon?

Because there was no Christ in it.

Well, Christ was not in the text; we are not to be preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text.

Don’t you know young man that from every town, and every village, and every little hamlet in England, wherever it may be, there is a road to London?

Ah! And so from every text in Scripture, there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures, that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business is when you get to a text, to say, ‘Now what is the road to Christ?’ and then preach a sermon, running along the road towards the great metropolis — Christ. And, I have never yet found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it, and if I ever do find one that has not a road to Christ in it, I will make one. I will go over hedge and ditch but I would get at my Master, for the sermon cannot do any good unless there is a savor of Christ in it.³⁸

³⁶Spurgeon, “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” 206.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸C. H. Spurgeon, “Christ Precious to Believers,” in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 5 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1860), 140, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

In preparing to preach, a key focus must be the unsearchable riches of Christ. The preacher must not become sidetracked with other seemingly good subjects without bringing them back to Christ. The particular phrase used in Ephesians 3:18, “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” is found only once in the New Testament. The Greek word for “riches,” πλοῦτος, is used a number of other times by Paul describing riches of grace (Eph 1:7), wisdom and insight (1:8), immeasurable riches of grace (2:7), riches of his glory (3:16), riches of the glory of this mystery (Col 1:27), and treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).

In the Word of God, preachers are given the inexhaustible and unfathomable resources found in Christ, so why would we go anywhere else except further into the riches of Christ? How do we keep from getting sidetracked? Focus on the cross. All roads lead to the cross. We can never exhaust the cross but must go deeper and deeper into it. The riches there are immeasurable, inexhaustible, and unsearchable.

While the depths of these riches are incomprehensible, they are not inaccessible. We must not despair of searching them out in our study, but rejoice, knowing that we will have all of eternity to enjoy the pursuit of comprehending their vastness. For now, we have been given enough in the Scripture to never run out of sermon material. We must continue to seek the deep things of God. We must go after them, meditate on them, love them, rejoice in them, and place our trust in them. They are deeper than the ocean and higher than the heavens, but our honor is to search them out and feed them to our people.

M—Minister’s Self-Watch

The minister’s self-watch, which involves evaluating daily the inner self, is

crucial to preparing spiritually to preach the Word.³⁹ Scripture instructs the pastor, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:16). As the pastor lives in the fear of God, realizing the eternal and weighty magnitude of his calling, he will more readily be kept from falling into sin and bringing a blot to the name of Christ. Yet not only a fear of failure should motivate the pastor to keep careful watch over his life, but he should also be motivated by the reward of his success. Spurgeon quotes M’Cheyne on the self-watch as a condition of success:

How diligently the Calvary officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, His instrument – I trust, a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.⁴⁰

Assurance of Salvation

One of the minister’s first concerns should be that he is a saved man. As a teenager, I was so desperate to find an assurance of salvation that I wanted to become a pastor for I thought that surely all pastors were confident of their salvation. Of course I now realize that was a foolish notion.

Scripture admonishes, “Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall” (2 Peter 1:10). The qualities that Peter lists include virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, and godliness. The presence of these qualities in a person’s life is evidence of true faith in Christ. A man cannot preach with power unless he has been “born again” and received the

³⁹Further Scriptures on the minister’s self-watch include 1 Tim 4:16, Acts 28:24, Ps 90:1, Gen 16:3, Ps 19:12, John 21:15-17, Ps 7:12, and Ps 51.

⁴⁰Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 8.

enabling power of the Holy Spirit. A truly saved man will be an obedient man and will receive a greater revelation of truth from the Lord (John 14:15, 21). Preaching is not for the faint of heart, so the preacher must know Christ and be closely tuned to his voice (Eccl 5:1).

Spurgeon eloquently describes this process of self-examination:

To study one's own self in the light of God's Word, and carefully to go over one's condition, examining both the inward and the outward sins, and using all the tests which are given us in the Scriptures, would be a very healthy exercise; but how very few care to go through it! Yet, beloved friends, if it be a wise thing to look well to your business, how much more ought you to look to the business which concerns your immortal souls!⁴¹

Danger of Pride and Immorality

Because the dangers of pride and immorality are more costly for pastors, ministers must vigilantly exercise caution and self-control (Jas 3:1-3). Spurgeon quotes Richard Baxter on the heightened battle for spiritual leaders:

The great enemy of souls takes care to leave no stone unturned for the preacher's ruin. "Take heed to yourselves," says Baxter, "because the tempter will make his first and sharpest onset upon you. If you will be the leaders against him, he will spare you no further than God restraineth him. He beareth you the greatest malice that are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hateth Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, and the 'Captain of our salvation,' and doth more than all the world besides against the kingdom of darkness; so doth he note the leaders under him more than the common soldiers, on the like account, in their proportion. He knows what a rout he may make among the rest, if the leaders fall before their eyes. . . ."⁴²

Scripture warns, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). There are many vices that will destroy the pastor's body, but

⁴¹Charles H. Spurgeon, "Solitude, Silence, Submission" in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 42 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library Systems, 1998).

⁴²C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 1, *A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), 11.

immorality will destroy his soul. Immorality of any degree will cause the pastor to lose the sensitivity and tenderness that is necessary to shepherd the flock of God, but the damage and heartache will multiply exponentially if he becomes entangled with one of his own flock.

Integrity and Personal Character

The minister must be careful that his integrity and his personal character reflect the teachings of the ministry of Christ. The strength of his integrity will affect the strength of his ministry. What he speaks in the pulpit will be either verified or dismissed by the record of both his public and private life. By his personal integrity the pastor can either honor or dishonor the cause of God, his office, or himself. Spurgeon claims, “The life of the preacher should be a magnet to draw men to Christ, and it is sad when it keeps them from him. Sanctity in ministers is a loud call to sinners to repent, and when allied with holy cheerfulness, it becomes wondrously attractive.”⁴³

Spurgeon speaks of the importance of the pastor’s self-watch over his personal character with an analogy of four houses belonging to each man and over which he is to have careful oversight. The first house is the warehouse which is the pastor’s heart and memory. From out of this warehouse he can readily draw Scriptural principles and spiritual truths which have been stored up for use in his daily thoughts and conversations with others.

The second is the workhouse. This house represents the pastor’s daily work as spokesman of God’s Word and ambassador of help to the sick and needy. Spurgeon admonishes the pastor to see that this house is filled with much worthy activity in order to be an acceptable servant.

The third house is the clock-house, reminding the pastor of the importance of

⁴³Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 18-19.

redeeming the time. He must use his time well, promptly performing the duties called for in each hour. Since the old clock-houses had bells, Spurgeon further applies his analogy to the pastor's speech, which like a bell should ring timely and clear.

The fourth and final house is the counting-house, or the pastor's conscience, which must be kept under careful scrutiny at all times. Just as an accountant must keep regular and honest accounts, so the pastor must guard against error or deceit, remembering that one day the Master will call for all accounts to be laid bare. The minister's self-watch, which involves evaluating daily the inner self, is crucial to preparing spiritually to preach the Word.⁴⁴

P—Prayer

A deep and abiding private prayer life is essential to preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God.⁴⁵ Prayer and preaching go hand in hand. The preacher must ever be mindful that he is called to the front lines in a spiritual battle of eternal magnitude, and he will become a mighty warrior of the King's army only on his knees. Great advances will be won in "silence and solitude," as he earnestly seeks God in private prayer.⁴⁶ Spurgeon's own testimony was, "My heart is early and late with God; 'tis the business and delight of my life to seek him."⁴⁷ A. W. Tozer gives some practical advice:

Retire from the world each day to some private spot, even if it be only the bedroom (for a while I retreated to the furnace room for want of a better place). Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God's presence envelopes you. . . . Listen for the inward Voice till you learn to recognize it. Stop trying to compete with others. Give yourself to God and then be what and who you are without regard to what others think. . . . Learn to pray

⁴⁴C. H. Spurgeon, *Feathers for Arrows* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1870), 212.

⁴⁵See Jer 5:10, John 14:22, John 17:15, 2 Cor 3:17, and Isa 26:9.

⁴⁶For further study, see Donald S. Whitney "Silence and Solitude," in *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 181-203.

⁴⁷Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 43.

inwardly every moment. After a while you can do this even while you work. . . . Read less, but more of what is important to your inner life. Never let your mind remain scattered for very long. Call home your roving thoughts. Gaze on Christ with the eyes of your soul. Practice spiritual concentration. All the above is contingent upon a right relation to God through Christ and daily meditation on the Scriptures. Lacking these, nothing will help us; granted these, the discipline recommended will go far to neutralize the evil effects of externalism and to make us acquainted with God and our own souls.⁴⁸

The busy pastor must not allow the pressures of life to squeeze out his essential time in prayer. The life of Mary and Martha provide a vivid illustration of the one thing needful—sitting in the presence of Jesus.

A Constant State of Prayer

Because it is crucial that the minister stay in a constant state of prayer, Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians become especially pertinent for pastors: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:16–19). As the pastor seeks to maintain a constant spirit of prayer, he will find a continuous flow of God's spirit available to him.

The myriad of relentless duties must not keep the pastor from a fervent prayer life; indeed they must serve to drive him to it. Spurgeon warns, "If you become lax in secret devotion, not only will *you* need to be pitied, but your people also; and, in addition to that, you shall be blamed, and the day cometh in which you shall be ashamed and confounded."⁴⁹ Of course, the busy pastor will not be able to devote every hour of his day to formal prayer, but he must keep himself in an attitude of dependency on God, sending up quick prayers for aid or wisdom or praise. Spurgeon declares, "If there be any man under heaven, who is compelled to carry out the precept—'Pray without ceasing,' it is the Christian minister. He has peculiar temptations, special trials, singular difficulties, and

⁴⁸Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 199.

⁴⁹Ibid.

remarkable duties; . . . he therefore needs much more grace than common men, and as he knows this, he is led constantly to cry to the strong for strength. . . .”⁵⁰

Wrestling with God in Prayer before the Message

Prayer must come before, during, and after the delivery of the sermon. Several examples from Scripture show that a clear revelation from God often comes after times of deep and abiding prayer and repentance (Ezra 9, Neh 9, and Dan 9). The worthy preacher longs to engage in what Stephen Olford calls prophetic preaching, the type of preaching that “reaches down from heaven, and is understood by the believing heart.”⁵¹ Such preaching will not occur without deep and earnest prayer during sermon preparation. Spurgeon instructs, “The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors, but the Author Himself is far better, and prayer makes a direct appeal to Him and enlists Him in our cause.”⁵² He further states, “Among all the formative influences which go to make up a man honoured of God in the ministry, I know of none more mighty than his own familiarity with the mercy-seat. . . . All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. We grow, we wax mighty, [as] we prevail in private prayer.”⁵³

In sermon preparation the pastor may at times feel that the text before him is problematic, and he cannot break through to find the Lord’s message for his people. At such times, Spurgeon admonishes the preacher to retreat to prayer: “Quarry God’s Word

⁵⁰Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 42.

⁵¹Stephen F. Olford, “The Test of Truth,” in *Institutes of Biblical Preaching*, vol. 1 (Memphis, TN: Olford Ministries International, 1980), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

⁵²Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 43-44.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 41-42.

and use diligently the hammer of prayer. You will sometimes feel as if you were entirely shut up, and a new road will open before you.” Spurgeon also offers as a helpful prayer during sermon preparation the words of “a certain Puritan divine” who frequently repeated as he studied, “More light, Lord. More light, Lord.”⁵⁴

Descend to the Pulpit Fresh from the Prayer Closet

As the preacher descends fresh from his prayer closet to the pulpit, he must continue to remain in a state of prayer during his delivery. Spurgeon speaks of the necessity of prayer while preaching:

Most preachers who depend upon God’s Spirit will tell you that their freshest and best thoughts are not those which were premeditated, but ideas which come to them, flying as on the wings of angels; unexpected treasures brought on a sudden by celestial hands, . . . Often when I have felt hampered [in preaching], both in thought and expression, my secret groaning of heart has brought me relief, and I have enjoyed more than usual liberty.⁵⁵

Spurgeon, however, warns the pastor that the pastor cannot expect relief while in the pulpit if he has not sought him first in prayer beforehand: “But how dare we pray in the battle if we have never cried to the Lord while buckling on the harness! The remembrance of his wrestlings at home comforts the fettered preacher when in the pulpit: God will not desert us unless we have deserted him.”⁵⁶

Access to the Mercy Seat after the Sermon

After the sermon is delivered, prayer again is needed as the means of access to the mercy seat.⁵⁷ The preacher is susceptible to falling sharply from the heights of

⁵⁴Ibid., 44.

⁵⁵Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 45.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷For more on our access to the mercy seat, see Heb 9-10, specifically 10:19-25.

preaching on Sunday to the depths of discouragement on Monday, and at such times his only solace is at the mercy seat of God. Here he can give vent to his feelings and find comfort for his soul:

Elevated to the highest pitch of excitement, how can we relieve our souls but in importunate pleadings. Or depressed by a fear of failure, how shall we be comforted but in moaning our complaint before our God. How often have some of us tossed to and fro on our couch [bed] half the night because of conscious shortcomings in our testimony! How frequently we have longed to go back to the pulpit again to say over again more vehemently, what we have uttered in so cold a manner!⁵⁸

Not only will the preacher be discouraged by his own shortcomings, but also by the people's hardness of heart in failing to receive the Word. Again, Spurgeon directs the pastor to earnest prayer: "If we cannot prevail with men for God, we will, at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men." He quotes the prophet Jeremiah, "If ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears" (Jer 13:17).

Spurgeon denounces the man who does not earnestly pray over his preaching as a vain and conceited man. His lack of dependency on prayer reveals a prideful heart, for in effect he believes that his preaching is so eloquent and powerful that it will work in men's hearts without the moving of the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon warns, "If you do not pray over what you have sown, God's sovereignty may possibly determine to give a blessing, but you have no right to expect it, and if it comes, it will bring no comfort to your own heart."⁵⁹

This section on prayer will close with these comforting words from Spurgeon: "Great talents you may never have, but you will do well enough without them if you

⁵⁸Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 46.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 48.

abound in intercession.”⁶⁰

H—Holiness

It is appropriate that holiness should be the finale in the Triumph acrostic, for holiness is the culmination of all the spiritual disciplines. In Don Whitney’s *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, the author follows each spiritual discipline presented with the words, “For the Purpose of Godliness.”⁶¹ Godliness, or holiness, is the ultimate goal of all the spiritual disciplines. Spurgeon says, “Holiness in a minister is at once his chief necessity and his goodliest ornament. Mere moral excellence is not enough, there must be the higher virtue; a consistent character . . . anointed with the sacred consecrating oil.”⁶²

A consecrated holiness is crucial to a fruitful pulpit ministry. Spurgeon quotes M’Cheyne on the subject: “In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.”⁶³ This matter of a minister’s holy lifestyle is a weighty one indeed. Spurgeon asserts that if Uzzah was struck dead for touching the ark of God when it was in danger of toppling; the men of Beth-shemesh were slain for looking into the ark; the animals that came near the holy mountain of God’s presence were killed; then what manner of men ought today’s ministers be who stand as priests before the people bringing them the Word of God? Psalm 93:5 instructs, “Holiness befits thy house, O Lord.” Spurgeon points out that not only were the vessels and every part of the tabernacle to be holy, the priests themselves

⁶⁰Ibid., 47.

⁶¹Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 17-249.

⁶²Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 18.

⁶³Ibid., 8.

were to be carefully cleansed and adorned with garments inscribed with the words, “holiness to the Lord.”⁶⁴

Strive for Holiness

Holiness in its simplest form is becoming more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. It is laying aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely to us and running the race with endurance, always looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. As we look unto Christ with spiritual eyes of faith, we become like him.⁶⁵ By beholding him, we become like him.⁶⁶ This “looking unto Jesus” for holiness requires receiving it as a gift but also a striving after it (Heb 12:14).⁶⁷ Strive here means “to do something with intense effort and with definite purpose or goal.”⁶⁸ While holiness is the work of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit deep in the hearts of his children, there is also a practical side to holiness which requires spiritual diligence. Scripture instructs us “to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). We can only work out what is already within us. Spurgeon encourages, “Let us inculcate with all our might the practice of holiness. Holiness is the visible side of salvation.”⁶⁹ Of the necessity of striving towards holiness, Spurgeon states,

⁶⁴Ibid., 18.

⁶⁵C. H. Spurgeon, “Looking Unto Jesus,” in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 4 (London: Passmore & Alabaster; James Paul; Glasgow: George John Stevenson; George Gallie, 1858), 241, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

⁶⁶Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17–18 ESV).

