

Practical Hints on Preaching

Nine Lectures on Sermon Building

PREPARED BY

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FOREWORD

This syllabus has been prepared primarily for the benefit of preachers who have not enjoyed the advantages of a course in college and in the theological seminary. It might well be called a primer of homiletics. It is hoped, however, that pastors of liberal culture, if they happen to read it, may find some helpful suggestions.

No doubt this little manual will be used as a text-book in training schools for preachers. It is the hope of the authors that persons teaching it will bring to the attention of their pupils many examples of the principles and rules which are herein contained. The limitations of space forbade the insertion of examples.

We recommend to all pastors as the best single book on preaching the admirable work by Dr. John A. Broadus, entitled, *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*. Get it and devour it.

There is some slight overlapping of material in the various chapters, but it has occurred to us that a little repetition would not be objectionable in such a manual.

Professor McGlothlin prepared Chapters I-III, Professor Carver, Chapters IV-VI, and Professor Sampey, Chapters VII-IX.

If the little book helps our brethren to preach the glorious gospel a little better, we shall be happy.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,
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CHAPTER I

The Purpose of Preaching

Stated in general terms, the purpose of preaching is vital. It is designed to produce and build up the life of the individual and of the community, to establish the kingdom of God in the heart of the individual and in the world at large. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins," here in this world as well as in the next (Matt. 1:21). We are to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10). In speaking of his own mission Jesus said: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10). "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21), said Jesus as he sent the disciples forth to the work. We are to carry forward the identical work for which he laid the foundation by his life and death, and of which he made a beginning by his teaching and preaching. Our purpose is the same as that of our Master, that is, the full and complete salvation of men. Preaching is one of the divinely ordained means of doing this.

It may be well to remind ourselves of two false notions of preaching:

(1) It is not merely for the purpose of filling up an hour on Sunday morning. We do not preach because the hour has come and as pastors we are compelled to say something. "Don't preach because you have to say something, but because you have something to say." (2) It is not primarily to defend or propagate a certain type of theology or a certain mode of baptism or a certain form of church government or anything of a similar nature. These and other similar matters will need discussion, but the main consideration to which everything else should contribute, is the salvation of the people in the fullest and broadest sense. Make everything contribute to this.

I.—*Instruction.*

Preaching should *instruct* the people. People are amazingly ignorant, especially concerning the vital things of life, such as God, Christ, the Holy Spirit; heaven, hell, the nature and care of their own bodies and souls, their moral condition, their final destiny; the plan of salvation; the nature of the church; the meaning of baptism and the supper; the nature and demands of the moral law, the duties which one owes to God, to his neighbor, to the community in which he lives, to the state, to himself and his own family; the spread and work of the kingdom as revealed in Christian history and in the missionary work of the world today. There is continual need for the most careful teaching. Jesus was more often called a teacher than a preacher. Teaching is a large element of preaching and every preacher must be a teacher. Most preachers probably assume too much knowledge in their hearers. Some sermons should be almost wholly didactic, and almost every sermon should have in it the element of teaching. The preacher who carefully and adequately teaches will have a solid and reliable Christian life in his church.

II.—*Exhortation.*

People are prone to indifference, neglect, idleness; they are slow to act upon what they know. Hence preaching must move them to action. Some preachers exhort before the people are instructed; this makes shallow and unreliable Christians. Others instruct but do not move the people to act, do not exhort; this makes dry as dust churches and preachers. Preachers must not only instruct the intellect, they must also stir the emotions and move the will; they must lead the people to act out their religion. Dormant religion is little better in this world than no religion. The preacher should therefore study the best methods of appealing to Christian motives, such as love to God and men, duty, desire to serve, Christian steadfastness and heroism, and others. Probably every sermon should have in it some exhortation, though few if any should be composed of exhortation exclusively.

III.—*Comfort and Encouragement.*

The world is full of fear, sorrow, suffering, doubt and anxiety. There are no eyes that are not sometimes wet. One function of preaching is to bring comfort and encouragement to those that need it. The preacher must strengthen faith in God's goodness, love and care for his children, in Christ's power to save from sin and ruin, in the Holy Spirit's presence, and in his sanctifying and helping power. He must clarify and inspire hope in the discouraged and down-hearted, making heaven real and attractive, a motive in life.

IV.—*Warning.*

Men are sinners and the wages of sin is death. Moreover, sin has the power to deaden sensibility to its pollution and its ruin. Men are not fully conscious of their condition nor of their danger. They must be warned, awakened, led to repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a large part of the purpose of preaching. It must be done for the unregenerate of course, but alas! for the church members also, who too often continue in known sin. The preacher must be a prophet revealing to men the evil of their lives and the holiness and righteous demands of God.

V.—*Reforms and Public Morals.*

The preacher cannot fail to share in efforts for the improvement of public morals. He must fight vice, intemperance, injustice and wrong of every kind. It is his duty to support, as occasion demands, all institutions that bless and build up the community. The gospel is interested in every man and in all the interests of all the people. This part of the preacher's work requires great tact and skill, it must not occupy his whole time nor absorb all his energy, but he cannot ignore it. Before he speaks he should thoroughly inform himself as to the facts, should always scrupulously adhere to the facts and steadily speak from a heart full of love and kindness. It requires courage as well as skill; but when fortified by undoubted facts he need not be afraid.

CHAPTER II

The Preacher's Equipment

The preacher is called to fill one of the most difficult places that falls to the lot of mortals. With the help of God he is to lead men out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of doubt into faith, out of blindness into clear vision, out of religious carelessness and unconcern into moral and religious earnestness and activity, from the love of the world and material things to the love of the invisible spiritual realities, the love of God and all good things. If he is to accomplish this great task worthily, he must be equipped for it. No man needs equipment more urgently.