⁶⁷Strive for peace . . . and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

⁶⁸Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, electronic ed. of the 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 662.

⁶⁹Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 309.

In a word, we must labor for holiness of character. What is holiness? Is it not wholeness of character? . . . Depend upon it, a holy life is, in itself, a wonderful power, and will make up for many deficiencies; it is in fact the best sermon the best man can deliver. Let us resolve that all the purity which can be had we will have, that all the sanctity which can be reached we will obtain, and that all the likeness to Christ that is possible in this world of sin shall certainly be in us through the work of the Spirit of God.⁷⁰

Yes, we are a partaker of the divine nature, but we must strive for it as the apostle Paul did. By looking unto Jesus, he could say, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20).

Without Holiness, No Man Will See God

Without holiness, the man of God will never see God (Heb 12:14). The pastor will not have a clear vision of God nor understand his Word unless he walks in holiness. Spurgeon points out that “no man can have communion with God in this life, and no man can have enjoyment with God in the life to come, without holiness.”⁷¹ Likewise, the prophet Amos asks, “Do two walk together unless they have agreed to meet?” (Amos 3:3). Spurgeon says of the necessity of holiness in having a vision of God:

No, no; God has sworn by his holiness — and he will not, he cannot lie, — that those who are not holy, whom his Spirit has not renewed, who have not been, by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, made to love that which is good, and hate that which is evil, shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous. Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no man shall see him without holiness.⁷²

In Christ, we have been given all the “spiritual blessings in the heavenly places” in order that we should be “holy and blameless” (Eph 1:3-4). We must be

⁷⁰C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 2: *Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle. Second Series*. (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1889), 64.

⁷¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Holiness Demanded,” in *Spurgeon's Sermons*: vol. 50 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

⁷²Ibid.

vigilant to receive the daily manna and the living water from the rock of Christ. We must cash the check given to us at the bank of holiness.⁷³

Without Holiness, His People Will Not See God Clearly

Without holiness in the pastor's life, not only will the pastor have a muddled vision of God, but his people will also. How can the pastor preach what he himself does not understand? The pastor's holiness is essential for preaching to his people a clear picture of a holy God. Spurgeon asserts, "Holiness of life is the best proof that we know God. It matters not how readily we can speak about God, nor how much we suppose that we love him; the great test is, do we keep his commandments? What a heart-searching test this is! How it should humble us before the mercy-seat!"⁷⁴

The minister must be wary of "having a form of godliness while denying its power" (2 Tim 3:5). The pastor who becomes careless about his piety will grow dull. Spurgeon warns that he will not pray well in the pulpit and worse in his study alone. When the minister's soul grows lean, the members of his congregation will feel his barrenness though they may not understand why it has come. If this leanness of soul is not checked at once, Spurgeon cautions that very soon the preacher's entire life will be affected, and every one of his hearers will suffer for it. Spurgeon gives this weighty warning: "He is in a great measure accountable for all the sin which he occasions. This we cannot endure to think of, my brethren. It will not bear a moment's comfortable consideration, and yet it must be looked at that we may guard against it."⁷⁵

⁷³For further study see C. H. Spurgeon, *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith: Being Precious Promises Arranged for Daily Use With Brief Comments* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2009), 361.

⁷⁴C. H. Spurgeon, "The Christian's Manifestation," in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 52 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1906), 443, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library System, 1998).

⁷⁵Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 14-15.

Paul understood the importance of living a holy life style before the watching world and dared to say, “Be imitators of me” (1 Cor 4:11). Just as children learn by imitating their parents and young painters imitate accomplished artists, so the spiritually immature will more readily copy a minister whom they can see than the Lord Jesus whom they have not seen. While Spurgeon admits their imitation of men in the pulpit is not ideal, he acquiesces, “we must be tender towards this weakness.”⁷⁶ Just as a good father will examine himself upon seeing problems within his family, so must a pastor examine himself concerning problems within his church. Spurgeon asserts that if the godly minister is grieved over his people’s waywardness, he must humble himself before God and seek there the reason why his ministry does not produce better results. Perhaps he may find the fault is his own lack of piety.⁷⁷

Like it or not, Spurgeon reminds us, “We must remember that we are very much looked at. . . . We are watched by a thousand eagle eyes; let us so act that we shall never need to care if all heaven, and earth, and hell, swelled the list of spectators.”⁷⁸ The scriptural injunction in Hebrews takes on an even greater seriousness for the pastor: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:1-2). The holiness of our character is a weighty matter; the consequences are eternal.

Conclusion

Spurgeon was said to have climbed the steps leading to his pulpit repeating to himself, “I believe in the Holy Spirit. . . . I believe in the Holy Spirit.” I used to follow

⁷⁶Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*, 245.

⁷⁷Ibid., 246.

⁷⁸Ibid., 20.

that practice also, but now before preaching I question myself with the TRIUMPH acrostic. Am I traveling for souls; am I resting in the finished work of Christ; am I focusing on the unsearchable riches of Christ; as a minister am I scrupulously watching my character; am I in a consistent and constant attitude of prayer; and lastly do all these disciplines culminate in a life of holiness?

In closing, allow Spurgeon to admonish us as preachers of the Holy Word just as he admonished his students many years ago:

I charge you, be faithful to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine of His grace. Be ye faithful unto death, and your crowns will not be wanting. But, oh! let none of us die out like dim candles, ending a powerless ministry in everlasting blackness. The Lord Himself bless you! Amen.⁷⁹

⁷⁹Ibid., 363.

CHAPTER 4 THE PROJECT

Introduction

Chapter 4 will chronicle the events entailed in actually completing the project. Rather than following a strict chronological approach, this chapter is divided into the following five major sections: Preparing for the Project, Preaching the Sermon Series, Teaching the Triumph Seminars, Interviewing Other Pastors, and Bringing Closure.

Preparing for the Project (3 Weeks)

Enlisting Support

The initial explanation of this project was briefly presented to the pastoral search committee of Farmville Baptist Church in March 2012 as they considered issuing a call to me to serve as their senior pastor. I wanted this committee to understand that my doctoral work would entail the completion of this project. After accepting the call and beginning the pastorate in July 2012, I presented the upcoming project in more detail to both the deacon board and the church council in September 2012. Both groups believed that the project would be beneficial to the church and enthusiastically gave their approval to proceed. I was grateful not only for their approval, but also for their support since many of the members in these two groups would become key participants in the project.

Seminary approval to begin the project was issued by Dr. Brian Vickers on February 12, 2013. On February 13, 2012, I spoke with our local Director of Missions about the possibility of inviting a group of pastors to work together through the TRIUMPH model. However, since I was so new to the area, I was not able to gather a group of pastors willing to meet weekly to go through the TRIUMPH curriculum. This

was one of the major drawbacks of moving to a new church in the midst of my doctoral project. On February 21, 2013, I received approval for the low-risk consent survey instruments by the SBTS Ethics Committee.

Enlisting Participants

After a couple of weeks of seeking the Lord in prayer and fasting about who should be asked to participate in the TRIUMPH focus group, I made a list of sixty-two individuals, most of whom are deacons, lay leaders, and teachers at Farmville Baptist Church. In the absence of a group of pastors willing to study the curriculum, I received permission to teach it to the church leadership instead. I included teachers of all age groups from young children all the way through senior adults. My secretary set up an email address book for these people so that we could contact them easily.

On February 18, 2013, I sent a letter to each of the people in the group I had earlier identified, explaining the project and specifying the commitments that I desired from each of them. I asked them to respond “yes” if they were willing to participate fully, “no” if they would not be able to commit to participation, or “yes to coming only” if they would commit to coming to the presentations but were unable or unwilling to commit to extra preparation. The extra preparation would require reading a Spurgeon sermon in preparation for each week’s TRIUMPH session as well as filling out a pre and post survey. I also attached the first Spurgeon sermon for them to read if they were willing to participate.

Throughout the rest of the week I followed up the key leaders with personal requests to commit to becoming a TRIUMPH focus group participant, explaining the benefits to them as teachers and leaders as well as for me in progressing towards completion of my doctoral project. On February 20, 2013, I also sent a follow-up email to the people on the TRIUMPH list who had not yet responded.

Focus Group Preparation

I called five people, three women and two men, on February 19, 2013, to invite them to serve as evaluators for the Sunday morning series on Moses, David, Ezra, Paul, and Peter. Each of these people agreed. All were very supportive, though some felt a bit apprehensive about evaluating their pastor. The following day, I distributed via email a “Preaching Response Form” to each of these evaluators for use in the following Sunday morning sermon on Moses. The Sunday that I began the series, I included a bulletin insert introducing the five men as “Miracle-Gro Guys.” On the back of the insert I also outlined the TRIUMPH series so that the entire congregation would be aware of both series.

Preaching Sermon Series (5 Weeks)

I preached a five-week sermon series based on my study of the five men of Scripture from chapter 3. I titled the sermon series, “Miracle-Gro Guys,” a spin-off from the plant fertilizer name. I highlighted the growth of each man as he grew deeper in his walk with God and enabling him to be mightily used in making God’s Word known to others.

Moses: A Face-to-face Encounter with God

The sermon. I preached the first sermon in the series on February 24, 2013, from the texts of Exodus 3 and 33. In this sermon I noted that Moses, who was called a friend of God, experienced face-to-face encounters with God in three different venues: the burning bush, Mt. Sinai, and the Tent of Meeting. Moses learned to know God intimately, and he received directions for his leadership from his encounters with God. While the people saw the mighty acts of God, his miracles and deliverances, Moses longed to know God and his ways (Ps 103:7, Exod 33:13). Moses presented us with a powerful model of deeply desiring to know God intimately.

Evaluation. Several of the evaluators did not realize that the evaluations were to be done either during the sermon or shortly thereafter. I contacted them and explained that they needed to return them by the following Wednesday of each week. One evaluator was absent, but he offered to watch the sermon online and complete the evaluation.

This first set of evaluations gave me high marks on preparation and content. More importantly, they gave me high marks on having a sense of being spiritually prepared. All of the evaluators “strongly agreed” that there was a sense of God’s presence in the message. Four out of five evaluators also indicated that they “strongly agreed” that God spoke to them in the sermon. The fifth person “agreed.” I can infer from one evaluator that perhaps I had too many points for one sermon, although she said that the outline was easy to follow. She suggested that I “echo the theme over and over.” I admit that I probably did try to pack too much into the sermon because I found it difficult to distill into one sermon all that I had studied for chapter 3 on Moses.

David: Embracing Life’s Brokenness

The sermon. I preached the second sermon in this series on March 3, 2013. This sermon, titled “Embracing the Brokenness in Life,” focused on David using the texts of 2 Samuel 12-13 and Psalm 15. The focus was on how God used the brokenness in David’s life to make him into a great leader. David experienced brokenness in two ways. First, he experienced brokenness from circumstances beyond his control when he was forced to wander in the wilderness, hiding from Saul even after he had been anointed as king. Secondly, he experienced brokenness as a result of his own sin with Bathsheba and murderous cover-up attempt. Although his own sin brought about the troubles in this situation, David humbled himself, acknowledged his guilt, and allowed God to work in his life. Allowing God to use life’s difficulties to develop a tenderness of heart is an important part of becoming godly leaders.

Evaluation. One evaluator was absent because she had sick children at home, but she was willing to watch the sermon online and give feedback later in the week. The evaluations for this sermon also generally revealed high marks, especially on biblical interpretation and application. In the anecdotal section of the evaluations, one evaluator commented on a word picture that I used that was particularly meaningful to her. I compared a believer's life to a rough diamond, and the trials and tribulations in his life can be used to smooth off the rough edges of his character. I found it interesting that out of the whole sermon, this evaluator's main comment highlighted this analogy, because it was not originally a part of my prepared sermon. I trust, however, that because I had tried to be diligent to come to the pulpit spiritually prepared, God was able to prompt me to use this word picture that she found especially helpful. Another evaluator also commented positively on my use of personal illustrations although she did not mention which were particularly meaningful.

Ezra: Man of the Book

The sermon. On Sunday, March 10, 2013, I preached the third sermon in the "Miracle-Gro Guys" series, focusing on Ezra. I used the texts of Nehemiah 8 and Ezra 7:8-10. Because the story of Ezra is unfamiliar to many, I began with the historical setting for the story. The outline of the sermon was taken directly from Ezra 7:10 which delineates three objectives on which Ezra had "set his heart": studying, obeying, and teaching the Law of God. After individually examining each of the threefold objectives, I also noted the pattern of their order. Studying and learning come first, and both are done with a heart to obey. Finally, out of a mind prepared and a life properly ordered, an opportunity for teaching others may arise. Ezra provides an excellent model to follow in setting the priorities of one's heart, especially for one who desires to teach God's Word.

Evaluation. By examining the anecdotal portion of the surveys, it appears

evident that the sermon outline was clear to the evaluators. I had good marks from all participants on being spiritually prepared. The evaluators also said that I had natural delivery. Two “strongly agreed” and two “agreed” that I gave specific application from the biblical text to their lives. All but one “strongly agreed” that the sermon motivated them to get their lives in line with the biblical principles taught. All “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that there was a sense of God’s presence in the message and that God spoke to them. Because one evaluator was absent and was unable to access the sermon online, there were only four evaluations turned in for this sermon.

Peter: A Spirit-empowered Man

The sermon. I preached the fourth sermon in the series on Sunday morning, March 17, 2013. During the following two weeks, I took a break from the series in order to focus exclusively on Easter, but as we looked at the necessity of the cross in Peter’s transformation, I found an excellent segue into the following two Easter messages. In this sermon I noted how a string of failures in Peter’s life caused him to die to any confidence in his own flesh, yet he was able to find resurrection power through the Holy Spirit. The story of Peter’s life provides an encouraging illustration for us as we see the power of the Holy Spirit at work in him.

Evaluation. The evaluations indicate that the group understood the main point of Peter’s transformation after receiving the Spirit. He changed from a well-meaning yet often-failing disciple to a rock-solid leader of the church.

One evaluator remarked, “Wonderful, energetic start to the sermon. Everyone in the church was able to relate and become engaged, great energy in opening. I enjoyed the personal connection, light humor, and tone of voice to bring the Scripture to life.” She also noted that she especially appreciated the ending in which I examined the contrasts between the first and second coming of Christ. She felt it was a good visual picture.

Another evaluator commented that there was enough information in this sermon for two sermons. I have to agree that he was right. The problem lay in my preparation. I was not confident in what I had prepared, so I added in material from a sermon that I had done earlier. What I should have done was stick to what I had, and trust the Lord to use it. I reverted back to my early years of sermon preparation when I tried to pack in everything that I knew about a topic into one sermon. I suppose that in this way I served as an illustration of the pre-transformed Peter—well-meaning, but not relying on the Spirit.

A third evaluator mentioned for the second time that there were problems with the PowerPoint. The slides did not always correlate with the point being made in the pulpit. I have attempted to correct this problem by giving the audio-visual operator a copy of my sermon with the key points highlighted in yellow.

All evaluators “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the sermon was easy to follow and that there was a sense of God’s presence. The latter is a testimony to the working of the Holy Spirit.

Paul: Triumphant in Christ

The sermon. I delivered the final sermon in the series on Sunday morning, April 14, 2013. The title was “Triumphant in Christ” and was based on 2 Corinthians 2:12-17. This sermon focused on Paul’s analogy of being a captive on display in a Roman Triumph, having been captured out of the land of sin and now led by the conquering hero, Christ Jesus. I began the sermon with a description of the historical Roman Triumph. I then moved into an explanation of Paul’s use of this analogy as a descriptor of himself. I found it difficult to strike the right balance of viewing ourselves as a conquered slave heading for death, and remembering that our Conqueror is the One who loves us and gave Himself for us.

Evaluation. Although I found this sermon difficult to preach, the surveys reveal that perhaps this was my best sermon of the five because the marks were consistently the highest across the categories. One evaluator wrote, “You really preached through the text today. You unpacked it and exposed it. Great focus on the true Victory and exposing the false victory of the world. Good tight focus.” Another commented, “I love the stories and examples you use from the Bible to illustrate your point.”

In writing chapter 3 of my project, I found that I struggled with the material on Paul more than any of the other. I wrestled with the image of Paul giving thanks in viewing himself as a conquered man in the Triumph march of the Victor. I found the analogy deep and somewhat hard to flesh out while remaining accurate to the Scripture. Therefore, I found it most interesting that this seemed to be my most powerful sermon of the series.

I believe that correctly dividing this text revealed my own inadequacies more than any of the others, and I certainly wrestled in prayer more over this text than the others. Perhaps this sermon serves as a living example that in my weakness, he is made strong (2 Cor 12:10), and that my preaching was not with words of wisdom but a demonstration of the power of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:1-5). I found it to be both a humbling and exhilarating experience to see him work in my weakness.

Also on this Sunday, Peter Doyle, a pastor in the PCA denomination who had mentored me as a young man, came to visit. He is now retired and much revered in the community. Doyle was extremely complimentary, commenting on the depth of the sermon and the unpacking of the vivid biblical analogy. He appreciated the wonderful visual picture it provided for him. I believe that he honestly meant what he said, because on the following Sunday he returned and brought his wife.

TRIUMPH Series (7 Weeks)

Travail for Souls

I began the TRIUMPH series on Sunday evening, February 24, 2013. I was quite pleased by the turnout of about fifty-five people—the largest attendance on a Sunday night since I began as senior pastor of FBC. Copies of the “Pre-Seminar Questionnaire” were distributed to those who did not bring their completed forms. I began with a time of prayer asking for God to work in us and to prepare us spiritually to serve as leaders and teachers. I then presented the material on “Travailing for Souls,” and followed-up the presentation by opening the floor for a time of discussion.

The discussion was excellent with many honest and heartfelt comments. Only one person referenced the assigned Spurgeon sermon, “Travailing for Souls”;¹ however, I did not specifically ask for comments on the sermon. One person felt that she had long travailed for the souls of several family members and wondered if there was ever a time when God would release her from such travail. Another affirmed my comments about the importance of intercessory prayer in cultivating a longing desire for the salvation of souls. An elderly woman with a great heart for others recounted her disappointment in God’s not calling her to do mission work, but told how she has recently found fulfillment in that desire through teaching English to some local Korean ladies at our church.

Rest in the Finished Work of Christ

On Sunday evening, March 3, 2013, I presented the sermon, “Rest in the Finished Work of Christ,” focusing primarily on the aspect of rest. This material brought a much-needed balance to the earlier material on travailing for souls. There is a natural tension between travailing and resting, and this juxtaposition made for some good

¹C. H. Spurgeon, “Travailing for Souls,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), 495, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems 1998).

discussion. Travailing emphasizes man's activity; resting emphasizes God's sovereign activity. The people seemed most eager to discuss the "how" of resting, and discussion then steered towards the difficulties of making time for personal devotions in which they might develop an intimate relationship with the Lord and therein find rest. One person commented that time is perhaps the greatest tool that the enemy can use. Another honestly expressed frustration at not having time in the morning for devotions when she had to be at work at 7:00. However, all seemed hungry to have such an intimacy with God in which they could experience rest in the midst of weariness. One of the members of the focus group pointed out that being at rest in the Lord does not imply that life's circumstances will be easy, and he used as an example the martyr Stephen's radiant countenance as he was being stoned. The assigned Spurgeon sermon for this session was "Rest, Rest."²

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

On Sunday evening, March 10, 2013, I presented the material on the "Indwelling of the Holy Spirit." After a brief overview of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the filling of the Holy Spirit, I primarily focused on the anointing of the Holy Spirit for the work of leadership and teaching. The primary message was a reminder of the absolute necessity of relying on the Spirit to accomplish the supernatural work of God. Although a person may have natural talents in particular areas, the works of God are not achieved by works done in the flesh.

Again, discussion was robust. One congregant referenced the assigned Spurgeon sermon, "The Withering Work of the Spirit,"³ stating that God never heals

²Charles H. Spurgeon, "Rest, Rest," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1998).

³Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Withering Work of the Spirit," in *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. 17 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library Systems, 1998).

what he has not first crushed. Like a physician who may cause pain when he surgically removes a cancer, God always acts for our own good. Another commented that it is in times of drought that the believer's roots are driven deeper. There were several comments referencing the many new members and recent baptisms at FBC, believing these to be an indication that the Spirit was moving in the church. To these comments, another member responded that although we like to feel that God is at work, we cannot depend on our feelings. Members must remain faithful to their work, while continuing to depend on the Spirit, whether or not the movement of the Spirit is felt.

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

On Sunday evening, March 17, 2013, I preached the fourth sermon in the TRIUMPH series, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ." This was the halfway mark in the series, and I noted that the appropriateness of the U being the middle letter of the acronym since Christ and all that is available to us in him is the fulcrum for all else in the Christian life. I used as the text for the sermon Romans 6:33: "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" I emphasized that although the riches of Christ are past finding out, they are given to us as leaders and teachers to discover and in turn give to our people. We are to preach not man, but man's Redeemer. During the discussion, two people referenced the assigned Spurgeon sermon, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ."⁴ One remembered reading Spurgeon's warning that if we read our Bible for knowledge, we may believe our minds are expanding, but in reality our heads are swelling. Another recounted Spurgeon's admonition that if we preach (or teach) with fire, then everyone will come and watch us burn! This last comment generated much laughter.

⁴Charles H. Spurgeon, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ," in *Spurgeon's Sermon*, vol. 13 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library Systems, 1998).

Minister's Self Watch

On Sunday evening, March 24, 2013, I preached the fifth sermon in the TRIUMPH series, “The Minister’s Self Watch.” The sermon title was the same as the assigned Spurgeon sermon.⁵ My sermon was designed to emphasize to the teachers and leaders of Farmville Baptist Church the importance of living a pure and holy lifestyle before a watching world. Such a commitment begins in the private life and extends to the public realm. I encouraged the leaders to remember that their private actions reflect upon the name of Christ generally and the name of our church in particular. I was surprised at the lack of discussion following the sermon since past weeks had generated many good comments. However, the silence turned into a very encouraging time to me personally, as one lady said that she believed she spoke for many others in saying they were very grateful to have a man in the pulpit committed to this self-watch and a holy lifestyle. Others affirmed the comment by clapping.

Private Prayer Life

After skipping a week for Easter Sunday, I preached the “P” in the TRIUMPH series, “The Private Prayer Life” on Sunday evening, April 7, 2013. I had assigned for reading a chapter from Spurgeon’s *Lectures to my Students*, “The Preacher’s Private Prayer.”⁶ My sermon focused on the importance of prayer not only as the avenue by which we access the Holy Spirit’s guidance in preparing messages, but also his power in delivery. Through prayer the teacher seeks the Holy Spirit’s work in illuminating his Word during the teaching. Prayer is also vital after the teaching as well, lest the enemy steal away the seed that has been planted or attack the teacher in his weariness. The

⁵C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, vol. 1 of *A Selection from Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), 1-17.

⁶Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 1: 40-52.

enemy of prayer is often busyness, but the effective teacher must pursue an active prayer life. I encouraged the people to view busyness as an urgent reason for prayer, not an excuse to neglect it. Instead of following the teaching time with discussion as had been my practice, I asked the congregation to spend time together as a body in prayer. It was a powerful time.

Holiness

The final TRIUMPH presentation was delivered on Sunday evening, April 14, 2013. The assigned Spurgeon sermon was “Holiness Demanded.”⁷ I emphasized the necessity of those in leadership striving to live a holy lifestyle. We noted that holiness was a fitting culmination, for it is the fruit of all the spiritual disciplines. I charged those in leadership to take seriously the necessity of leading a holy life because those under our care are looking to us as examples to follow. Sin tolerated in the leader’s lifestyle will quench the Spirit and his working through us. After a very brief discussion, I asked the participants to complete the Post Seminar Questionnaire found in Appendix 4. In order to express my appreciation to the participants and to celebrate the completion of the TRIUMPH seminars, my wife and I then treated everyone to ice-cream sundaes in the fellowship hall.

Going Deeper

I invited participants in the TRIUMPH seminar to read one of two excellent books on spiritual disciplines in preparing to preach or teach the Word of God. I called this portion of the seminar, “Going Deeper.” I bought five of each of the two books so that I might provide them for anyone interested. The two books that I offered were Greg

⁷C. H. Spurgeon, “Holiness Demanded,” in *Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. 50 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1871), electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Library Systems, 1998).

Heisler's *Spirit-Led Preaching*⁸ and Arturo G. Azurdia's *Spirit Empowered Preaching*.⁹ I encouraged the participants to move beyond any fears of reading a "preaching" book by mentally substituting the word "teach" whenever they read "preach." One man read one of the books in a week and came back asking for the other book. During one of the seminars, I asked him to give a brief review of the books and how they had encouraged him. He said that *Spirit Empowered Preaching* was one of the best books he had ever read. His comments were a real encouragement to me.

Interviews

A third segment of the project was to interview several pastors to find out how they spiritually prepare to preach the Word of God. I sought to interview two groups of pastors. On Tuesday, March 5, 2013, I presented a note to nine local pastors at a prayer breakfast asking the following question: "What do you do spiritually to prepare to preach the Word of God?" I requested that they take the paper with them, ponder the question, and either write out their answers or email them to me. Only two of the nine responded to this request.

On Wednesday, April 3, 2013, I emailed a broader group of twelve pastors who have been personally influential in my life asking them to respond to the same question. This group ranged from men with national ministries to men who have personally mentored me. To my amazement, six men responded to my request in the same day that I emailed them. Three more responded the following day. Eventually, all but two responded to my email. Understandably, someone from the office of three of the more nationally recognized men replied that they would not be able to write a response. The men contacted and the responses received are listed in Appendix 9. I was quite

⁸Arturo G. Azurdia, *Spirit-Empowered Preaching* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2006).

⁹Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007).

pleased with the quality of the responses and found them to be most insightful.

Project Closure (2 weeks)

Focus Group Pre and Post Seminar Evaluations

Although there were 30-40 people who attended the TRIUMPH seminars, I specifically analyzed the responses of 7 key leaders of Farmville Baptist Church. Four of these leaders had also served as my sermon evaluators. The other evaluators analyzed were the chairman of the deacons, a key leader in the children's ministry, and our youth minister.

The pre and post survey consisted of the same 21 questions. The purpose of the survey was to see if there was any change in the attitudes of the group towards spiritually preparing to preach and teach. This was important to me since the vast majority of the attendees in the TRIUMPH seminar were involved in the teaching ministries of the church. Although there were no major changes indicated by the surveys, there were several very positive indicators on key questions. These will be analyzed in chapter 5.

Focus Group Appreciation Dinner

On Sunday, April 28, 2013, my wife and I hosted a dinner for the focus group evaluators and their families in order to express our appreciation for their faithful work and support. I also conducted a follow-up group interview. During the interview I asked the following questions:

1. What did you learn about spiritually preparing to teach the Word of God?
2. Do you see any changes in your personal spiritual preparation to teach the Word of God as a result of this project?
3. Out of the TRIUMPH acrostic, which three were the most helpful?
4. Do you have any suggestions/insights about the project?
5. Where do we as a church go from here?

The group expressed their support of the project and felt that it had been beneficial to them individually and to the church as a whole. Each of them felt that they had an increased awareness of the need to prepare spiritually for teaching. Furthermore, they indicated that they better understood how to go about preparing their hearts and lives for teaching God's Word.

CHAPTER 5 EVALUATION

This final chapter evaluates the project, analyzing its strengths and weaknesses and reflecting upon its value and success. This chapter consists of the following eight sections: Evaluation of the Project's Purpose, Evaluation of the Project's Goals, Strengths of the Project, Weaknesses of the Project, Recommendations to Improve the Project, Theological Reflections, Personal Reflections, and Conclusion.

As I begin the evaluation process for the project, I need to state at the outset that I am quite aware of the subjective nature of the project. To gauge the success of learning to prepare spiritually to preach God's Word is most difficult to measure objectively.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The stated purpose of the project was to learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God at Farmville Baptist Church of Auburn, Alabama, and to train lay leaders and local church ministers in this approach to preach the Word of God in their sphere of influence.

The stated purpose is composed of three parts. The first two parts were successfully met. The learning aspect was completed through the study for chapters 2 and 3 of this paper. The second component was met in training the lay leaders at FBC in spiritually preparing to teach. However, the third component was not fulfilled as originally planned since I was unable to train local church ministers in preparing spiritually to preach God's Word. The change to this component will be fully explained below. I am most disappointed that I did not have the opportunity to train local pastors in

the community around my previous church. I am utterly convinced of the usefulness of the curriculum developed, and I will still seek to teach it to other pastors. I am continuing to meet with pastors in my new association and hope to gain a level of trust with them. Rick Lance, Executive Director of the Alabama State Board of Missions, has asked for my work. I remain hopeful it will go further.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Goal 1

The first goal was for me to learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God so that, like the Apostle Paul, my preaching would be a “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor 2:1-4).

Meeting the goal. This first goal was accomplished primarily in two ways. The first was the study of lives of the five biblical characters to understand how they prepared spiritually to proclaim God’s Word. Insights gleaned from four of these men were reported in chapter 2, while the fifth is reported in Appendix 1.

The second means of accomplishing goal 1 was by studying the works of Spurgeon in order to develop the TRIUMPH curriculum. This study was reported in chapter 3. A third means of achieving the first goal was interviewing godly pastors who have a spiritual dimension to their ministries. I have learned much from them, from the biblical study of the five selected men, and from the life and writings of Spurgeon.

Synthesis of lessons learned. I was pleased to see how the material in chapters 2 and 3 complemented each other. The overriding theme of each was the absolute dependency on the Holy Spirit for accomplishing a supernatural work. My study for chapter 2 revealed the high cost each of the men had to pay in order to be prepared spiritually to proclaim God’s Word. Each endured great trials which worked to prepare them to be spokesmen of God. Their lives encouraged me personally to receive

the trials and difficulties of life as through the nail-scarred hands of Christ, allowing them to transform my life through the power of Christ. The seven specific disciplines in chapter 3 often echoed the material gleaned from chapter 2. These disciplines provide very practical means of preparing to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a constant tension and balance that needs to be realized. While I am called to accept the hardships of life with thankfulness and contentment and to understand that in my brokenness I am being made in Christ's image, I am also to understand that there are specific disciplines to practice in order to have a deeper walk with the Lord and be better prepared as a proclaimer of God's Word.

I learned much by thinking through the lives of the men of Scripture and reading Spurgeon's powerful sermons. While the disciplines normally associated with spiritual growth and preparation such as prayer, fasting, and meditating on the Word became apparent through my study, I was also pleased to find other less commonly recognized preparations, three of which are listed below.

Burden for the flock. Moses and Paul in particular felt the heaviness of the burden of leadership for those under their care which in turn qualified them to speak. Both men were willing to stand as a mediator between God and the people, and if need be for God to take their lives on behalf of the people. The spiritually prepared preacher will, like Moses and Paul, find himself broken over the sin of the people. Spurgeon speaks of this burden as a "travail for souls." This heart attitude towards those under the pastor's care is a less recognized but critically important means of preparing oneself to preach in the power of the Spirit.

I tend to view myself as a teacher of the Word, but this study really served to make my heart more tender towards the souls of people. I realized as a shepherd of the people that my responsibility was to care for their souls in a much deeper way. I believe that the many administrative and pastoral duties that attend my position as senior pastor

had consumed my time and attention until I had grown somewhat callous. I also love to study the Word. Nothing gives me greater pleasure, but studying the lives of Moses and Paul along with the material on traveling for souls made me realize that I had allowed my personality as a student and teacher of the Word to make me more of an academic. The use of travail as an analogy for the aching desire involved in the birth of souls is penetrating and intense. I realized I fell far short of such passion.

Holy lifestyle. Another less commonly recognized aspect of preparing oneself for preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit is the need for a clean and holy lifestyle. Spurgeon's directives on the minister's self-watch and holiness were sobering reminders of the importance of a holy lifestyle for the preacher. This aspect was also clearly revealed in the life of Ezra who set his heart to practice the Word before he taught the Word. The life of David was an encouraging study in repentance after moral failure. My study reminded me afresh how crucial a pure lifestyle is for those who proclaim God's Word. The Spirit of God will most readily flow through a clean vessel.

Weakness embraced. Each of the men studied experienced many difficulties in life. In their trials they recognized their own weaknesses and allowed God to work in them. Moses was slow of speech, but God made him his spokesman. Peter denied Christ, but he later turned to preach Christ to the very ones who had earlier crucified him. Paul especially understood that divine power is best displayed in human weakness. This reflection on weakness became especially powerful to me, and it is treated more fully in the section, "Theological Reflections."