I.—*The Body.*

He should have and preserve a strong and clean body. The body is the necessary basis for all strenuous work. If a man's body is weak he is incapable of performing any severe and prolonged tasks. He should know the conditions and laws of good health and resolutely observe them—how much and what to eat, how much to sleep, the value of fresh air and pure water taken internally and applied externally, the necessity for healthful exercise, how to dress so as to keep comfortable, how to use nature's great gifts for securing health and happiness, rather than medicines. Let him labor to preserve a sound and strong body, which ought to be the temple of the Holy Spirit.

II.—*The Mind.*

He should have a strong and clear mind. The effective preacher must be a vigorous thinker. He must be able to distinguish between truth and error, fact and fancy, reality and deceptive appearances. His thinking must be clear, deep and straight. He deals with the profoundest things in life; religious error, haziness and shallowness are prevalent and require mental keenness for their detection. He should be an independent thinker, not dominated by his friends or his opponents; a fearless thinker, confident that truth is of God and is always a blessing. Let the preacher care for his

mind—its independence, its courage and its thoroughness. Let him take every available opportunity for further training and improving his mind and filling it with all useful knowledge.

III.—*The Conscience.*

The preacher should have a good strong conscience. He is compelled to meet the temptations that are common to men, and also those that arise out of his own particular calling. The work of the ministry has its own particular perils that no preacher can ignore without danger of disaster to himself and to his work. In view of these facts, it is incumbent on the preacher to furnish himself with a good conscience, one that is sensitive and strong. An effective conscience is one that discerns clearly and promptly what is right and what is wrong and then unfailingly impels to the right. The preacher should be able to fulfil his Master's injunction: "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). The line that divides right and wrong is not always obvious, but who more than the preacher should be able unfailingly to see it? The preacher needs to brush away mere conventions and customs and see infallibly what is essentially right and what is essentially wrong.

The preacher's conscience should sternly and unfailingly enforce on himself what is right. Of all men the preacher cannot palter with truth and righteousness. He must do the right and preach the right at whatever cost to himself. Right and truth may hurt some people temporarily; but if so, they ought to be hurt. In the long run, it can do neither individuals nor communities anything but good. The demands of truth and right are absolute. Faithfulness to conscience will make it clear and strong; to play with it will weaken and destroy it. The preacher who is not equipped with a good and effective conscience is continually in danger of making shipwreck of his life.

IV.—*A Clear Religious Experience.*

He must be equipped with a genuine *religious experience*. He must know what it is to repent of sin, to exercise faith,

to live in fellowship with God. Without this personal experience he can never fulfil the work of the ministry. A genuine experience of grace will give vitality, warmth and power to his preaching. Hearing with the ear is not sufficient; he must understand with the heart. The spiritual world must be real to him before he can make it real and attractive to others. If he has never come to God, he can never bring others to him. A genuine experience of grace, continued and increased by a constant communion with God, is absolutely essential to efficiency in the ministry.

V.—*A Good Education.*

The preacher should have as *good an education* as it is possible for him to get. The proper kind of education trains his whole being so as to make him most efficient. It should help him to acquire a sound mind in a sound body, with a clear conscience and a warm heart. "Knowledge is power." All knowledge will somewhere be useful to the minister. Education does two things for a man: First, it trains his powers and enables him to use them; and that is its most important function; and, second, it gives him knowledge and puts him in the way of finding more knowledge as needed. It opens up the channels of information and gives him the instruments for the acquisition of knowledge. Every intelligent man must continue to learn all his life, but the educated man will do it systematically and effectively and with ease, while it is difficult to the uneducated man.

VI.—*A Good Library.*

The preacher should be equipped with as *good a library* as he can afford to buy. Some books are indispensable. He must of course have the Bible first of all, and those books that are necessary to the proper understanding of the Bible. If he reads the Hebrew and Greek, he must have and use them. He would find various English translations helpful—the American Standard Version as his constant companion on the study table, then the King James and any others that have been made by able and reverent men. Each version will help him to see the passage from a new stand-

doint. Then he should have a good concordance, a Bible dictionary, an atlas of Bible lands, a good work on Bible customs, and such commentaries as he can afford.

In addition to his distinctly religious books he should have at least a good English dictionary, a good atlas of the world, a reliable grammar of the English language, and also such works of history, science and standard literature as his tastes and pocket-book will warrant him in purchasing.

VII.—*A Comfortable Study.*

He should be equipped with a *comfortable, convenient and quiet study*. No man can do proper intellectual and spiritual work without proper physical surroundings. It should be light, airy, cool in summer and warm in winter, with a pleasant outlook. It should be furnished with a comfortable chair, a writing desk or table and book-cases and paper racks as needed. It should have a filing case for preserving clippings and such other things as may be useful in the future. Money spent in properly equipping a study is money well spent. It should be sacred to him and to his work.

CHAPTER III

Choosing and Interpreting the Text

I.—*Choosing the Text.*

The method of choosing the text will depend upon the special nature and purpose of the sermon to be preached.

1. It will often be desirable to choose the subject and then the text to suit. The sermon will then be called a *subject sermon*. In this case the subject should be very carefully stated and its meaning and contents very carefully and accurately defined, at least in the preacher's mind, and then search be instituted to discover a text which expresses the contents of the subject as exactly and as fully as possible. The ideal is to have the subject and the text express exactly the same truth, to be coterminous in meaning, neither expressing more nor less than the other or any truth different from that expressed by the other. This may be impossible,

sometimes, but the preacher should never be satisfied till he finds that text which most nearly and exactly expresses the thought contained in his subject. Thus if the subject is "The Nature of Faith," that text of the whole Bible which most nearly expresses "the nature of faith" should be found and used. The preacher's success in discovering the text which he needs will usually depend upon his knowledge of the letter of Scripture. Books cannot help him greatly; he must know *the Book*.