Goal 2

The second goal was to lead a "Preparing to Preach" focus group of five congregational lay leaders to understand and apply the truth that spiritual preparation is a key ingredient in preparing to preach. This goal was successfully met with the support of

five key members of Farmville Baptist Church. The second goal had a dual objective of “understanding” and “applying.”

Understanding Spiritual Preparation

The teaching designed to raise the level of understanding was addressed in two ways. The first was the sermon series on the five biblical characters examining how they preached, what spiritual preparation cost them, and what one can learn from their lives about spiritual preparation. The second means was teaching the TRIUMPH acrostic.

Measuring Success in Goal 2

A pre and post survey was administered to assess whether there was any change in the understanding and behavior of the focus group after these two teaching series. While the surveys did not indicate any major shifts in understanding, an analysis must bear in mind that this focus group was a rather spiritually mature group of people to begin with. I chose them because of their spiritual sensitivities.

The surveys did, however, indicate some changes in important key areas which indicate a measure of success for goal 2. Five key questions from the pre and post survey are analyzed below.

Question 2 on the survey addressed the understanding of the necessity of the work of the Spirit in understanding God’s Word. This question yielded a fairly significant positive net change. I was especially pleased to note this positive indication, because this was perhaps the key point not only in the TRIUMPH seminars, but also in the sermon series. The natural man with his natural talents cannot accomplish the works of God in his own flesh. I am greatly encouraged that this question indicates that the group increased their understanding of this crucial concept. The table below records the data for question 2.

Table 1. Research data for statement 2

Q. 2 The natural man cannot understand the gospel unless the Spirit of God reveals it to him.							
Member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	1	3	1	1	4	4	1
Post	1	2	1	2	3	2	1
Shift	0	+1	0	-1	+1	+2	0
Net Change in Responses				+3			

Question 4 is the primary question for revealing the effectiveness of the project. I was especially pleased to find that the results of this question indicate a positive change in the actual practice of individuals. The project made a positive impact on their lives in spiritually preparing to teach. Behavior was modified.

Table 2. Research data for statement 4

Q. 4 I prepare spiritually to preach/teach God's Word.							
Member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	2	3	1	3	3	1	3
Post	2	2	1	4	2	1	2
Shift	0	+1	0	-1	+1	0	+1
Net Change in Responses				+2			

It is interesting to note the results from question 15, which addresses the understanding of the key concept of how to prepare for spiritually preaching or teaching the Word. There was no net change in the responses which indicate a greater understanding of how to spiritually prepare. While question 4 indicated that the group made a change in behavior, question 15 did not indicate an increase in understanding. The lack of net change may indicate that the group believed they understood how to spiritually prepare before the seminar began. Five out of 7 responded in the post survey that they either “strongly agree” or “agree” that they understand how to spiritually prepare for preaching. Perhaps the other 2 realized after the teaching that this was a deeper subject than they first understood. Whatever the reasons for the lack of net change in understanding, the project’s primary goal of changing behavior was met as was indicated by question four reported above.

Table 3. Research data for statement 15

Q. 15 I understand how to prepare spiritually for preaching the Word.							
Member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	2	2	1	4	2	3	2
Post	2	4	1	3	4	1	1
Shift	0	-2	0	+1	-2	+2	+1
Net Change in Responses				0			

Questions 5 and 21 both dealt with the holiness of lifestyle as an important aspect of preparing spiritually to preach, and both indicated some of the strongest net changes among the responders. I believe that this understanding may have been the

greatest learning curve of the seminar. The early presentations of the TRIUMPH seminar taught the necessity of depending on the Holy Spirit and his power to effectively preach the Word of God, especially the “R: Resting in the Finished Work of Christ,” the “I: The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” and the “U: The Unsearchable Riches of Christ.” After laying the firm foundation of the necessity of reliance on the Holy Spirit, the people were ready to understand the importance of living a holy lifestyle in order to access the power of the Holy Spirit. Although I believe there is a worldwide disconnect between holiness in the preacher and power in preaching, Farmville Baptist Church in particular has had a history of leaders lacking a holiness of lifestyle. Therefore, I believe this teaching was of special importance to the people at FBC. The results of questions 5 and 21 are reported in the two tables below.

Table 4. Research data for statement 5

Q. 5 I must be right with God to be an effective communicator of God’s Word.							
Member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	3	2	1	2	1	5	1
Post	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Shift	+1	0	0	+1	0	+3	0
Net Change in Responses				+5			

Table 5. Research data for statement 21

Q. 21 I am careful to keep a watch over my thoughts and actions as a means of spiritual preparation to preach/teach the Word of God.							
Member	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pre	2	2	1	4	2	4	1
Post	1	2	1	3	2	1	2
Shift	+1	0	0	+1	0	+3	-1
Net Change in Responses				+4			

Goal 3

The third goal was to develop a curriculum to train others to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God. This curriculum was based on 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 as well as principles gleaned from the life and writings of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Seven factors that were crucial in Spurgeon’s spiritual preparation for preaching were used to form the TRIUMPH acrostic. The acrostic format was utilized to serve as an aid in making the seven key principles memorable.

I believe this to be the most exciting and successful part of the project. The TRIUMPH acrostic turned out to be a rich and practical study for understanding spiritual preparation. The acrostic provides an effective easy way for a pastor to examine himself before he steps into the pulpit as well as throughout the week of preparation. Because the curriculum is based on Spurgeon’s works, I wanted it to honor him in the spirit of his teachings. I believe that it does, and I believe that he would be pleased with it. The curriculum is outlined in Appendix 7.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to use the curriculum developed in goal 3 to train a TRIUMPH focus group of five pastors from the Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association in methods of spiritually preparing to preach the Word of God in the power of the Spirit. The goal was to equip these pastors with the seven important spiritual preparations necessary to become powerful preachers of the Word of God. Although I was unable to meet the goal in teaching the TRIUMPH specifically to pastors, I was able to teach it to my own congregation. This shift led to some unexpected benefits which will be explained later.

The reason I was unable to work specifically with pastors was that the Lord called me to move to a new ministry at FBC in the middle of this project. Goal 4 was originally designed for use in my pastorate where I had served for ten years. I was closely acquainted with other ministers in the association with whom I was planning to conduct an eight-week seminar to teach the TRIUMPH curriculum. Many of the pastors were excited about the project and were eager to begin. However, I was called to a new church before the project was ready. Because of time restraints placed on me concerning time limitations for doctoral work, I found myself without a group of pastors who knew me well enough to invest eight weeks studying a curriculum that I had developed. I did approach my associational missionary with whom I had begun developing a friendship, but we were unable to gather a group of pastors willing to commit to a multi-week study.

The logical next step was to shift my focus from teaching the curriculum to a group of pastors to using the teachers and leaders of my own church at Farmville Baptist. In retrospect, this change was advantageous to me personally because I was able to use the curriculum to help my own people gain a vision for the necessity of spiritually preparing to teach. I was able to teach the importance of this spiritual preparation whether they were ministering in the children's department, the youth, the adults, or the senior ministries. The attendance at the seminar sessions far exceeded my expectations,

and FBC's key teachers were faithful in attendance. I was also pleased with the number of repeat attendees among the wider audience.

As a result I believe the members of FBC gained a new vision for the importance of daily preparing their hearts and lives to lead and teach. I believe it awakened in them a new seriousness with which they should prepare for teaching, and it heightened awareness among FBC leaders of the necessity of living a holy lifestyle. The TRIUMPH acrostic gave the FBC leadership a practical tool to help them remember that their responsibilities begin long before they open their Bibles or LifeWay leader guides; it begins in their hearts, their prayers, and their lifestyles.

However, I deeply regret that I did not achieve the goal of teaching the curriculum to other pastors. I am very excited about the TRIUMPH curriculum, and I believe it will indeed be very helpful to those in the pastorate. Therefore, I still strongly desire to share this material with pastors as the Lord gives me opportunity.

Goal 5

The fifth goal was to implement in my own life the principles of spiritual preparation in order to improve as a preacher of the Word. I believe my preaching has indeed improved because of this project. I have gained more freedom in preaching as the truths set forth in chapters 2 and 3 have worked deeper into my heart. I have a heightened understanding that as a preacher I am totally dependent on the Holy Spirit to accomplish his supernatural work with his Word in the hearts of his people. These works are totally outside of my own abilities to accomplish in the flesh. In one sense, my greater awareness of these truths has allowed me to relax. On the other hand, the necessity of carefully following the disciplines involved in spiritual preparation, especially as set forth in the TRIUMPH series, has caused me to be even more deliberate in preparation.

Although the emphasis of this project has been what I could do to prepare outside of consecrated study, I have found that practicing these disciplines has actually

motivated me to study my texts in a deeper way. I have spent increased time in looking at the original languages and asking God to illuminate his word through careful exegeting of the text.

As I am choosing what to preach, studying the text and considering applications to the text, I run through in my mind the TRIUMPH acrostic, asking myself, “Am I traveling for souls, etc.” Working through this project has helped me maintain accountability in my personal life, and I hope and pray that it has caused me to preach not just in persuasive words of wisdom but in the demonstration of the Spirit. How do I know that? Again, the weakness of this project is in its objective measurability, but I can only say that the feedback from my people has been increasingly positive. I have been overwhelmed at times by the positive comments I receive after preaching. There truly seems to be a greater moving of the Spirit through my sermons than I have ever before experienced.

Strengths of the Project

Various strengths of the project have emerged, several of which I have already mentioned. Others are outlined here.

Beneficial to FBC

Although I had to shift my teaching from the pastors in my previous association to the FBC membership at large, I believe that there were some unexpected benefits. I was able to teach the TRIUMPH series to forty or fifty people, which is over a third of the congregation. As a result, I believe there is a new sense of God’s presence at FBC as we have focused on aligning our lives to become vessels through which the Holy Spirit will work. The project has also enhanced the spirit of teamwork among our membership as they were given a very practical means of showing support for their new pastor as they filled out forms and attended the Sunday night TRIUMPH seminars.

Attendance for these seminars has been the highest Sunday evening attendance since I have been at FBC. While the material in both the sermon and TRIUMPH series is designed for preachers and teachers, the principles taught are applicable to all followers of Christ. Therefore, the project was beneficial to the congregation as a whole.

However, God holds teachers with a stricter accountability, and this teaching was important for those currently in teaching positions. A key component of my philosophy of church growth is to train and deepen the message of the teachers so that they in turn will make disciples and thereby add to the church. I believe this teaching has not only strengthened our current teachers, it has laid a foundation for rising future teachers. One man who has never taught before commented that he never realized how hard teaching is, and he now more readily understood his need to be dependent on the power of Spirit.

Triumph Sequence

I was quite excited to see the strength of the TRIUMPH acrostic as the seven components began to unfold. The sequence proved to be a most appropriate design. Beginning with “Travail for Souls,” the pastor first has his heart broken over the sins of his people just as did Moses and Paul. The heaviness of this travail, however, is next eased by a divine rest, “Rest in the Finished Work of Christ.” The burden of travail is light because the pastor is yoked with the triumphant Christ and his finished work (Matt 11:39). Next, the minister is reminded that a rest for his burden is only accomplished by the work of the Spirit, and he is brought to focus on the power available to him by the “Indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” The pivotal point of the acrostic, the “Unsearchable Riches in Christ,” highlights Christ as the fulfillment of all that the pastor and his people need. After having had his heart broken over his people and finding Christ and his power all-sufficient for his task, only then does the pastor look to himself. He realizes the necessity of careful “Self-watch.” His perseverance in “Prayer” makes the pastor intimate

with God and gives him direction for leadership. Finally, a lifestyle of “Holiness” becomes the culminating fruit of a life yielded to the working of the Spirit.

Weaknesses of the Project

Several weaknesses of the project became apparent as it unfolded.

Exclusive Emphasis

A danger inherent in such a study is the temptation to focus so keenly on spiritual preparation that it is emphasized to the neglect of diligent study and preparation. The two are not distinct and should not be separated. The aid of the Spirit is absolutely necessary in the study. He alone must illuminate and make plain his Word. He must reveal to the pastor the applications of the text for his congregation. Spiritual preparation is to enhance the pastor’s labor in accurately exegeting the text. Spiritual preparation and careful study are two sides to the same coin.

Subjective Nature

One of the weaknesses of the project is its subjective nature. Any study that attempts to measure the activity of the Holy Spirit is very difficult, but it is nonetheless worthy of the attempt.

Project Limited to FBC

Because of my recent move, I was not able to take the project outside of the church in any significant way, and I deeply regret that it has not been used to touch other pastors in particular. I would still hope to be able to use the TRIUMPH curriculum with other pastors since they are the target group for which it was specifically designed.

Specificity of Training

Because I taught the TRIUMPH seminars to the congregation on Sunday evenings, I believe that some of the current teachers at FBC failed to see the sessions as

specifically for them. Some teachers who did not attend regularly might have more faithfully attended a training especially designed and promoted for them. However, as described above, this weakness also had some unexpected benefits.

Going Deeper

The two books used in the Going Deeper portion of the TRIUMPH study were not as effective as I would have liked. Several of the FBC congregants checked them out, and those who read them truly appreciated them. Some of the people may not have believed the books were immediately applicable to them. I tried to overcome this hindrance as I encouraged our people to mentally substitute “teacher” whenever they read “preacher.” I firmly believe that pastors would be much more willing to read the books, and would find them immensely helpful. My experience supports this presupposition, for I have shared them with some pastors and they have wholeheartedly appreciated them.

Recommendations to Improve the Project

The materials in the TRIUMPH curriculum would be ideal for a group of pastors who long to see the power of the Spirit working through their preaching. A group of like-minded pastors who would study together for eight weeks would be an ideal setting for teaching this curriculum as it stands. I believe that discussion following the teaching would be much more beneficial and on-target. I also believe that asking the pastors to share insights gained from their reading of the assigned Spurgeon sermon each week would make the reading assignments more beneficial.

A second recommendation would be to design a special class for lay teachers rather than teaching to the congregation as a whole. A specific training time for teachers would spark more concrete discussion on the difficulties within their own classes and their own attempts at spiritual preparation. The TRIUMPH seminar might also be combined with other practical instruction for teachers such as classroom facilitation or

disciplinary management with children.

A third recommendation would be to look for books specifically designed for teachers which would be perceived as more relevant. This would be a difficult concession for me to make, however. I feel that the two books utilized in the Going Deeper portion of the TRIUMPH seminar are exceptional books that clearly articulate the heart of what I want to emphasize in the spiritual dimension of preparation for teaching.

Theological Reflections

I have been surprised to find the recurring theme of weakness echo so relentlessly throughout this study of spiritually preparing to preach. In my own experience, I have so often had Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:3 reverberate within my soul: "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling." In fact, it was that feeling of weakness that drove me to use this project as means of learning how to better access the power of the Spirit in my preaching.

Weakness in Preaching

I have adopted Paul's statement about the manner of his ministry as my own: "My message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (2:4). I long for the Spirit's power in my preaching. Paul is not advocating ignorance or poorly constructed sermons; rather he is glorifying the work of the Spirit. Paul understood that as a fallen man, he himself was inadequate to present spiritual truth to other fallen men. He could not rest on his own eloquence or wisdom. Human wisdom is futile compared to the wisdom and power of God. Like Paul, I long for the faith of those who hear me preach to rest not on my cleverness but on God's power (2:5). I know that if I can convince a man to accept a spiritual truth, another man can convince him to reject it. It is only the power of God that has the ability to fully convict and transform a life.

Weakness to Understand God's Wisdom

The wisdom of God is hidden from the natural man for he cannot understand it (2:14). Understanding only comes as the Spirit of God reveals it. Christ himself taught in parables which concealed truth, and he praised his Father who has “hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and has revealed them to infants (Matt 11:25). In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul quotes Isaiah: “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.” Immediately after quoting this passage, Paul says, “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit” (2:11). In other words, the Spirit reveals what is beyond knowledge. What does that mean for me as a preacher? In my weakness, I am totally incapable of teaching God's Word unless the Spirit is present and active in my life and in the lives of those who receive the Word. The Spirit is given to us “so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” (2:12). This is not in lieu of studying the text diligently. We must be like Ezra who set his heart to study, obey, and then teach.

Exaltation of Weakness

Paul considered himself an ambassador in chains (Eph 6:20), a conquered man always being led about in the triumph of Christ, yet always giving thanks for his position (2 Cor 2:14). Paul declared, “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Cor 12:9). He clearly understood that weakness is the position from which the power of the Spirit can be unleashed. “Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses. . . . for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (12:10). What were the particulars of Paul's weaknesses? They were insults, distresses, persecutions, and difficulties (12:10). As I encounter these in various degrees in my life, I too can receive them as through the nail-scarred hands of Christ, allowing them to do their work in my life that I may know the power of Christ at work in me.

Weakness Revealed in the Lives of the Five Biblical Characters Studied

As I examined the five men of Scripture, I found this same message of God's power unleashed in human weakness. Each of these men paid a high cost to become spokesmen for God. The weakness of Paul has already been treated in this section.

Moses. Moses suffered much. He lost the power and prestige of the palace of Egypt, he lived as a lowly and forgotten shepherd, and he bore with the unruly and rebellious nation of Israel in the desert for forty years. Yet through all of these trials, Moses grew intimate with God. He became God's spokesman to both Israel and Egypt, and his ministry was accompanied by numerous displays of God's power.

Peter. Perhaps Scripture contains no greater study in the power of the Spirit to transform a man of weakness than Peter. The pre-Pentecostal Peter meant well, but he continually found himself weak and failing in his good intentions. The power of the Spirit in the life of Peter utterly transformed him into the rock-solid pillar of the early Church who preached Spirit-empowered sermons.

David. David also knew much about weaknesses, hardships, and persecutions, yet out of his experiences, God's Spirit inspired him to pen the Psalms, some of the most beloved portions of Scripture. The life of David also provides a marvelous study of the life of a man who pleased God, yet fell into significant moral failure. While his life also illustrates the consequences of his sin, out of David's broken and contrite heart flowed Psalms 51 and 32 which provide us with words to use in our own moments of brokenness.

Ezra. While Ezra is not portrayed as a man who experienced great weakness, we find in him a humility that acknowledges his weakness and God's supremacy. Although he obviously was a brilliant man, Ezra set his heart upon God's wisdom found

in his law. He consumed his days not following man's wisdom or eloquence, but God's Word. Immersing himself in it, he also allowed it to penetrate his own heart and conform himself to its precepts. God's power is evident in his ministry as the people clamored to hear him clearly expound God's Word to them.

Personal Reflections

Over the years I have longed to be a Spirit-anointed preacher, but I did not feel I quite knew how to become one. Now as a result of this project, I believe I am on the path to really learning how to be a Spirit-anointed man of God both in and out of the pulpit. Obviously, I will never be able to say I have arrived, but I believe this project has been a key to helping me understand how to spiritually prepare to preach the Word of God. I am more convinced than ever that my preaching must not rest on my own eloquence or talent.

Preparation for a sermon must not be confined to the study as I outline the chapters and parse the verbs, although such activity is most important. Preparation must begin with my heart and my life seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. As a preacher, I can be well-trained to study the text and deliver the message with rhetorical excellence, but to do so without aligning my life in such a way as to be available to the Holy Spirit will yield a powerless message.

From the five men of Scripture studied, I learned how to properly respond to life's experiences, mindful that difficult experiences can serve either to embitter me or to deepen my message. My study has helped me to allow my trials to crucify my flesh and thus has helped me to spiritually prepare to preach God's Word with his power (Rom 8:28-29). The study has caused me to be more at peace walking with God, to be filled with His Spirit, not agitated when difficulties come. I have deepened my understanding of the importance of staying attached to the Vine (John 15) and receiving God's grace throughout every moment of every day. Agitation at life's difficulties blocks the flow of

God's grace to the preacher personally, and it blocks the flow of his Spirit to the people. I believe I have grown deeper in my walk with Christ as a result of this project, and I have a heightened awareness of the sense of the presence of God in my own study and in my preaching.

I would be remiss if I did not think that all that I have learned flows out of the cross. With Paul, I am determined that the centrality of the cross will be evident in my messages. Along with Paul I want to declare, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (2:3). The cross is weakness and foolishness to the world (1:25), but in reality it is the power and wisdom of God (1:24).

Conclusion

I approached this project to better understand how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God. By no means, however, have I intended to detract from the importance of hard work in the pastor's study of carefully exegeting the text and crafting the sermon. As preachers, we are admonished to rightly handle the Word so that we will not be ashamed before God (2 Tim 2:15).

I have examined godly men to discover how they allowed the trials in life to develop godly character so that they might be mightily used of God to proclaim his Word and lead his people. This does not mean that pastors are only puppets in the hand of God only reacting to the trials of life. There are also disciplines that preachers can proactively practice to make them ready vessels to proclaim God's Word. For the truth to be made the clearest, the character of the preacher should match his proclamation of the Word. As true heralds of the triumphant General, pastors are to speak the very words that he commands. To hear his words, the pastor must be in his presence, carefully nurturing an intimate relationship with him.

The seven disciplines that have been delineated in the acrostic TRIUMPH are my best attempt at laying a foundation for proclaimers of the Word to hear from God on a

regular basis. My vision is that preachers will memorize the TRIUMPH acrostic and apply it before, during, and after the sermon. May it ring in their ears, reminding them to travail for souls, rest in the finished work of Christ, look to the indwelling Holy Spirit, focus on the unsearchable riches of Christ, conduct a self-watch, persevere in prayer, and live a life of holiness. My desire is that every preacher would TRIUMPH in his calling.

APPENDIX 1

DAVID

David: Embracing the Brokenness in Our Life

David was a shepherd boy, a faithful servant to King Saul, an intimate friend to the king's son, a mighty warrior, and a great king himself; yet most importantly, David was “a man after God's own heart, who did His will” (Acts 13:22). Although David also had his flaws, his repentant heart resulted in brokenness which led to an intimate friendship with God (Psalm 25:14).

What Characteristic Most Made David Effective in Proclaiming God's Word?

David's brokenness resulted in an intimacy with God that made him effective in proclaiming God's Word. David declares in Psalm 25:14, “The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him.” The word “friendship” is רֵדָה which carries the meaning of “a state of intimacy or trust in which one reveals confidences.”¹ David was a confidant of God, sharing a close personal relationship with Him. This intimacy is the same kind of friendship that Moses had in his face-to-face encounters with God.

The passage in Acts 13:22 indicates the reason that David is described as a man after God's own heart: “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.” David's willingness to fully do God's will is the key to his

¹J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed., Logos Library System (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), s.v. “רֵדָה.”

intimacy with God.² The phrase describing David as “a man after God’s own heart” is found in Scripture only one other time. In 1 Sam 13:14 Samuel tells Saul: “But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.” This passage likewise identifies obedience as a key to David’s intimacy with God.

Although God identified David as “a man after his own heart” early in his life, the Lord took him through the furnace of affliction in order that he might learn to trust God even in the midst of incredibly difficult circumstances. As David placed his life under God’s control, the Lord developed in him a brokenness out of which flowed the very words of God recorded in the Psalms: “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Ps 34:18).

How Did David Proclaim God’s Word?

As a prophet. While David was not a preacher in the traditional sense, he was certainly a proclaimer of God’s Word. The Apostle Peter acknowledged David as a prophet in that he had looked ahead and spoken of the resurrection of Christ. In his Pentecostal sermon, Peter used David’s prophecies from the psalms to proclaim Jesus as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy (Acts 2:25-28, 30, 34-35).³ Luke also speaks of David as a prophet and recipient of the Davidic covenant: “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not

²Paul’s quotation of Old Testament Scripture is a somewhat “mixed” quotation, combining materials from 1 Sam 13:14, Ps 89:20, and Isa 44:28. Barclay Moon Newman and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series: Helps for Translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 256.

³Peter specifically quoted from David using Pss 16:8-11, 132:11, 89:3, and 110:11.

abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:30–31). Even Jesus acknowledged that the Psalms prophesied about Him: “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets *and the Psalms* [italics mine] concerning Me” (Luke 24:44). In fact, there are more prophecies of Christ in the Psalms than any other book of the Old Testament.⁴

As a psalmist. David also proclaimed God’s Word by penning the majority of Psalms, the collection of which has become one of the most beloved books of the Bible. David’s name is attributed to seventy-three psalms, and he likely wrote a number of the anonymous psalms. The Psalms provide windows into David’s soul, giving keen insight into just what made David “a man after God’s own heart.”⁵ Through these intimately personal psalms, David has preached to untold millions, teaching them how to cope with the afflictions of life. His heartfelt cries express the deep longings of humanity across the ages: “Save me; help me; guide me; teach me; show me; hear me.”

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David also penned magnificent expressions of the majesty and glory of God. He has led worshippers throughout the ages to the throne room of God in praise. John R.W. Stott expresses the significance of the Psalms: “The reason why Christian people are drawn to the psalms is that they speak the universal language of the human soul. . . . Whatever our spiritual mood may be, there is sure to be a psalm which reflects it—whether triumph or defeat, excitement or depression, joy or sorrow, praise or penitence, wonder or anger.”⁶ Such powerful and

⁴Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms*, vol. 14 of *Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 14.

⁵Some of David’s psalms reflect specific experiences, such as the rebellion of his son Absalom (3), his victory over Saul (18), his sin with Bathsheba (32, 51), his strange behavior in Gath (34, 56), and his years of exile in the wilderness (57, 63, 142).

⁶John R.W. Stott, *Favorite Psalms* (Moody Press: Chicago, 1988), 5.

enduring language could never have come from a young man who was handed the kingdom on a silver platter. No, as a prophet and a psalmist, David spoke out of a life of hardship and affliction—out of a life of brokenness.

What Did it Cost David to Acquire the Quality of Brokenness?

The story of David begins with the dramatic contrast between the rejection of King Saul and the great future hope of the shepherd boy, David.⁷ When this youngest son of Jesse was brought up from the sheep field near Bethlehem, Samuel anointed him as the future king of Israel, and the Spirit of God “rushed upon” David mightily (1 Sam 16:13).⁸ He soon became part of King Saul’s court and is described as a “skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man” (1 Sam 16:18). Indeed, David’s future was bright and promising. As God’s anointed, he was surely on his way to a glorious and fruitful reign—but David was not yet ready. First, he had to be broken.

Brokenness in the wilderness. David’s path to kingship was long and arduous. The problems arising from the king’s jealousy were relentless: “Saul was David’s enemy continually” (18:29). David became a wanted man fleeing as a wild animal from the hunter (18-22). He lived in caves, moving from wilderness to wilderness.⁹ At the cave of Adullam he became the captain of “everyone who was in

⁷This contrast is a warning to all leaders, especially pastors and teachers. Although a seasoned pastor may have once been anointed and used of God, if he allows himself to drift away from obedience to the Lord, he might well find himself replaced.

⁸When Samuel anointed David as king, the Bible says, God “raised up” David. This was a common Old Testament expression for God’s bringing forth a prophet or ruler to serve his people, but it is also an expression for Jesus’ resurrection. The parallelism is not accidental, for David and the promises to him foreshadow the promises fulfilled in Christ (2 Sam 7:12-16).

⁹David roamed from wilderness to wilderness: the wilderness of Ziph (23:14), the wilderness of Maon (23:25), the strongholds of En-gedi (24:14), the wilderness of Paran (25:1), and the wilderness of Ziph (26:1). Twice, he fled Judah to take refuge among the Philistines (21:10, 27:1).

distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul” (22:1-2). David lived a “Robin Hood” existence for nearly ten years. Out of his distress David cried, “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold. . . . Mighty are those who would destroy me” (Ps 69:1, 2, 4).

Through the years of relentless trials, David could easily have become bitter, but he continued to trust in the Lord just as he admonished his readers to do throughout the Psalms. Looking confidently and expectantly to God for his deliverance, David learned to wait upon the Lord. Because he refused to raise his own hand against the Lord’s anointed, he twice spared the life of Saul when it was in his hand—once in the cave in En-gedi (24:1-15) and again in the wilderness of Ziph (26:1-16).

David was allowed to travel a path of rejection similar to the path that his descendant, Jesus, would travel. Like Jesus, he allowed the heartaches of life to develop in him a tenderness of heart that would qualify him to be a type of Christ, the eternal King of Israel. Even in the height of power, David showed kindness to Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s lame son (2 Sam 9:1-13), who could possibly claim the throne. God used David’s experiences to humble him, developing in him a brokenness which would enable him to “preach” to generations of hurting people.

Brokenness over his own sin. While it is difficult enough to be broken as a result of injustice, it is even more difficult to be humbled by one’s own sin. One of the greatest challenges of David’s life was repenting over his adultery with Bathsheba and murderous cover-up attempt (2 Sam 12-18). The cost of the king’s sin was great indeed.¹⁰ Under the Mosaic Law, there was no provision for adultery or murder—they both held

¹⁰After Nathan the prophet confronted David, he remorsefully acknowledged his sin (2 Sam 12:1-12). Though God forgave him, He determined that David would pay back fourfold, including: (1) the death of his infant son (2 Sam 12:18); (2) the rape of his daughter, Tamar, by his son, Amnon (13:14); (3) the murder of Amnon by his half-brother and David’s son, Absalom (13:29); and (4) the rebellion of Absalom against his father’s own throne (15-18).

the death penalty (Exod 20:13-14, Num 35:30, Lev 20:10, Deut 17:12).¹¹ When Nathan confronted David, he broke. He had to look past the whole ritual law system to God Himself. Understanding the penalty he deserved, David could only humble himself before God: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (Ps 51:17). David’s brokenness over his own failures flow throughout the Psalms.¹²

How Does the Preacher Incorporate This Quality of Brokenness into His Personal Life?

Trust God in personal affliction. To be spiritually prepared to proclaim God’s Word and reach the heart of his people, every man of God must learn to allow the difficult circumstances of life to break him of his self-sufficiency and deepen his trust in God. The preacher of God’s Word must realize that his message will be preached by his life as much as by his words. Like David, Paul found that the comfort received in affliction can be used to comfort others in their affliction (2 Cor 1:3-6). Generations have found comfort, strength, courage, and hope through the heart cries of David as he wrestled with God in the midst of his afflictions.

Submit to God’s timing. The preacher that is spiritually prepared to preach God’s Word will submit his life to God’s control, acknowledging that any authorities God has placed over him are God-ordained. Like David, he may be called of God and anointed for leadership, but he may not yet be acknowledged as the shepherd by the sheep for a period of time. In such situations, the preacher must follow David’s example and wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord is waiting expectantly while continuing to be

¹¹“The man who acts presumptuously, . . . that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel” (Deut 17:12).

¹²Ps 51 records David’s repentance after Nathan’s confrontation. Ps 32 is another psalm of contrition.

faithful in the current circumstances, confident that God will lift him up when the time is right. As in the life of Christ there was a death, burial, and resurrection, so for the pastor there must be a death to self-dependence, a burial of self-sufficiency, and a resurrection in submission to God (Gal 2:20).

Accept injustice. Just as David was exposed to unjust treatment, so also at some point the faithful pastor will likely face undeserved criticism. The spiritually prepared preacher must recognize that men who love evil will hate the truth. Therefore, if the preacher is careful to proclaim God's truth in its entirety, he should not be surprised when trouble arises. The preacher's response must be one of continued faithfulness and trust in the Lord to bring about justice in His time: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. . . . Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act" (Ps 37:3, 5).

Vigilantly watch his life. Finally, the spiritually prepared preacher will be careful to keep a close watch over his life, quickly confessing and forsaking his sins as soon as he is aware of them. The brokenness developed in David during his wilderness wanderings should have kept him from falling into sin, but David grew weary and soft. Instead of taking his own men into battle, he sent others to do the job. The preacher who desires to be spiritually prepared to deliver God's Word should take great warning from David's life. If David, a man after God's own heart, who had so successfully weathered an unimaginable array of afflictions, could fall so far, it can happen to anyone, including the pastor.