2. The preacher may first find a text that appeals to him and then draw from it the subject to be treated. The sermon will then be called a *textual sermon*, and the object will be to expound and apply the truth of the text. The nature of the sermon will be determined by the content of the text. There are two methods of choosing a text for this kind of sermon. (a) Every preacher should keep a notebook in which he jots down texts that strike him in his daily Bible reading. With the text he should also note down the thought that flashes on him and any ideas that are suggested as to its treatment, illustration or anything else that will assist him to make the sermon when the time comes. Otherwise many of his texts will be found useless when he comes to make the sermon, the point that originally appealed to him having been forgotten. If the preacher will keep such a book he will find its pages very helpful when he is tired and unable to find a satisfactory text for a sermon. (b) He may take up his Bible and turn through its pages or read it more closely till some text impresses him with its possibilities as the basis for a sermon at that particular time. Often a tired or distracted mind will be so quickened by such a process that it will quickly make a sermon of power from a text discovered in this way. However, this method is rather haphazard, and will not suffice as a general plan. It conduces to hastiness of preparation and effectually prevents any consistent and progressive teaching in the pulpit. The preacher should make large and comprehensive plans as to what he wishes to teach from his pulpit for several months and choose his texts with this larger object in view. A series of sermons on Bible characters, or the parables, or the miracles, or a whole book, or any group of related subjects

will greatly stimulate the preacher and help and interest the people.

II.—*Length of the Text.*

The text may be of any length, but it should usually be at least a complete sentence. It may be a part of a verse, an entire verse, a paragraph from a chapter, a whole chapter, or even an entire book. As a rule, a subject sermon will have a short text, and a textual or expository sermon will have a longer text; but even this will not always be the case. If the text is a passage of some length, care should be exercised to choose a passage that has unity. Expository preaching, when well done, will be found most fruitful and interesting.

III.—*Interpreting the Text.*

Try to discover and express the exact meaning of the text. Any other use is a perversion of Scripture.

1. Interpret it with the *dictionary*. Know clearly and fully the meaning of all the words of the text. If the original Greek and Hebrew are known, use them of course in the study of the text. If not, use the best English translation.

2. Interpret it in the light of the *immediate context*, that is, in the light of the verses immediately preceding and following it. Frequently a text does not mean just what the words would express if they stood entirely alone. For example, the text, "All that a man hath will he give for his life," must be interpreted in the light of the fact that it was spoken by Satan. Study the context.

3. Interpret it in the light of the *larger context*, that of the book in which it is found and the general teaching of the entire Bible. Every verse of Romans, for example, must be interpreted in the light of the meaning and purpose of the book as a whole. Saturate yourself with the teachings of the Bible as a whole, and of the book from which you are preaching.

4. Interpret it in the *light of oriental thought and customs, religious beliefs, and Bible geography and history*. Try to understand the way the peoples of Bible lands thought

and lived, what kind of a land they lived in, what its history has been, etc. Large sections of the Bible cannot be understood in any other way. Study a few of the best books on Biblical geography, history and customs, and study them afresh in connection with every text.

5. Interpret it *with the help of some good commentary* if possible. The best commentaries bring all the best thought of the world to the help of the preacher in the interpretation of his texts. If necessary, get some advice in buying commentaries, but have some if possible. Use them, but remember that they were written by men and therefore may be marred by mistakes: use them with independence.

6. Interpret it in *the light of your own Christian experience*. The Bible is a book of religious experience and can be understood only by religious men and in the light of religious experience. Remember that you are yourself the epitome of all humanity, and that your own experiences are a good key to unlock the experiences of other men.

7. Interpret it *by long reflection*. It is possible to understand every word in a text and all the context and history and geography and yet not understand the text. Reflect upon it; sink yourself into its truth; think deep into it. This is the only way by which the deeper hidden meaning of the Scripture can be brought up and out.

8. Interpret *with prayer*. Prayer will clear your mind, purify your heart, open your spiritual eyes to see and your spiritual ears to hear. It will put you in the proper frame of mind and heart to be guided and filled by the helping power of the Holy Spirit. No man knows the meaning of a spiritual text till he has prayed over it. Religious truth is clear only to religious men.

CHAPTER IV

Types of Sermons

(Compare Chapters I and III.)

I.—*Meaning.*

Sermons should by no means be all alike, or even similar, except in the most general aspects of the sermon. Their

differences grow out of various considerations, all of which may be classed under the two heads,—relation of the sermon to the text, and the immediate aim of the sermon. Every sermon ought to have a specific end at which it aims and to which it is adapted. If the sermon is constructed for such a definite end and fits that purpose, it will, in just the same form, fit no other occasion or purpose. Occasions and purposes will frequently be very similar and the same sermon may easily be modified so as to fit these similar purposes; but as no two occasions are just the same, so no two sermons should be just the same. Recognition of this principle will serve to give variety in preaching, which is desirable for the preacher and is demanded by the hearers.

II.—*The Types.*

1. The books usually treat types of sermons from the standpoint of the *method of dealing with the text*, and the three types are: (1) *Topical* sermons, called also subject sermons; (2) Text, or *textual*, sermons; (3) *Expository* sermons.

(1) *Topical* sermons undertake to discuss a subject without any direct or detailed reference to the method in which the subject is presented in the text. Sometimes the subject is chosen and the treatment is presented in the text. Sometimes the subject is chosen and the treatment of it outlined, or the sermon may be almost completed, before the text is chosen. There will always properly be a definite, obvious and legitimate connection between the text and the subject. They will fit each other. Often the subject will be suggested by the text, but its treatment will not be determined by the text. A text as given in the Bible may present some aspects of a subject that will be suitable for the present purpose, but not all the aspects which the preacher will desire to use on the given occasion. He will then use what are in the text and add such others as his purpose calls for.

(2) *Text* sermons are such as draw subject and outline of treatment both from the text. Very many texts lend themselves naturally and helpfully to this form of treatment.

It is easy to see that this type and the first may overlap, as part of the treatment may be suggested by the text and part of it by other considerations, and part of the outline suggested by the text may suit the occasion while the rest of it will not be so suitable and will be omitted, or referred to very incidentally.

(3) *Expository* sermons interpret a passage of Scripture in such a way as to bring out and apply the thought of the passage as intended in its original writing. Usually, but not necessarily, the text will be longer than for either of the other types. The essential fact about it will be that it brings out clearly into view of the hearers the subject and the thought of the writer when the passage was written. The text may be a single verse (sometimes even less than that), a paragraph, a section, or even an entire book.

(2) On the basis of the *immediate purpose* of the sermon there may be numerous types, only the chief of which can here be mentioned:

(1) *Evangelistic* sermons aim at conviction and conversion of the lost and the revival of the saved in their life and service.

(2) *Doctrinal* sermons aim at the instruction of the people in the facts, the history, the grounds of our religion. They are teaching sermons.

(3) *Ethical* sermons aim at stimulating and directing the hearers in the practical living of the religion, at arousing the conscience in reference to conduct. This is a constant need, and too often a neglect in our preaching. Religion is chiefly a life, and that life is in righteousness and true holiness. The final test of preaching is its influence on moral living, in the fear of God.

(4) *Institutional* preaching is a phase of doctrinal preaching, and its aim is interpreting and enforcing the ideas of the church, its ordinances, its organization for work, its meaning to society, government and other institutions. The organization and general work of the denomination will fall in this class.

(5) *Missionary* sermons have for their object the instruction and enlistment of the congregation in the ideas and

work of the kingdom of God in its universal and varied aspects and purposes.

(6) *Occasional* sermons are called for at commencements, annual meetings of various sorts, funerals, and various popular gatherings to which the preacher may be invited to preach.

III.—*Reasons for Various Types and Suggestions as to their Use.*

It will be obvious that the recognition of the various classes of sermons will help the preacher to adapt his sermons to the varied uses, to make them more fitting, to avoid repetition. This will give the congregation the relief and the interest of variety, will insure a wider range of instruction and inspiration, and will develop the whole life of the people. Preachers who will seek this variety intelligently will find their pastorates more delightful, longer and far more fruitful than if they go along in an undefined way following a natural bent or the lines of least resistance. This will require more planning for the preaching, but will also give it more zest for the preacher and more consciousness of really building up his congregations and his churches. All classes of people will be helped and not just the circles that like or profit by certain few types of sermons.

In dealing with the texts it will be important that certain suggestions be followed:

(1) Subject sermons must not deal deceitfully with the texts. Be sure the subject and the text fit. There is a text for every subject that ought to be preached on, and the preacher must find the right one, one that is not twisted from its true meaning to use with the subject; for some will always think of the text as teaching what is presented in the sermon. Better preach without a text than to pervert one.

(2) Textual sermons will be the most frequent with the majority of preachers. Care must be exercised in making the outline, so as to get the points and distribute their emphasis and order as given in the text, and so to give a balanced view of the text and its subject.

(3) The most difficult for most preachers, but the most

fruitful kind of sermon, is the expository if rightly handled. The world's greatest preachers have usually been expository preachers. Such were nearly all who have permanently influenced Christianity. Only by this sort of preaching can any large part of the Bible be covered in a life-time. This has the advantage of bringing into the whole sermon the authority of the Word of God, of keeping the hearers close to the heart of God, of revealing most fully the mind of the Spirit. But it requires hard work, patient thinking, extensive study of the Bible. Such a sermon must use a unitary passage of scripture, must find the specific subject of the passage, must discover and arrange the various parts of the subject as presented in the passage, must be careful to distribute the discussion so as to do equal justice to all the parts. It is easy to degenerate into mere commenting and to disproportionate emphases. But for the man who will work at it this will soon be a joy to the preacher, a delight to the hearers, and will give greatest honor to the Word of God.

An illustration of how a text may be applied for the three types of sermons may be seen in Heb. 4:14-16. It will fit for the subject of Temptation, which may be treated in any suitable way without reference to the presentation in the text. Or it may suggest the subject, The Temptations of Jesus, and from the text such an outline may be drawn as:

I.—The Nature of Him who was Tempted,

II.—The Nature of His Temptations,

III.—The Value of His Temptations for Us.

Or the passage may be used for an expository sermon. The subject, taking account of the context as well as of the passage itself, is clearly, Encouragement in Temptation, and the divisions unfold naturally in the study of the passage.

Again, the way in which one would handle such a passage would vary greatly according as one was to preach an evangelistic, a doctrinal, or an institutional sermon.

CHAPTER V

Organizing the Sermon

(Compare Chapters III, IV, VII)

Unless the material of the discourse is organized with some order and progress, it does not deserve to be called a sermon or an address at all, but will be only "remarks" more or less, usually less, valuable.

I.—*Some Reasons for Careful Organization.*

1. The *effectiveness* of the sermon depends very largely on this; many hearers will know little about outlines, divisions and order in the address, while some will appreciate these intelligently. All will get the benefit of the order and progress and will carry away a permanent impression, even when they are not at all conscious why it is so.

2. The sermon will be *remembered* with far greater ease, both by the hearers and by the preacher himself. It will make the delivery at the time far easier, and will enable the preacher to recall it for repeated use as he could never do if logical order and systematic arrangement were lacking. The people can carry the sermon away in memory when it is a unified and completed whole, and so can continue to profit by it. Some will be able to extend the processes of thought suggested by the clear outline, and thus will be stimulated to that fine culture of religious thought and meditation.

3. With an organized sermon the preacher will be able to control the time of his sermon and to *distribute the time* among the various parts of the sermon so as to give to each part its due emphasis. One-sided, half-developed sermons will be few with the preacher who makes preparation and organizes his material carefully.

4. Sermons will be units and wholes, each with a distinct structure and a definite group of material. This will enable the preacher to keep his sermons separate, will prevent improper repetition of materials in different sermons, and will conduce to variety, clearness and directness in preaching.