APPENDIX 2
DOCUMENTATION OF ANALYSIS
OF CONTENT OF EXODUS

Table A1. Percentage by chapter for content of Exodus

Chapter Number	Total Verses in Chapter	Total verses of Recorded Conversation	Total Verses of Commandments & Ordinances	Total Verses of Fulfilled Instructions	Total Verses of Other
1	22				22
2	25				25
3	22	20			2
4	31	22		6	3
5	23	2		21	
6	30	15		1	14
7	25	13		12	
8	32	12		20	
9	35	15		20	
10	29	5		20	
11	10	3		7	
12	51	20	12	19	
13	22	2	13	7	
14	31	9		22	
15	27	1	1	22	
16	36	4	13	16	3
17	16	4		1	11
18	27				27
19	25	16	9		

Table A1, continued. Percentage by chapter for content of Exodus

20	26	2	20		4
21	36		36		
22	31		31		
23	33		33		
24	18	11		6	1
25	40	1	39		
26	37		37		
27	21		21		
28	43		43		
29	46		46		
30	38	1	37		
31	18	3	15		
32	35	19		2	14
33	23	21			2
34	35	32	2	1	
35	35			35	
36	38			38	
37	29			29	
38	31			31	
39	43			43	
40	38	1	14	18	5
Total	1,213	254	413	410	136
%	100%	21%	34%	34%	11%

Table A2. Specific verses used in analysis of content of Exodus

Chapter Number	The Verses of Recorded Conversation	The Verses of Commandments & Ordinances	The Verses of Fulfilled Instructions	The Verses of Other
1				1-22
2				1-25
3	3-22			1-2
4	1-17,19,21-23,27		18,20,28-31	24-26
5	22-23		1-21	
6	1-8,10-13,28-30		9	14-27
7	1-5,8-9,14-19		6-7,10-13,20-25	
8	1-5,12,16,20-23,30		6-11,13-15,17-	
9	1-5,8-9,13-19,22		6-7,10-12,20-	
10	1-2,12,18,21		3-11,13-17,19-29	
11	1-2,9		3-8,10	
12	1-13,43-49	14-20,24-27,42	21-23,28-41,	
13	1-2	4-16	3,17-22	
14	1-4,15-18,26		5-14,19-25,27-31	
15	25	26	1-21,27	22-24
16	4-5,11-12	22-34	1,6-10,13-21,35	2-3,36
17	4-6,14	2-17,23-26		2-3,7-13,15-16
18				1-27
19	3-6,9-13,18-24		1-2,7-8,14-17,25	
20	1,22	2-17,23-26		18-21
21		1-36		
22		1-31		
23		1-33		
24	1-2,9-13,15-18		3-8	14

Table A2, continued. Specific verses used in analysis of content of Exodus

25	1	2-40		
26		1-37		
27		1-21		
28		1-43		
29		1-46		
30	34	1-33,35-38		
31	1,12,18	2-11,13-17		
32	9-13,15-16,31-34		14,35	1-6,17-30
33	1-3,5,7-23			4-6
34	1-3,5-10,27-28	11,26	4	
35			1-35	
36			1-38	
37			1-29	
38			1-31	
39			1-43	
40	1	2-15	16-33	34-38

APPENDIX 3
 FOCUS GROUP
 PRE AND POST SEMINAR QUESTIONNAIRE

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to incorporate pastors and lay leaders in the spiritual preparation, evaluation, and application of expository teaching at Farmville Baptist Church in Auburn, AL. This research is being conducted by Thomas Howell McClendon, Jr. for purposes of his project research. In this research, you will be asked to fill out the following survey regarding spiritual preparation for teaching and preaching the Word of God. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

DIRECTIONS: Using the following scale, please write the number that corresponds to your opinions in response to the following statements. This instrument will be used as the pre-seminar and post-seminar questionnaire to track the progress of the focus group.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	

1. _____ The main goal of the preacher/teacher should be to become an effective communicator of God's Word in order to reach the heart of the listeners.
2. _____ The natural man cannot understand the gospel unless the Spirit of God reveals it to him.
3. _____ The center of our preaching and teaching must be the cross of Christ.
4. _____ I prepare spiritually to preach/teach God's Word.
5. _____ I must be right with God to be an effective communicator of God's Word.

6. _____ I have a number of spiritual disciplines (confession, prayer, fasting, time of silence, meditation on God's Word, etc.) that I use to help me to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God.
7. _____ Talent can take a person a long way, but God will never be pleased until character matches talent.
8. _____ It is important to have accountability partners to keep from falling into sin.
9. _____ Communion with God in prayer is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.
10. _____ Living a holy life is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.
11. _____ I must be right with my neighbor to be an effective communicator of God's Word.
12. _____ I have set times to meditate on the Word.
13. _____ I practice fasting at least once a year.
14. _____ Meditation on God's Word is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.
15. _____ I understand how to prepare spiritually for preaching the Word.
16. _____ I have a burden for souls to be saved through my preaching.
17. _____ I have a hunger for God more than anything else.
18. _____ I will enhance my preaching by resting in the finished work of Christ.
19. _____ A key to spiritual preparation for preaching the Word of God is being indwelled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
20. _____ Understanding the unsearchable riches of Christ prepares me spiritually to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.
21. _____ I am careful to keep a watch over my thoughts and actions as a means of spiritual preparation to preach the Word of God.

APPENDIX 4

PREACHING RESPONSE FORM

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to incorporate pastors and lay leaders in the spiritual preparation, evaluation, and application of expository teaching at Farmville Baptist Church in Auburn, AL. This research is being conducted by Thomas Howell McClendon, Jr.. for purposes of his project research. In this research, you will be asked to fill out the following survey regarding spiritual preparation for teaching and preaching the Word of God. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

DIRECTIONS: Using the following scale, please write the number that corresponds to your opinions in response to the following statements concerning the sermon you just heard.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	

1. _____ The sermon focused on the biblical text.
2. _____ The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.
3. _____ The preacher used at least one interesting and contemporary illustration as a "window" into the text.
4. _____ The sermon as a whole was interesting.
5. _____ The sermon motivated me to get my life in line with the biblical principles taught.

6. _____ I believe I have a better understanding of the biblical text after hearing this sermon.
7. _____ The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to my life.
8. _____ The sermon was understandable and easy to follow.
9. _____ There was a sense of God's presence in the message.
10. _____ The message impacted me intellectually but not emotionally.
11. _____ I sensed the preacher was spiritually prepared for this sermon.
12. _____ The preacher seemed less prepared today than he usually is.
13. _____ I believe God spoke to me today.
14. _____ There was a natural delivery of the sermon that did not hinder the message.
15. _____ The conclusion of the sermon tied the message together.

16. What was the main point of the sermon today?

17. What advice, correction, and/or encouragement do you have for the pastor concerning today's sermon?

APPENDIX 5
LETTER TO TEACHERS AND KEY LEADERS

Dear Farmville teachers and key leaders,

I have finished the writing phase of my doctoral project called “Preaching Spiritually to Preach the Word” and now it is time to begin the teaching phase. This will consist of a 5-week Sunday morning sermon series on 5 key biblical figures (Moses, Ezra, David, Peter and Paul).

These five great biblical giants of the faith will show us how to grow deeper in our walk with God so that we can bring others to maturity in Christ (Col 1:28). Through these men we will learn how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word. Moses will teach us about a “*face to face*” encounter with God. (Ps 90; Ex 33:7-23; 34:29-35; 2 Cor 3:7, 13, 15; Rom 10:5; 1 Cor 10:2). David will teach us the importance of reacting correctly to “*brokenness in life*” (2 Sam 12-13; Ps 51). Ezra will model the importance of being a “*man of the Book*” (Ezra 7:8-10; 10:1-17). Peter’s “*spirit-empowered focus*” will help us gain boldness and power (Acts 2:14-47; 3:11-26; 4:23-31). Paul’s “*triumphant in Christ*” attitude will prepare us to preach the Word with power (1 Cor 2:1-5; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 2:14-3:18; 2 Tim 4:1-8).

From these men we will learn how to properly respond to life’s experiences, mindful that difficulties can either serve to embitter us or to enhance our message. We must receive the trials and difficulties in our lives as though they are filtered through the nail-scarred hands of Christ. If we allow these trials to crucify our flesh, these experiences will spiritually prepare us to teach God’s Word with His power (Rom 8:28).

I believe Sunday nights will be especially rich and rewarding as we discuss

how to spiritually prepare to teach God's Word using a model of spiritual preparation developed from Charles Spurgeon's sermons and books. We will use the acrostic TRIUMPH as a memory device (2 Cor 2:14). The letters of the acrostic stand for: Travail for Souls; Rest in the Finished Work of Christ; the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit; the Unsearchable Riches of Christ; the Minister's Self-Watch; Prayer; Holiness. This model will assist us in preparing spiritually to teach the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

What am I asking of you? I am asking that you make a special effort to be there each Sunday morning, but I am also asking you to commit to:

- Come every Sunday night for the next 7 Sundays barring an emergency (1 hour per week).
- Read the Spurgeon sermon sent to you during the week before you come (1 hour per week).
- Be willing to fill out a short evaluation form before and one after the series (15 minutes each).

What is in it for you? You will grow deeper in your walk with Christ and you will become a better teacher in your field of influence wherever that may be. And secondly, you will encourage your pastor as he sees a hunger and thirst for Christ in this body that he is attempting to shepherd. You too are shepherds in your area of influence. Did you know that there is a crown awaiting you if you are shepherding your people? Yes, there are some conditions. You can check them out in 1 Peter 5. If you fulfill the conditions, you will receive a crown of glory. Let's go for it!

If you are willing to commit to the above assignments related to the next 7 Sunday nights, will you respond to this email by just saying YES? If you can only commit to coming and discussing on Sunday nights, respond "yes to coming only." If you cannot commit, please respond with a NO. I am praying for each one of you right now. Thank you for considering my proposal.

APPENDIX 6
SERMON SURVEY RESPONSES

Table A3. Sermon 1 survey responses

Num	Statement	Sermon Evaluator					Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	The sermon focused on the biblical text.	1	2	1	1	3	1.6
2	The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.	2	2	1	1	3	1.8
3	The preacher used at least one interesting and contemporary illustration as a "window" into the text.	3	1	1	1	2	1.6
4	The sermon as a whole was interesting.	1	1	1	2	3	1.6
5	The sermon motivated me to get my life in line with the biblical principles taught.	1	1	1	2	3	1.6
6	I believe I have a better understanding of the biblical text after hearing this sermon.	3	1	1	1	3	1.8
7	The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to my life.	1	1	1	1	3	1.4
8	The sermon was understandable and easy to follow.	2	2	1	1	2	1.6
9	There was a sense of God's presence in the message.	2	2	1	2	2	1.8
10	The message impacted me intellectually but not emotionally.	7	7	4	9	4	6.2
11	I sensed the preacher was spiritually prepared for this sermon.	1	2	1	1	3	1.6
12	The preacher seemed less prepared today than he usually is.	7	8	3	10	8	7.2
13	I believe that God spoke to me today.	2	2	1	1	4	2
14	There was a natural delivery of the sermon that did not hinder the message.	4	3	1	1	3	2.4
15	The conclusion of the sermon tied the message together.	4	3	1	2	2	2.4

Table A4. Sermon 2 survey responses

Num	Statement	Sermon Evaluator					Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	The sermon focused on the biblical text.	1	3	1	1	3	1.8
2	The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.	3	3	1	1	3	2.2
3	The preacher used at least one interesting and contemporary illustration as a "window" into the text.	3	5	1	1	3	2.6
4	The sermon as a whole was interesting.	2	3	1	1	4	2.2
5	The sermon motivated me to get my life in line with the biblical principles taught.	4	3	1	1	3	2.4
6	I believe I have a better understanding of the biblical text after hearing this sermon.	4	4	1	2	4	3
7	The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to my life.	3	3	1	1	4	2.4
8	The sermon was understandable and easy to follow.	2	3	1	1	4	2.2
9	There was a sense of God's presence in the message.	2	3	1	1	4	2.2
10	The message impacted me intellectually but not emotionally.	7	7	7	10	5	7.2
11	I sensed the preacher was spiritually prepared for this sermon.	3	3	1	1	4	2.4
12	The preacher seemed less prepared today than he usually is.	4	4	10	10	8	7.2
13	I believe that God spoke to me today.	3	2	1	1	5	2.4
14	There was a natural delivery of the sermon that did not hinder the message.	3	3	1	1	4	2.4
15	The conclusion of the sermon tied the message together.	3	4	1	1	5	2.8

Table A5. Sermon 3 survey responses

Num	Statement	Sermon Evaluator					Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	The sermon focused on the biblical text.	3	2	1	N/A	2	2
2	The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.	4	2	1	N/A	2	2.3
3	The preacher used at least one interesting and contemporary illustration as a "window" into the text.	5	1	1	N/A	3	2.5
4	The sermon as a whole was interesting.	3	2	1	N/A	2	2
5	The sermon motivated me to get my life in line with the biblical principles taught.	2	2	7	N/A	2	3.3
6	I believe I have a better understanding of the biblical text after hearing this sermon.	2	3	1	N/A	2	2
7	The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to my life.	4	2	1	N/A	4	2.8
8	The sermon was understandable and easy to follow.	3	2	1	N/A	3	2.3
9	There was a sense of God's presence in the message.	3	3	1	N/A	2	2.3
10	The message impacted me intellectually but not emotionally.	7	4	7	N/A	8	6.5
11	I sensed the preacher was spiritually prepared for this sermon.	3	2	1	N/A	2	2
12	The preacher seemed less prepared today than he usually is.	7	9	10	N/A	8	8.5
13	I believe that God spoke to me today.	3	3	1	N/A	4	2.8
14	There was a natural delivery of the sermon that did not hinder the message.	3	3	1	N/A	3	2.5
15	The conclusion of the sermon tied the message together.	3	2	1	N/A	3	2.3

Table A6. Sermon 4 survey responses

Num	Statement	Sermon Evaluator					Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	The sermon focused on the biblical text.	1	2	1	1	2	1.4
2	The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.	3	2	1	1	2	1.8
3	The preacher used at least one interesting and contemporary illustration as a "window" into the text.	2	6	1	1	3	2.6
4	The sermon as a whole was interesting.	1	2	1	1	3	1.6
5	The sermon motivated me to get my life in line with the biblical principles taught.	1	3	1	1	2	1.6
6	I believe I have a better understanding of the biblical text after hearing this sermon.	2	3	1	1	2	1.8
7	The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to my life.	2	2	1	1	2	1.6
8	The sermon was understandable and easy to follow.	1	3	1	2	2	1.8
9	There was a sense of God's presence in the message.	1	3	1	1	2	1.6
10	The message impacted me intellectually but not emotionally.	8	7	1	9	5	6
11	I sensed the preacher was spiritually prepared for this sermon.	3	2	10	1	2	3.6
12	The preacher seemed less prepared today than he usually is.	10	8	1	10	5	6.8
13	I believe that God spoke to me today.	1	3	1	2	2	1.8
14	There was a natural delivery of the sermon that did not hinder the message.	2	4	1	1	2	2
15	The conclusion of the sermon tied the message together.	2	5	1	1	2	2.2

Table A7. Sermon 5 survey responses

Num	Statement	Sermon Evaluator					Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	The sermon focused on the biblical text.	1	2	1	1	N/A	1.3
2	The sermon's introduction prepared a "doorway" into the text.	1	2	1	2	N/A	1.5
3	The preacher used at least one interesting and contemporary illustration as a "window" into the text.	2	1	1	2	N/A	1.5
4	The sermon as a whole was interesting.	1	1	1	2	N/A	1.3
5	The sermon motivated me to get my life in line with the biblical principles taught.	1	2	1	3	N/A	1.8
6	I believe I have a better understanding of the biblical text after hearing this sermon.	2	2	1	1	N/A	1.5
7	The pastor made specific application from the biblical text to my life.	2	2	1	3	N/A	2
8	The sermon was understandable and easy to follow.	1	2	1	1	N/A	1.3
9	There was a sense of God's presence in the message.	1	2	1	1	N/A	1.3
10	The message impacted me intellectually but not emotionally.	10	8	1	10	N/A	7.3
11	I sensed the preacher was spiritually prepared for this sermon.	2	2	1	1	N/A	1.5
12	The preacher seemed less prepared today than he usually is.	10	4	10	10	N/A	8.5
13	I believe that God spoke to me today.	1	1	1	2	N/A	1.3
14	There was a natural delivery of the sermon that did not hinder the message.	2	2	1	1	N/A	1.5
15	The conclusion of the sermon tied the message together.	2	2	1	1	N/A	1.5

APPENDIX 7
TRIUMPH CURRICULUM

Pre-Seminar

Email to the participants the Spurgeon sermon, “Travailing for Souls,” to be read before the first class and the pre-seminar questionnaire to be filled out and brought to the first class session.

Week 1: Travail for Souls

The Goal

The goal is to learn how to “Travail for Souls.”

The Method

Lecture and discuss “Travail for Souls,” from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon sermon handed out the week before. During week one each participant will choose from following of two books: *Spirit Empowered Preaching* by Arturo Azurdia or *Spirit-Led Preaching* by Greg Heisler. The book chosen will be read and outlined during the next seven weeks so everyone is prepared for the discussion on week eight. Participants will be encouraged to read at least one chapter per week. At the end of the one hour session, the next Spurgeon sermon, “Rest, Rest,” will be handed out.