II.—*Assembling the Material.*

The preacher will be always collecting materials for sermons and will have some system by which he will preserve them. Now when he comes to the work of constructing the sermon an important element in the process will be deciding what to put into it. This will be a double process, selecting and rejecting. Matter must not be put into it just because one has it at hand, because it has interested the preacher personally, because he has heard it used with effectiveness by some other speaker, nor because something has to be put into it and this is all that now appears. The selection must be made with reference to the object now to be sought in this sermon, to the subject chosen now to be discussed and to the effective presentation of this subject so as to procure the end aimed at. Let all considerations of mere beauty, expediency or necessity be sternly put aside. Reject all material that does not fit the sermon and its purpose. Hunt up new material if enough is not at hand appropriate for the sermon in the making.

III.—*Selecting a Subject.*

It will be obvious, from what has been said above, that one of the first things to be done is to *select a subject*. Only then can selection and rejection and arrangement of material be made. The subject should be definite in idea, unitary in thought, comprehensive of all the items to be discussed. It should contain in itself suggestively all the points to be treated in the sermon, and so related to them that they will fall under the subject naturally and symmetrically. The subject may or may not be stated to the congregation. It will usually be best to state it, but it must at all events be very clear to the preacher himself.

IV.—*Dividing the Subject and Distributing the Material.*

A good sermon should have:

1. An *introduction*. Not often does the preacher want to plunge headlong into his subject. He will lead up to it, gathering the attention and the interest of his hearers. The introduction should really introduce the subject. Some-

times it will be made up of explanation of the text, of the circumstances of its writing, of its original meaning. Sometimes the circumstances of the preaching itself will introduce the subject. Often an historical introduction is best. Rarely it will do to begin with a story if it is brief, pointed and exactly pertinent to the subject in hand. Nothing helps a sermon more to do its work than a fitting introduction and this should be carefully studied. One must, however, beware of having a carefully studied introduction to a sermon, all the rest of which shows lack of careful preparation.

2. The *main discussion* and treatment will occupy most of the time of the sermon in delivery, of course, and will need to be wrought out with pains. *The several main divisions must be co-ordinate with each other and all related in the same way to the main subject.* It will be well for both preacher and hearers if these divisions can be stated in similar, symmetrical, form. Where it can be done naturally, with no straining, the divisions may all begin with the same letter. This pleases and aids memory. How many divisions there shall be will depend upon the nature of the subject. By no means let all your sermons have the same number and the same structure. Have only two, if that properly divides the subject or your discussion of it. Do not be afraid to have four or even five, if it requires so many to analyze the thought to be presented. So distribute the material as to have some proportion as between the various parts of the sermon. Do not give fifteen minutes to one head and three to another. Do not put all your illustrations in one part of the sermon and leave the rest bare of ornament.

3. The *conclusion* is important. Do not just quit. Round the sermon out to a fitting climax and conclusion. And when you conclude, quit. Do not tack on story, postscript, exhortation or superfluous explanation. The nature of the conclusion will be determined by the nature of the subject, the character of the discussion given and by the immediate object of the sermon. A sermon might be much the same in its body on an evangelistic occasion or before a district association, but the conclusions would be quite different on the two occasions. Sometimes a summing up of

the thought of the sermon is desirable as a closing for it. Often the conclusion will show how the principles of the sermon are to be applied by the hearers in their own lives. Sometimes an enforcing of the ideas by exhortation will be best. The concluding application can often be made in the form of quoting one or more stanzas of a hymn, or other poem. Finally, conclusions will vary in length. Five minutes may sometimes not be too much, while sometimes one or two short sentences will be most effective. Let the preacher study this part of his sermon well, and not depend upon the inspiration of the moment for it. It is here that the nail is clinched if at all. Do it well!

CHAPTER VI

Illustration

I.—*Meaning and Value.*

Illustration means shedding light on a subject. And that is just what it is for, and what must determine the extent of its use and the character of the illustrations to be used. The end of all preaching is effectiveness. For that the three requisites are clearness, force and beauty. Illustration helps each of the three. Very often an idea can be made clearer by a simple illustration than it can by many sentences of didactic explanation. Often an illustration will give direction to a point so that it goes home with precision and force that can be secured in no other way. "Feathers for Arrows" is the suggestive title to a book of illustrations for sermons. And illustrations give beauty to sermons that helps to make them attractive, and this is one of the ways that people are led to hear and heed the truth that we have to preach. Always the final question about any illustration is: Will it make this sermon more effective as an instrument of truth and life? If it will, use it; if it will not, omit it, no matter how attractive it may seem.

II.—*Kinds and Sources.*

The kinds of illustrations are almost innumerable, and they can be drawn from all our surroundings and experiences.

Nearly all language is figurative. All gestures are illustrations, although they are often illustrative of the wrong things. We talk in pictures when we talk of truths and ideas, for the words for telling of them were drawn from physical things and motions.

1. Hence our most common source of illustration is found in *figures of speech*,—similes, metaphors, and the more elaborate figures. These can be studied in any good rhetoric or in the larger grammars. The apt use of these is in some speakers a great charm and an effective method of enforcing truth.

2. *Personal experiences*, those of the speaker and those of others whom he knows, will often be very useful. These must be told with moderation, modesty and good taste. If these suggestions are observed there is nothing more useful than personal testimony to the value in one's own life and observation of the principles he is preaching.

3. *Biographical stories* are a kind of personal illustration that many learn to use with great skill. And biography is one of the best of all studies.

4. *History* furnishes examples of all the truths we have to preach, and when drawn upon with wisdom gives interest and enforcement to what we have to say. The facts used must either be familiar or must be explained sufficiently to make them easily intelligible.

5. Closely related to history is *current events*. These illustrate our points and we can also interpret current history in such a way as to enable our hearers rightly to see the hand of God in the great events that are passing before us in the world. One needs to take large and true views of current facts and movements for this and not be partisan, prejudiced or narrow. Rightly done, this affords to the preacher opportunity for one of the finest services he can render to his people.

6. *Literature* is a never-failing source of effective illustration for some preachers. Here we may use characters in fiction, the descriptions in literature, and especially the Bible, which gives biography, history, poetry, and all forms of illustration, and all with authority.

7. *Missions*, missionary biography, history and current incidents, afford one of the finest of all sources of illustration, and the use of such illustrations unconsciously interests the people in missions and makes easy the enlistment of the people in missionary prayer and giving.

8. Finally, to enumerate but one more, there is *Nature*, that source which our Lord himself found so fascinating and so effective for picturing his words to men. Include here the various uses of nature by man,—farming, engineering, mining, etc., as well as the forces, changes and beauties of nature.

III.—*Suggestions and Cautions.*

Good taste and good judgment are important in the use of illustrations. Some preachers need to curb a disposition to use too many. A far greater number need to cultivate the use of illustration.

1. It ought not to need to be said that illustrations must be free from coarseness and improper suggestion of any sort. Yet all of us have sometimes heard stories from the pulpit that in themselves or in the manner and language of their telling were an offense against good taste if not against good morals.

2. Avoid making the illustrations too prominent. To be a good story teller, a good word painter, a good narrator of historical events, will give a sort of popularity with some and may minister to pride, but these things do not make one a true preacher. There should not be too many illustrations. One is usually better for enforcing a point than two or three. Nor should any illustration be too long, for then the hearers will be in danger of forgetting the point. Never let it seem that you are stating a point for the sake of telling a story. That will do for after-dinner speeches but not for sermons.

3. Make the illustration fit. It should be so obvious that it helps out the point that all will see the truth more clearly and think little of the illustration.

4. Let there be variety in your illustrations. Use stories, from various sources and of different types, employ figures of speech, cite examples from history and experience.

Every one will find some lines easier for him than others and must then cultivate the use of those that are not so easy for him.

5. Let the illustrations not be too unusual and remarkable, so as to absorb the interest that should be given to the matter illustrated. Especially let stories be reasonable, so as not to arouse questions as to their truth or probability.

6. Do not tell old and common stories, such as have "gone the rounds" for generations, as part of your own experience or as coming under your own observation. Even where a common experience has come to you, it is best not to use it when it will cause many to question whether you are really telling the truth.

7. Only this one thing further: Do not try to supply lack of thought and teaching with stories. One sometimes hears a very good outline given but not developed. The preacher states his point and then proceeds to illustrate it with a group of stories, then states another point and tells stories again. That is never good preaching and sometimes is not preaching at all. In a word, use illustrations to illustrate and not to take the place of other elements that go to make up a true sermon.

CHAPTER VII

Gathering Materials

I.—*Sources of Materials.*

1. *Personal Experience.*

Two extremes should be avoided,—one, to imagine that our experience is sufficient to settle all questions; the other, to refrain from drawing upon our own experience at all. Paul did not hesitate to relate the experience of his conversion time and again. Spurgeon, Moody, Broadus and other great preachers have made good use of personal experiences.

2. *Personal Observation.*

We have opportunities to observe others and can turn to good account their religious experiences. Thus one accu-

mulates a fund of information that can be made exceedingly interesting and profitable, coming as it does from an eye witness. We should seek to relate the experiences of others with accuracy and faithfulness. If our hearers get the impression that we are careful to give faithful reports, they will welcome incidents from real life. Jot down memoranda of all remarkable and instructive experiences that come under your observation.

We should keep our eyes and ears open wherever we may chance to be in God's wonderful world, for we never know when we may see or hear something that may help us to impress divine truth from the pulpit. The lower animals, trees, flowers, growing crops, clouds, mountains and many other things have a message for the observant preacher.

3. *Reading.*

(1) The *Bible* is the book from which the wise preacher will draw more material than from all other sources. He should read rapidly through the Bible to make himself familiar with the history, the prophetic literature, the poetry, the teaching of Jesus, the epistles, and the Revelation. The preacher should read the rich devotional passages in the Bible slowly and with much prayer for his own growth in grace. Incidentally he will thus accumulate much valuable material for prayer meeting talks, for personal interviews with the sick and the sorrowing, and for sermons. Every preacher ought also to be digging up some portion of the Bible with the aid of the best helps he can get. This intensive study of single books will yield large returns to the preacher. Occasionally the preacher will profit by the study of some great word like "grace," using the concordance to find every occurrence of the word in the Scriptures. Use the marginal references in the American Standard Edition of the Bible. They are the best commentary that can be found and will guide the preacher to other passages that throw light upon the text he wishes to preach from. Let every preacher under thirty resolve to learn enough Greek to enable him to read the New Testament in the original language. Most young preachers under twenty-five ought to learn Hebrew also. Read the Bible in every language that you happen to know,

and read it in all the English versions that you can get your hands on. We can never know the Scriptures too well. The preacher above all others ought to be at home in the Bible.

(2) *Religious books and periodicals.* Pilgrim's Progress, Spurgeon's Sermons, Matthew Henry's Commentary, good commentaries on single books as Broadus on Matthew, works in theology such as Dagg's Manual of Theology, Pendleton's Christian Doctrines, Mullins's Baptist Beliefs, and Strong's Systematic Theology,—these are invaluable to the preacher. The pastor ought to take the Baptist paper in the State in which he is laboring and some good secular newspapers. If possible, let him also take some strong general denominational paper like the Watchman-Examiner or the Baptist World. He will find in the Home and Foreign Fields much information that will enrich his sermons with fresh illustrations from the mission fields of the world. If one wishes to keep abreast of the religious thinking of our day, he will get much help from the Review and Expositor, a strong Baptist quarterly. Religious biography is a gold mine for the preacher. The people are always ready to listen to stories about Spurgeon, Moody, Jeter, Mercer, Boyce, Broadus or Manly. A careful reading of the lives of Judson, Carey, Yates and John G. Paton will furnish illustrations for twenty sermons. The Baptist Hymnal is well worthy of careful study. Many a sermon would be better for quotations from the great hymns.