The Materials

The materials needed for this week are the Spurgeon sermon, “Travail for Souls,” lecture material from chapter 3, *Spirit Empowered Preaching* by Arturo Azurdia, and *Spirit-Led Preaching* by Greg Heisler. The Spurgeon sermon, “Rest, Rest,” should be

handed out at the end of the class for next week's discussion.

Week 2: Rest in Christ

The Goal

The goal is to learn how to rest in the finished work of Christ.

The Method

Lecture and discuss "Rest in Christ" from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon sermon handed out the week before. "The Withering Work of the Spirit" should be handed out for next week's discussion.

The Materials

The materials needed for week two are the Spurgeon sermon, "Rest, Rest," the lecture material from chapter 3 and the Spurgeon sermon, "The Withering Work of the Spirit," which should be handed out at the end of the class.

Week 3: Indwelled by the Holy Spirit

The Goal

The goal is to learn how to be anointed by the Holy Spirit for preaching.

The Method

Lecture and discuss "Indwelled by the Holy Spirit" from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon sermon, "The Withering Work of the Spirit" which was handed out the week before. The Spurgeon sermon, "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ," should be handed out for next week's discussion.

The Materials

The Spurgeon sermon "The Withering Work of the Spirit," and the lecture

material from chapter 3 are the materials needed for this week. The Spurgeon sermon, “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” should be handed out at the end of the class.

Week 4: Unsearchable Riches of Christ

The Goal

The goal is to learn to focus on the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The Method

Lecture and discuss the “Unsearchable Riches of Christ” from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon sermon, “The Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” handed out the week before. The Spurgeon lecture, “The Minster’s Self-Watch,” from his book, *Lectures to My Students* should be handed out at the end of the class for next week’s discussion.

The Materials

The materials needed for this week are the Spurgeon sermon, “Unsearchable Riches of Christ,” the lecture material from chapter 3 and the Spurgeon lecture, “The Minster’s Self-Watch,” from his book, *Lectures to My Students*.

Week 5: Minister’s Self-Watch

The Goal

The goal is to possess a pure life, a life right with God so that the preacher can be fully used to bring glory and honor to Christ’s name.

The Method

Lecture and discuss “The Minster’s Self-Watch” from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon lecture, “The Minster’s Self-Watch,” from his book, *Lectures to My Students*, handed out the week before. The Spurgeon lecture, “The

Preacher's Private Prayer," from *Lectures to My Students* should be handed out at the end of the class for next week's discussion.

The Materials

The materials needed for this week are the Spurgeon lectures entitled "The Minister's Self-Watch" and "The Preacher's Private Prayer" from his book, *Lectures to My Students*, and the lecture material from chapter 3 on "The Minister's Self-Watch."

Week 6: Prayer

The Goal

The goal is to learn the importance of prayer for preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God.

The Method

Lecture and discuss "Prayer" from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon lecture, "The Preacher's Private Prayer," from his book, *Lectures to My Students*, handed out the week before. The Spurgeon sermon, "Holiness Demanded," should be handed out at the end of the class for next week's discussion.

The Materials

The materials needed for this week are the Spurgeon lecture, "The Preacher's Private Prayer," from his book, *Lectures to My Students*, the Spurgeon sermon, "Holiness Demanded," and the lecture material from chapter 3 on prayer.

Week 7: Holiness

The Goal

The goal is to learn how holiness is related to preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God.

The Method

Lecture and discuss “Holiness” from the written material provided in chapter 3 and the Spurgeon sermon, “Holiness Demanded,” handed out the week before. At the end of the class, the participants should be reminded to finish their reading and to come prepared with their outline of their chosen book in order to enhance discussion.

The Materials

The materials needed for this week are the Spurgeon sermon, “Holiness Demanded,” and the lecture material from chapter 3 on “Holiness.”

Week 8: Summary and Book Review

The Goal

The goal is to review the TRIUMPH acrostic, discuss the books read, and to see if there is any change in the attitude of the participants toward preparing spiritually to preach the Word of God.

The Method

Discuss the TRIUMPH acrostic and stimulate discussion on the two books read by the participants.

The Materials

The materials needed for this week are the two books: *Spirit Empowered Preaching* and *Spirit-Led Preaching*, a complete copy of chapter 3 to be handed out to each of the participants for discussion and future personal study, and the post-seminar questionnaire to be filled out at the end of class.

APPENDIX 8
SAMPLE SERMON MANUSCRIPT

Moses: “Face to Face Encounter with God”

In one sense, we are all shepherd/leaders or we will be at some time in our lives: parents, teachers, lay leaders, babysitters, anybody who has people under them or desire to be a leader can learn from these “Miracle-Gro Guys.” It seems in the ways of God to train up leaders then place people under their care. As an under-shepherd of Christ it is my responsibility to tell you about God, His Son and the ways of God. It is my prayer that as shepherd leaders, as we seek God’s presence, God will teach us and then bring people for us to care for, for His kingdom.

The worthy shepherd/leader desires to be used of God to make an eternal difference in the lives of his hearers. Yet, desire is not enough. Inward preparation is of utmost importance. The effective leader must prepare his heart and his life in such a way that he might be enabled by the Holy Spirit to teach with supernatural power. Truth taught must be truth lived out in obedience to God’s Word and through the power of God’s Spirit. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Word of God must illuminate his Word and anoint the messenger. Charles Haddon Spurgeon gave his students at the Pastor’s College this warning:

If there is to be a Divine result from God’s word, the Holy Ghost must go forth with it. As surely as God went before the children of Israel when he divided the Red Sea, as surely as he led them through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire, so surely must the Lord’s powerful presence go with his Word if there is to be any blessing from it.¹

¹C.H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1973), 339.

There are at least two major areas of preparing spiritually to teach God's Word. First, the leader must properly respond to life's experiences, mindful that difficulties can either serve to embitter the messenger or to enhance his message. He must receive the trials and difficulties in his life as though they were filtered through the nail-scarred hands of Christ. If he allows these trials to crucify his flesh, those experiences will spiritually prepare him to teach God's Word (Rom 8:28). Second, the leader must understand the specific spiritual disciplines that he can follow to spiritually prepare him to teach in the power of the Spirit.

In the next five weeks, we will examine the lives of five biblical characters whom God prepared through trials and difficulties to be his spokesmen. These five great biblical giants of the faith will show us how to grow deeper in our walk with God so that we can bring others to maturity in Christ (Col 1:28). Why should we study these men? 1) Our roots will grow deeper in maturity in Christ, 2) That we may bring others to maturity in Christ, 3) Which in turn grows our church body. Develop more teachers, God will send the people.

Through these men we will learn how to prepare spiritually to teach the Word. Moses will teach us about a "face to face" encounter with God (Ps 90; Ex 33:7-23; 34:29-35; 2 Cor 3:7, 13, 15; Rom 10:5; 1 Cor 10:2). David will teach us the importance of reacting correctly to "brokenness in life" (2 Sam 12-13; Ps 51). Ezra will model the importance of being a "man of the Book" (Ezra 7:8-10; 10:1-17). Peter's "spirit-empowered focus" will help us gain boldness and power (Acts 2:14-47; 3:11-26; 4:23-31). Paul's "triumphant in Christ" attitude will prepare us to teach the Word with power (1 Cor 2:1-5; 9:24-27; 2 Cor 2:14-3:18; 2 Tim 4:1-8).

Four questions will be asked and answered concerning each man studied:

1. How did this man proclaim God's Word?
2. What character quality most made him effective in proclaiming God's Word?
3. What did it cost him to acquire that quality?

4. How does the leader incorporate this into his personal life?

Moses: A Face-to-face Encounter

(Exodus 3:1-6, 13-15; 33:1-23)

“Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend” (Exod 33:11). This verse gives us a glimpse into one of the most intimate relationships between God and a man revealed in Scripture. So who was this man Moses and how did such an intimate relationship with the God of Glory prepare him to be mightily used by God?

Moses, the Law Giver, became a powerful spokesman for God. He led the nation of Israel out of slavery, bore them through the wilderness for forty years, taught them how to behave as God’s people, and took them right up to the brink of the Promised Land. Under his leadership, the massive and unwieldy nation of former slaves was transformed into a nation specially chosen by God to bear his name and to exhibit the power and glory of God to a watching world.

Surely such an amazing feat was not accomplished by the power of one reluctant, stuttering human being (4:10). No, Moses became an instrument through which God demonstrated his power because Moses received his instructions directly from God as to what he was to speak and how he was to lead. How did he receive these instructions? Moses met with God personally. Again and again, God spoke to him until gradually Moses began to know Him intimately.

What Character Quality Most Made Moses Effective in Proclaiming God’s Word?

Moses’ friendship with God grew out of his face-to-face encounters with God in three settings: the Burning Bush, Mt. Sinai, and the Tent of Meeting.

Burning Bush. Moses’ first recorded encounter with God was at the Burning

Bush. The Bible says that Moses, “turned aside” to see the bush burning that was not being consumed (Exod 3:2-6). Here God gives Moses an assignment and to go in His name (3:7, 13). There God revealed to Moses his name, “I AM” or “I AM WHO I AM” or “I AM WHAT I AM” (3:14), and it was there that Moses received his call—he was to return to Egypt and be used by God to deliver his people from slavery (3:10). When Moses complained that he was not eloquent enough for the task, God answered: “Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say” (4:12). God assured Moses that He would equip him for the assignment. “God enables us to do what he asks us to do.”

Moses need not fear that he would have to go alone. “Certainly I will be with you,” (3:12a) God assured him. However, Moses still had trouble trusting God. God’s anger burned against Moses, and He sent Aaron to serve as a spokesman even though God would still speak directly to Moses instead of Aaron: “You are to speak to him [Aaron] and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what to do” (4:15).

Mt. Sinai. Moses met twice with God on Mt. Sinai to receive the law of God for the people. “Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain saying, ‘Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel’” (19:3). On this mountain Moses not only received God’s commandments for the people, he also experienced the glory of God as the cloud of God’s presence covered the mountain (24:15-16).

As Moses came down the mountain after meeting God, the skin of his face shone, reflecting the glory of God. He was both a Word-bearer and an image-bearer of God to the people. It is significant that for a time Moses did not realize that the skin of his face shone after having a face-to-face encounter with God. While the people recognized a holiness in him, Moses walked in humility. Later Moses would put a veil over his face

after being with the Lord (Exod 34:29-35).

Tent of Meeting. Most frequently Moses met with God in the Tent of

Meeting:

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting....Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the Lord would speak with Moses....Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses *face to face*, just as a man speaks to his friend (33:7, 9, 11) [emphasis mine].

The pillar of cloud that descended when Moses entered the tent symbolized God's presence coming to meet with Moses (33:9).² It was in this Tent of Meeting that Moses experienced God in a more intimate relationship, hearing God speak to him "face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend" (33:11).

"Face to face" should not be taken literally but rather as an idiom. This can be especially understood in light of verse twenty in which God tells Moses, "No man can see My face and live!" (33:20) Douglas K. Stuart suggests the meaning "up close and personal" or the English idioms, "person to person" or "heart to heart."³ In other words, Moses experienced friendship with God. Friends share common experiences, and they trust one another, telling one another things deeply personal and meaningful.⁴

Going deeper. Moses longed to know God's ways: "Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found favor in your sight, let me know your ways that I may know you, so that I may find favor in your sight" (33:13). Psalm 103:7 reveals that God granted this

²It is noteworthy that the tent was erected outside the camp (33:7), indicating to all the people God's holiness and his separation from the sin of the Israelite nation following their making of the golden calf.

³Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus, Vol. 2 of The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 698-99.

⁴In Numbers 12:7-8, God himself acknowledges that he spoke openly with Moses: "My servant Moses, he is faithful in all my household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the Lord."

request: “He [the Lord] made known his *ways* to Moses, his *acts* to the sons of Israel” [emphasis mine]. Israel saw the mighty acts of God such as the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the provision of manna in the wilderness, and the water gushing from the rock at Meribah. They saw the miracles. They saw the provisions of the Lord. They saw the mountain shake and the thunder and lightning. But Moses went deeper. He learned the ways of God. He achieved an intimacy with God far deeper than just witnessing his powerful works.

As Exodus 33 progresses we further see Moses’ compelling drive to know God deeply, recognizing him as his only source for power and successful ministry. After the Golden Calf incident, God instructed Moses to continue leading the people towards the Promised Land, but indicated that he would not personally go with them—he would send an angel instead (32:34). His angel would do mighty works; he would drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite (33:2). While it might be wonderful to have the promise of God’s angel to do great and mighty things on behalf of the sons of Israel, Moses would not be satisfied. God’s miraculous works were not enough. He was willing to settle for nothing less than the presence of God Himself. We can feel Moses’ desperation as he cries, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here” (33:15). Moses had learned enough in his years of ministry to know that he dare not attempt to lead the people apart from God’s presence with them. May every leader of the Gospel know the same.

How Did Moses Proclaim God’s Word?

Moses’ encounter with God resulted in receiving and declaring the Law of God, with the glory of God shining on his face validating his message (Ex 19:6-7; 32:19-25; 34:29-35; 40:34-38; Deut 17; Rom 10:5; 1 Cor 10:2; 2 Cor 3:7-4:12).

How did he preach and teach? 1) He encouraged the people to be a holy nation (Exod 19:6), 2) He set before them what God had taught him: “set before them all these

words that the Lord had commanded him” (Exodus 19:6–7). 3) He reproved them for their sin after the golden calf incident and at other times (Exodus 32:19–25) and 4) He continued to go into God’s presence to get a clear word from God (Exod 34:29-35).

How did a man like Moses become so effective in his calling as deliver and giver of the Law? Surely his personal encounters with Jehovah God were a crucial key in shaping Moses to become a powerful spokesman of God’s Word. Just a quick perusal of the book of Exodus reveals that over and over God spoke to Moses, instructing him as to what to say and what to do. We also see that Moses spoke with God, sometimes asking for direction, sometimes complaining about the difficulties of his task.

Exodus 6 relates one example of the interchange between God and Moses. In this passage Moses had approached Pharaoh for the first time, but his demands had only resulted in increasingly difficult labor for the Israelites. Notice how Scripture records the interchange with God that followed:

Exod 5:22 “Then Moses returned to the Lord and said....”

Exod 6:1 “Then the Lord said to Moses....”

Exod 6:2 “God spoke further to Moses....”

Exod 6:6 “Say therefore to the Sons of Israel....”

Exod 6:9 “So Moses spoke thus to the Sons of Israel....”

Exod 6:10 “Now the Lord spoke to Moses saying....”

Exod 6:12 “But Moses spoke before the Lord saying....”

Exod 6:13 “Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge”

Nor is such an exchange an isolated incident. A study of the type of content in the book of Exodus reveals that God indeed fulfilled his promise to Moses that “I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to say” (4:12). If we count the number of verses that record specific dialog between God and Moses, count the verses that relate the

ways in which Moses carried out God's commands to him and the fulfillment of what God told him would happen, we would find that altogether 89 percent of the book of Exodus records either a direct conversation between God and Moses or the fulfillment of God's instructions. Only 11 percent contains other information. Clearly the book of Exodus reveals that Moses heard from God and acted in accordance.

Even still, scripture reveals that Moses was an incredibly meek man (Num 12:3). Moses understood that he was not responsible to create his own plans and programs for leading the children of Israel. After all, he had earlier tried in the flesh to break the Israelite's bondage when as a prince he had killed the Egyptian (Exod 2:11-14). No, Moses understood that he was a spokesman for God, and as such his mission was to hear from God and act accordingly. He spoke and acted with authority because he knew that he spoke what God had given him and did what the Lord had commanded him to do. His life and message were born out of face-to-face encounters with the living God.

What Did It Cost Moses to Experience "Face-to-Face" Encounters?

God had told Moses, "I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight" (33:12). Such a close personal relationship built on years of trust and communication assured Moses that he had found favor with God. Yet, this favored relationship did not come without cost.

While Moses learned to experience the heights of knowing God intimately in face-to-face encounters, he found himself experientially living in the midst of a sinful and obstinate people. As Moses came down from the mountain, fresh from a prolonged experience of God and His glory, Moses encountered the people at one of their worst moments, cavorting in revelry around the golden calf, sunk in idolatry, drunkenness, and immorality (32:5-6). Moses' first reaction was righteous indignation, smashing the tablets, grinding the calf to powder, throwing it into the water, and ordering the people to

drink it. After calling for the slaughter of the unrepentant Israelites, Moses announced, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (32:19-30).