(3) *Other Reading.* Cultivate a taste for good literature. Read Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, and Browning. History is a field that will yield excellent material for sermons, especially Church History. People like to hear about Chrysostom, Augustine, Huss, Luther, Cromwell, Roger Williams, and Wesley. Fresh stories of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson will catch and hold the attention. A good daily newspaper like the New York Times will bring to the preacher valuable material every day. One must learn how to get through with the daily paper in thirty minutes, as it may become a hindrance by usurping time that ought to be given to other work. A good monthly magazine like the Review of Reviews or the Literary Digest is quite helpful to the preacher.

II.—*Preserving Materials.*

1. A good memory is the best guardian of one's materials, and memory can be cultivated. If one gets clearly in mind the material to be preserved, memory's task is greatly lightened. By association of ideas the facts imbedded in memory will be called forth when needed.

2. It is well to have a note book at hand in which to jot down any fact or illustration or text or thought before it slips out of mind. It is well to put down in writing enough to make it easy to recall what is needed. We cannot always understand our own notes.

3. Some preachers use to advantage files in which clippings from papers and magazines are deposited.

4. It is well to make full notes of all sermons and addresses just before or just after their delivery. The more the young preacher writes, the better it will be for his style of speaking; and the written memoranda will make it easier to rework the sermon and preach it in another community.

5. In reading books in his own library the preacher can underscore important passages and make notes on the margins.

6. An interleaved Bible is valuable for the preservation of materials. Sermon notes can be inserted throughout the volume, and are always easy to use. A wide margin in Bibles is desirable as a place for recording references to books or other material that will illustrate a given text of Scripture.

III.—*Using the Material.*

1. Having selected a text and a subject for the sermon, the preacher should next make in writing an inventory of all his materials on the subject. He will then make a selection of material that best answers his purpose, and set about the arrangement of the material into an effective sermon.

2. If he lacks materials suitable for the development or illustration of certain parts of his discourse, he will go in search of new material for the purpose. His concordance or the marginal references in his Bible may lead him to the

very material he needs. He will run over in his mind the books that help him and will follow up every clue that promises to lead him to what he needs. Earnest, prayerful reflection will bring to mind much that will strengthen the sermon.

CHAPTER VIII

Delivery

I.—*Some Elements of a Good Delivery.*

1. *An Earnest Manner.*—Indifference, whether real or only seeming, is a serious drawback. The preacher must show in every way possible his sense of the importance of the message.

2. *Self-Control.*—If the speaker cannot control his voice, his gesticulation or the flow of his thought, the audience will hesitate to surrender itself to his guidance. The man who is master of himself and of his subject will soon win the confidence of his hearers.

3. *Naturalness.*—A good speaker must possess a strong personality. Other things being equal, the man of high character will win an audience more completely than a man weak in moral purpose. The impressive preacher speaks the truth with directness and in a perfectly natural manner. He avoids all clap trap. Standing before the audience he talks out of his heart with frankness and directness on the great themes of the gospel.

4. *Distinct Enunciation.*—The preacher must make it easy for all to hear. Loud speaking is not at all necessary, if the preacher will only be careful to pronounce every word distinctly. Mumbling and mouthing are to be avoided. Sudden transitions from a low tone to a high key are harsh to the ears of cultivated people.

5. *A Well-modulated Voice.*—Monotony in voice and manner will soon put an audience to sleep. There ought to be variety of subject matter in every sermon with a corresponding variety in the delivery. Practice under a competent teacher will greatly increase one's ability properly to ex-

press varying emotions, and thus secure greater variety and freshness in preaching.

II.—*Some Faults in Delivery.*

1. *Ranting*.—Do not split people's ears with noise.
2. *The Holy Whine*.—Singing and preaching are two distinct elements of public worship and should not be blended. Even the most pathetic scenes should be described in a manly way.
3. *Letting the voice drop toward the end of the sentence*.—Fill the lungs with air sufficient to carry you safely to the end of each sentence.
4. Any habit of voice or of manner that draws attention to the speaker rather than the subject he is discussing.
5. Repetition of sayings, such as, "I tell you," "brethren and sisters," "beloved," "my hearers," "the Lord knows," etc.

III.—*Some Practical Hints.*

1. Use the diaphragm in speaking. Preacher's sore throat would be almost unknown if all would speak from the diaphragm. Deep breathing helps greatly. Avoid a throaty voice.
2. Stand erect on both feet and shift your position occasionally to rest yourself and the congregation.
3. Avoid excessive gesticulation, but let your hands and feet and every other part of your body assist in the delivery of the message.
4. Watch your congregation and adapt yourself to them. If persons in some part of the house are unable to hear, speak in such a way as to make them hear. Shorten a sermon rather than wear an audience out when conditions are unfavorable. Stick to your audience as well as to your text. Rest them by a story or a word picture, if they seem to be growing restless.
5. If the preacher takes notes into the pulpit, it is best not to try to conceal them. The congregation will not

object to a moderate use of notes, if the preacher is frank and open in his manner of handling them.

6. It is well to remember that a speaker's effectiveness is greatly enhanced by a good reserve stock of nervous energy. The preacher should keep himself fit for the best service by observing the laws of health. Moderate eating and abundance of sleep will prepare the speaker for the high task of impressing upon his hearers the sublime truths of the gospel.

7. Having made the best preparation possible for the delivery of his message, let the preacher surrender himself with all his powers to the audience and the occasion. Virtue must go out of him, if he makes the message plain and impressive. Laziness or indifference in the pulpit is a sin. The preacher must be willing to spend and be spent for Christ.

CHAPTER IX

The Conduct of Public Worship

Baptists are apt to think more of the sermon than of all other elements in pulpit worship. We need to give more attention to the reading of the Scriptures, the selection of appropriate hymns, the conduct of public prayer, the administration of the ordinances and other features of public worship. We consider in the present study some suggestions for the improvement of our leadership of the worship in God's house.

I.—*Public Reading of the Scriptures.*

1. It means much to select a passage or passages that will prepare the minds of the people for the central message of the hour. When two passages are read, one of them may be selected for its effect in lifting up the hearts of the people into communion with the heavenly Father. A Psalm or other devotional selection may lead the congregation into an attitude of worship.

2. No man ought to try to read the Scriptures in public without careful study of the passages he has chosen for

this purpose. The reader should understand what he is reading and be saturated with the spirit of the passage. Sympathetic, interpretative reading of the Word of God may be made impressive and inspiring. Care must be taken to avoid all oratorical display. The preacher should be in a worshipful frame of mind. When he opens God's Book, let him bring forth God's message with quiet simplicity and deep reverence.

II.—*Public Prayer.*

It is not easy really to pray at any time, and public prayer is in danger of becoming stereotyped and formal. Many Baptist pastors have an unwritten ritual just as unchanging and unchangeable as those found in the prayer books. Persons who have heard these prayers a few times can tell just how near the end the preacher is, and often the irreverent make jests at the expense of the minister. Every preacher should cultivate the divine art of leading the people in public prayer. We offer a few suggestions looking to the improvement of public prayer.

1. The preacher who would be helpful in leading in prayer must do much praying in private. The devout and prayerful pastor will learn to guide others in their approach to the throne of grace.

2. The pastor should reflect long and earnestly on the needs of the people whom he is to lead in public prayer. How can he voice the aspiration and longings of people unless he has tried to put himself in their place? If there is need of making notes of the most important things to say in the sermon, is there not need to take account of the things to pray for? Is it wise to trust to luck in one case, while really preparing in the other?

3. Every preacher should make careful study of the prayers recorded in the Bible, especially those found in the Gospels and the Epistles, and thus acquire a vocabulary of prayer. The more of Scripture we get into our prayers the better it will be for us and for those who follow us in public prayer.

4. Avoid mannerisms in voice or posture. Seek to

keep in mind the fact that you are talking to God, and pour out your heart before him in the deepest humility and reverence.

III.—*The Service of Song.*

Every pastor ought to be a close student of hymns and of church music. Not every preacher can make of himself a good singer, but he can observe the effect of the song service on the emotions of the people and can learn how to select hymns that will lift the souls of men into joyous fellowship with Christ and with one another.

1. The preacher should seek to unify the entire service, trying, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, to warm the hearts of the people, to instruct their minds and to move them to action. The opening hymn should usually be a great hymn of worship; the hymn before the sermon may well be chosen for its aid in preparing the hearts of the people to receive the message from God; while the closing hymn may well be an application of the central thought of the service or a response from the people to the appeal of the preacher.

2. Encourage congregational singing. An organist, a precentor and a choir are desirable, if they do not usurp the right of the congregation to praise God in song.

3. Occasionally read a great hymn to the congregation, but only after the most careful preparation, seeking to lift men up into fellowship with God or to lodge in their hearts some great truth of the gospel.

4. Be careful in purchasing hymnals and song books to get only the best. The Baptist Hymnal, Baptist Hymn and Praise Book, The Herald, The World Evangel, and Gospel Songs are among the best.

5. If the church can afford two different books, get a hymnal for the Sunday morning preaching service and a more popular song book for the Sunday School and the prayer meeting. Thus there will be greater variety, and the people will learn some of the stately church hymns as well as the more lively songs.

IV.—*Special Services.*

1. *Baptism.*—Be sure to have a suitable place for baptizing. Keep out of muddy ponds or streams with steep banks and treacherous holes. The ordinance is a sermon in picture and should be administered in such a way as to impress all who witness it. The minister and the candidates should be properly clad, and the candidates should be given instructions in private as to the details of the administration of the sacred rite. It is desirable that the minister wear a simple gown with small weights around the bottom. Seek to make the ordinance as impressive as possible.

2. *The Lord's Supper.*—The atmosphere of Cal vary should always surround the table containing the bread and the wine, the emblems of our Lord's broken body and shed blood. We must help the people to "discern the Lord's body," that is, to stand in imagination at the foot of the cross and to realize that the blood of Jesus was shed for us as an atonement for our sins. If we smile at such a time, let it be through our tears.

The minister, if he breaks the bread, should have clean hands. It is well to have a small basin and napkin for the purpose. The number of cups is a matter of little importance, whether two or two hundred. There was probably only one cup used by our Lord, but then only a dozen men were at the table together. The individual communion cup is growing in favor, and we have never heard of a church that has given it up after having tried it.

If a collection is taken for the poor saints, it ought to be liberal at such a time and adequate for the needs of the congregation.

3. *The Sunday School.*—Every pastor ought to take his place as pastor in the Sunday School. It may sometimes be best for him to teach a class, though it is better in general that he should simply greet teachers and pupils as they enter. Sometimes he may make a brief address at the end or make the closing prayer. The pastor may do much to promote the spirit of worship in the school.

4. *Funerals.*—Prayer, singing and reading of the Scriptures, are the most important elements of the service. If

an address is delivered, avoid fulsome eulogy of the deceased. It is far better to bring a brief and earnest gospel message for the living and let the life of the deceased speak for itself. Of course there are exceptional cases in which it is proper to give an appreciation of the life and character of some notable Christian who has passed away.

5. *Revival Services*.—Combine faithful teaching as to the plan of salvation with earnest prayer in private and in public, good singing, faithful warning and earnest exhortation. If emotional excitement begins to run too high, introduce doctrinal and practical sermons. If we wish our converts to stand fast to the end, we must ground them in the faith and show them what the Christian life is and what are its fruits.

V.—*Pulpit Decorum*.

The preacher should so conduct himself in the pulpit as to win a hearing for his message. He should not offend good taste. The pastor ought always to be a Christian gentleman of the first rank. He should seek so to behave in the pulpit that men will forget him by reason of their absorption in the contemplation of the truths of the Gospel.