As Moses returned to God’s presence, we see the depth of his love for both God and the people whom God had sent him to serve. Moses became a mediator, standing between God and the people. He told them, “Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread or drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke Him to anger” (Num 9:18). Fasting and praying, Moses approached God, bearing the awful weight of the people’s sin upon his shoulders. He made no excuses for the people’s sins; he simply pled for mercy: “But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written” (Exod 32:32).

Moses was willing to become an incarnational messenger of God, ready to give up his own life in order to make his people right with God. Like Christ, Moses became a mediator between God and the people, willing to even to sacrifice himself for them—“blot me out of your book” (32:32). Of course, Moses in his human sinfulness could never atone for Israel’s sin; such atonement would take the spotless Lamb of God.⁵ Yet in this sincere entreaty, we see the incredible burden Moses carried for his people no matter how obstinate and stiff-necked they had become.⁶ H.D.M. Spence-Jones in *The Pulpit Commentary* believes that this willingness of Moses to sacrifice himself for his people is a key to understanding Moses: “Of all the noble acts in Moses’ life it is perhaps

⁵In his intercession for the people, Moses also acted much like a high priest as he entered the Holy of Holies, bearing the people’s sins before God and pleading for atonement based on blood sacrifice.

⁶Paul felt a similar burden for the Israelites as recorded in Romans 9:1-3: “I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

the noblest; and no correct estimate of his character can be formed which does not base itself to a large extent on his conduct at this crisis.”⁷

This incident was not the first time God had offered to blot out the people and build a new nation from Moses’ lineage. After the spies had returned with fearful reports, God told Moses, “I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they” (Num 14:11-12), but Moses would have none of it. In his response to God there was no hint of desire for personal gain or glory for his own name. No, Moses was consumed with God’s glory and reputation among the nations.⁸ In both instances, Moses’ great concern was that the nations not be given reason to believe that God was powerless to bring the people into the land nor that He be known as a God who failed to keep His promises (Num 14:13-17; Deut 9:25-29; Exod 33:16). Moses was clearly concerned for God’s reputation, not his own.

How Does the Leader Incorporate “Face-to-Face” Encounters Into His Personal Life?

Seek daily encounters with God. First, to prepare spiritually to teach the Word, it is imperative for the leader to set aside daily times to seek face-to-face encounters with God. The more he encounters the glory of God, the more he will seek to go ever deeper in the Lord—never content with simply seeing the acts of God but

⁷H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Exodus* Vol. II of *The Pulpit Commentary* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 343.

⁸Moses was concerned for God’s glory because he had personally encountered the glory of God at the Burning Bush, Mt. Sinai, and the Tent of Meeting. Now having been assured that he had found favor with God, Moses requested a new revelation of God’s glory: “I pray you, show me your glory!” (Exod 33:18) God warned him that no one could see His face and live, but he agreed to put him in the cleft of the rock, cover him with his hand while his glory passed by, allowing Moses to see only his back side (33:20-23).

desperate to truly know him and his ways. In this intimate relationship the pastor can learn to hear the voice of God and discern his will.

In the pastor's personal "tent of meeting," he must hear God speak through his revealed Word. Having received his message from time spent alone with God and his Word, the pastor can then boldly proclaim his message with authority, knowing that he does not speak his own mind, but rather is serving as God's spokesman.

Burdened by the sins of his people. Secondly, as the leader becomes more intimately acquainted with the Lord and his glory, he will become increasingly aware of the stark contrast between God and the people whom he is to shepherd. As a result, he will likely find himself increasingly burdened for the sins of his people and the resulting consequences, all of which will drive him to intercede for them in prayer. As he kneels as mediator between God and the people, bearing the incredible weight of the burden of shepherding a wayward and often obstinate people, he will find himself more and more broken over their sin. In that brokenness, he will discover a willingness to die daily for them. He will find himself coming closer to saying in effect along with Moses, "Lord, if my people will not come to know you and your presence, I don't want to continue; I don't even want to live." The pastor will jealousy desire God's power and glory to be evident in the lives of his flock so that the watching world will see the reality of the living God at work in the church. Then God will receive all the honor and glory.

Walk meekly. The leader must be careful to watch over his character. His love for his people, his jealousy for God's reputation, and his passion to see the spread of God's glory should prevent the encroachment of any taint of desire for personal gain from his position as pastor. Instead, meekness should be a determining mark of his character. Like Moses, he will speak and act with great authority and may even at times be filled with righteous indignation, but he will always keep his zeal under control.

Depend on the Spirit. The leader must be always mindful that he is entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit's presence. He must stand with Moses and say in effect, "If you do not go with me into the pulpit, I will not go." As C. H. Spurgeon mounted the long curving stairs to the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle each Sunday to proclaim God's Word, he is said to have often muttered with each step, "I believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe in the Holy Spirit."⁹ Like Spurgeon and like Moses, the leader must be utterly convinced of his inability to speak for God without God's presence and anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

What pastor has not had moments of asking God, "Who am I that I should go?" (3:11). "What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say?"(4:1). "Please Lord, I have never been eloquent...for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue" (4:10). It is precisely at such moments that every pastor who is called of God can hear Him reply, "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to say" (4:12).

⁹John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 334.

APPENDIX 9
PASTOR'S RESPONSES

Wayne Barber, Senior Pastor of Woodland Park Baptist Church in Chattanooga, TN

In preparing for preaching or teaching a message from God's Word, the most important thing that is critical to the preacher or teacher is to make sure that their own heart is yielded to the Truth that they are studying to share with others. Long before we share with others we need to let the Holy Spirit impart Truth to our own personal lives. We should always preach and teach out of the overflow of what Christ is doing in our own lives through the Word. When we properly study our text in context and we are surrendered to what it says, then the message will flow from the very heart of God Himself and the results will be His and His alone.

Michael Catt, Senior Pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, GA

In preparation, I believe it is essential for pastors to be shepherds who know their sheep. Generic sermons do not bear the weight of a word fitly spoken.

In that context, I work to prepare the topic or book I will be preaching on at least three months in advance. Once I've settled that, I begin to gather materials, commentaries, and resources to help me with my thoughts. I dip from many wells looking for the word that best fits our church. Typically I'm working 20-30 hours a week on my two Sunday messages. My job is to fill the pulpit; it's the job of the people to fill the pews.

Peter Reese Doyle, Pastor to CRU staff at Auburn University

In my later years, this is the procedure I seek to follow re spiritual preparation for preaching: I most often preach consecutively through books of the bible.

Monday	Study and pray over text
Tuesday	Study and pray over the text
Wednesday	Study commentaries (2 or three)
Thursday	Study commentaries and text Prepare tentative outline
Friday	Study text and revise outline
Saturday	Read text
Sunday	Meditate on text & outline

I prefer to preach from the text, with or without an outline. This is my goal. Obviously, at times, events intervene.

John Hartzell, former Senior Pastor of Normandale Baptist Church in Bloomington, MN

When one is called to preach the Word of God, one must first listen to the Holy Spirit in prayer and let Him reveal to you in the “inner man” the reality of the person of Jesus Christ and then preach that reality of His indwelling to the hearts of the congregation.

Al Jackson, Senior Pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, AL

I prepare spiritually to preach the Word by seeking to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit at all times. I want my life to be holy in thought and word and deed. When the Holy Spirit convicts me of sin, I quickly repent and seek God’s cleansing. As Robert Murray McCheyne said, “A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God.”

Practically, I pray with a group of men each Sunday morning at 7 AM and with another group of men at 9 AM. These brothers lift me up and encourage me in my preaching assignment each Lord’s Day

Thomas A. Kinchens, President of Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, FL

I try to stay in close touch with the Author. My personal time of devotional thought focuses on particular Psalms (51, 46, 122, and 121) and various other passages. Most of my preaching preparation comes from study and treatment of a particular book of scripture at a given time. Some of this study is based on literary interest, but most often it comes from conditions in our society that drive me to seek answers.

Paul Stith, Senior Pastor of Grace Heritage Church in Auburn, AL

A significant part of the preparation of my heart to preach involves devotionally reading through my text and wrestling with its application to my own heart. This starts early in the week and...goes on all week.

On Sunday morning I have started praying these kinds of prayers: “I believe in the Holy Spirit. . . . God, please give me the gift of prophecy. . . . God please help me preach for the pleasure of my King, Jesus, not for the pleasure of man.” I can be very prone to fear man and long for his/her approval. So it is critical that God help me escape the tendency to focus as I am preaching on man’s approval: the nodding head, the desired “Amen”, the careful attention, etc. I want to communicate and be helpful, but not so people will like me. Rather, I really do want people to walk out of the room in desperate need of the Savior Who has been presented or in love with him more because of the way he has met them in the preaching. I want it to be an encounter with God, not me. That is a battle won only by God’s help.

John Stokes, mentor and invaluable friend

In answer to the question, “How do you prepare spiritually to preach the Word?” I found the note, “We should be careful, lest we follow the methods of the Master, rather than the Master of the methods”, which I had made in the margin of one of my books, “The Key to Triumphant Living” by Jack Taylor in 1991. For years, I had been trying to prepare myself spiritually to be ready to share and teach the Word of God. Unfortunately, my efforts were clearly “in the energy of the flesh.” I wanted to achieve success for the Lord and win souls for Him. No matter how hard I tried, everything seemed futile. I finally realized that He is the Success. It is He, not me, “who is more than conqueror” even in everything I desire to do for him. I must prepare my heart. He will give the final answer.

Jerry Vines, President of Jerry Vines Ministries in Woodstock, GA

I believe we actually prepare spiritually to preach the Word long before the Sunday or week we are to preach. I have long believed that the key to a preacher’s or a believer’s spiritual life is the daily devotional time. There are two key phrases that summarize the life of the prophet Elijah: Elijah “hid himself” and he “showed himself.” He connected with God in private devotions; he connected with the people in public proclamation. So with the preacher. Then, the week of the preparation the preacher must bathe his preparation in prayer, seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit as he studies the Word. The night before I always tried to spend time in prayer and early the next morning, offering myself and my message to the Lord.

J. Robert White, Executive Director of Georgia Baptist Convention

I believe the preparation for every sermon should begin in a spirit of prayer as the preacher of the Gospel seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit for his message. Further, I consider the needs of the people who will hear the message. I believe the sermon should speak to the heart of the listener where he is in his walk with the Lord and with sensitivity address current reality in the life of the church, community, nation and world. Once the subject of the sermon is decided, I search the Scriptures for texts that speak to the subject. Once the Scripture is located, I begin to prepare the outline. I make a full outline of the sermon based on the passage and then begin to write. It is important to include illustrations from everyday life as I have discovered that people will remember over long periods of time the illustrations though unable to recall the title of the message or the text. All of this process is spiritual preparation. In the process of sermon-building, I have experienced every emotion. Weeping, laughing, singing, shouting are likely to erupt as I prepare my message and my heart. The richest experiences in preaching begin through study of the Scriptures, prayer and personal worship. Preaching should be an overflow of one’s own love relationship with Jesus.

APPENDIX 10

PRE AND POST SURVEY RESPONSES

Table A8. Pre seminar survey responses

Num	Statement	Focus Members							Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	The main goal of the preacher/teacher should be to become an effective communicator of God's Word in order to reach the heart of the listeners.	1	1	1	2	3	7	1	2.29
2	The natural man cannot understand the gospel unless the Spirit of God reveals it to him.	1	3	1	1	4	4	1	2.14
3	The center of our preaching and teaching must be the cross of Christ.	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.14
4	I prepare spiritually to preach/teach God's Word.	2	3	1	3	3	1	3	2.29
5	I must be right with God to be an effective communicator of God's Word.	3	2	1	2	1	5	1	2.14
6	I have a number of spiritual disciplines (confession, prayer, fasting, time of silence, meditation on God's Word, etc.) that I use to help me to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God.	2	1	1	4	5	3	2	2.57
7	Talent can take a person a long way, but God will never be pleased until character matches talent.	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1.43
8	It is important to have accountability partners to keep from falling into sin.	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1.71

Table A8, continued. Pre seminar survey responses

9	Communion with God in prayer is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1.29
10	Living a holy life is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1.29
11	I must be right with my neighbor to be an effective communicator of God's Word.	2	2	1	1	1	5	1	1.86
12	I have set times to meditate on the Word.	2	1	1	3	3	3	2	2.14
13	I practice fasting at least once a year.	6	4	N/A	5	5	10	3	5.5
14	Meditation on God's Word is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.	1	3	1	1	3	1	1	1.57
15	I understand how to prepare spiritually for preaching the Word.	2	2	1	4	2	3	2	2.29
16	I have a burden for souls to be saved through my preaching.	1	2	1	2	2	3	2	1.86
17	I have a hunger for God more than anything else.	2	2	2	3	1	1	2	1.86
18	I will enhance my preaching by resting in the finished work of Christ.	2	1	1	2	1	1	3	1.57
19	A key to spiritual preparation for preaching the Word of God is being indwelled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
20	Understanding the unsearchable riches of Christ prepares me spiritually to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.	2	2	1	2	2	5	1	2.14
21	I am careful to keep a watch over my thoughts and actions as a means of spiritual preparation to preach the Word of God.	2	2	1	4	2	4	1	2.29

Table A9. Post seminar survey responses

Num	Statement	Focus Members							Avg
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1	The main goal of the preacher/teacher should be to become an effective communicator of God's Word in order to reach the heart of the listeners.	2	2	1	2	3	5	1	2.29
2	The natural man cannot understand the gospel unless the Spirit of God reveals it to him.	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	1.71
3	The center of our preaching and teaching must be the cross of Christ.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	I prepare spiritually to preach/teach God's Word.	2	2	1	4	2	1	2	2
5	I must be right with God to be an effective communicator of God's Word.	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1.43
6	I have a number of spiritual disciplines (confession, prayer, fasting, time of silence, meditation on God's Word, etc.) that I use to help me to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God.	2	3	1	4	4	2	2	2.57
7	Talent can take a person a long way, but God will never be pleased until character matches talent.	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1.29
8	It is important to have accountability partners to keep from falling into sin.	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1.57
9	Communion with God in prayer is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1.29
10	Living a holy life is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.14

Table A9, continued. Pre seminar questionnaire survey responses

11	I must be right with my neighbor to be an effective communicator of God's Word.	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	1.86
12	I have set times to meditate on the Word.	2	2	2	3	4	3	2	2.57
13	I practice fasting at least once a year.	2	6	N/A	7	6	5	2	4.67
14	Meditation on God's Word is essential for Spirit-empowered preaching.	1	3	1	1	4	1	1	1.71
15	I understand how to prepare spiritually for preaching the Word.	2	4	1	3	4	1	1	2.29
16	I have a burden for souls to be saved through my preaching.	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	1.86
17	I have a hunger for God more than anything else.	1	3	1	3	3	1	2	2
18	I will enhance my preaching by resting in the finished work of Christ.	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1.29
19	A key to spiritual preparation for preaching the Word of God is being indwelled and empowered by the Holy Spirit.	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1.29
20	Understanding the unsearchable riches of Christ prepares me spiritually to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1.29
21	I am careful to keep a watch over my thoughts and actions as a means of spiritual preparation to preach the Word of God.	1	2	1	3	2	1	2	1.71

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ABSTRACT

PREPARING SPIRITUALLY TO PREACH THE WORD AT FARMVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH AUBURN, ALABAMA

Thomas Howell McClendon, Jr. D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Brian Johnson Vickers

This project explores how to prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God, and it develops a curriculum to train lay leaders and local church ministers in this approach to spiritual preparation. Chapter 1 introduces the project's goals and an overview of the project.

Chapter 2 addresses biblical and theological issues concerning the training of aspiring pastors and teachers to prepare spiritually to proclaim God's Word by examining the lives of Moses, David, Ezra, Peter, and Paul.

Chapter 3 examines the writings and sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon as a source for instruction in spiritual preparation. The TRIUMPH acrostic is developed from his works to better understand key spiritual disciplines.

Chapter 4 details the actual performance of the project.

In Chapter 5 the project is evaluated, concluding that the research project proved to be effective in helping ministers and lay leaders prepare spiritually to preach the Word of God at Farmville Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama.

VITA

Thomas Howell McClendon, Jr.

EDUCATION

B.A., Auburn University, 1979

M.Div., Bethel Theological Seminary, 1997

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Associate Pastor Internship, Grace Church, Richfield, Minnesota, 1994

Associate Pastor, Normandale Baptist Church, Bloomington, Minnesota, 1995-
2002

Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Cuthbert, Georgia, 2002-2012

Senior Pastor, Farmville Baptist Church, Auburn, Alabama, 2012-