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PREACHING CHRIST





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Tom Ascol

Introduction

Preaching Christ Crucified No Matter What!

The message of Christ crucified will always be foolishness to the world. It will take resolve to remain steadfast in exalting Christ in the pulpit and the public square. Along with resolve, ministers of the gospel must cultivate a growing skill in seeing and savoring Christ in all of Scripture. That is the aim of this journal. Tom Hicks considers the need to love Christ for without such love we will not preach him as we ought. Fred Malone provides instruction and examples for preaching Christ in various parts of the Scripture. Finally, Jared Longshore reviews a book on puritan meditation for without such unhurried time considering the Word of Christ, we will not be able to proclaim our crucified and risen Savior to the people of God. I hope that you are served by this journal to preach Christ first and last.

Why don't men preach Christ crucified? John Stott offers some profound insights on this question with his analysis of the offense of the cross, from his commentary on Galatians. I am humbled and challenged by this reminder:

What is there about the cross of Christ which angers the world and stirs them up to persecute those who preach it? Just this: Christ died on the cross for us sinners, becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). So the cross tells us some very unpalatable truths about ourselves, namely that we are sinners under the righteous curse of God's law and we cannot save ourselves. Christ bore our sin and curse precisely because we could gain release from

them in no other way. If we could have been forgiven by our own good works, by being circumcised and keeping the law, we may be quite sure that there would have been no cross. Every time we look at the cross Christ seems to say to us, 'I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.' Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size. And of course men do not like it. They resent the humiliation of seeing themselves as God sees them and as they really are. They prefer their comfortable illusions. So they steer clear of the cross. They construct a Christianity without the cross, which relies for salvation on their works and not on Jesus Christ's. They do not object to Christianity so long as it is not the faith of Christ crucified. But Christ crucified they detest. And if preachers preach Christ crucified, they are opposed, ridiculed, persecuted. Why? Because of the wounds which they inflict on men's pride.

—Tom Ascol



Tom Hicks

What Does It Mean to Love Christ?

In his classic book, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*, Ryle calls believers to warm, Christ-centered, evangelical piety, exhorting Christians to flee religious externalism and to pursue disciplined communion with Christ for the joy of knowing Him more. Ryle is clear about the doctrine of justification by faith alone on the ground of Christ's righteousness alone, but he is equally clear that believers must exert diligent effort to love Christ and keep His commandments for the joy of knowing Him more.

In the 15th chapter, "Lovest Thou Me?," Ryle says, "Life or death, heaven or hell, depend on our ability to answer the simple question, 'Do you love Christ?'" He goes on to explain:

A true Christian is not a mere baptized man or woman. He is something more. He is not a person who only goes, as a matter of form, to a church or chapel on Sundays, and lives all the rest of the week as if there was no God. Formality is not Christianity. Ignorant lip-worship is not true religion. The Scripture speaks expressly: "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom 9:6). The practical lesson of those words is clear and plain. All are not true Christians who are members of the visible church of Christ. ... The true Christian is one whose religion is in his heart and life. It is felt by himself in his heart ... There is one thing in a true Christian which is eminently peculiar to him. That thing is love to Christ.

Then Ryle provides a list of "the peculiar marks by which love to Christ makes itself known."

1. If we love Christ, we will think about Him. Christ is often present in the believer's thoughts. We remember His name, His character, or His deeds. We think about all that He has done to save us, all that He is doing, and all that He still will do. Ephesians 3:17 says that Christ "dwells in his heart." True Christians think much on Christ. Ryle says, "The true Christian has thoughts of Christ every day that he lives, for one simple reason, that he loves Him."

2. If we love Christ, we want to hear about Him. The believer finds pleasure in listening to those who speak about Christ. True Christians most enjoy sermons that are full of Christ, and they enjoy the company of those who speak much of Christ. The disciples said, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures" (Luke 24:32)?

3. If we love Christ, we will read about Him. The true Christian delights in the Scriptures because they speak of Christ, the beloved Savior. It is not wearisome to read a letter from a loved one. The Lord Jesus declared, "You search the Scriptures ... it is they that bear witness about Me" (John 5:39). The Christian cannot be happy without reading the Bible. Why? Ryle says, "It is because the Scriptures testify of Him whom his soul loves, even Christ."

4. If we love Christ, we seek to please Him. We are glad to discover what Jesus likes and what He dislikes. We're willing to deny ourselves to please Him. To someone who loves Christ, the Ten Commandments are not burdensome. "If you love Me you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15); "And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Christ's burden is light and the Christian gladly bears it because he loves Him.

5. If we love Christ, we want to be with His friends. True Christians regard all other Christians as friends because they are friends of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I have called you friends" (John 15:15). There is a bond of union between all the friends of Jesus. Why? Ryle says, "It is simply affection to the same Savior, and love to the same Lord."

6. If we love Christ, we're jealous for His name and honor. We do not like to hear anyone speak against Jesus. We feel jealous to maintain His interests and reputation. The Word of God says, "Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). The true Christian feels a godly jealousy toward all efforts to minimize "his Master's word, or name, or church, or day." This is because the Christian loves Christ.

7. If we love Christ, we will talk to Him. The believer has no difficulty in speaking to his Savior. We tell Him all our thoughts. We pour out our hearts to Him. We have no hesitation

about telling Him anything that is on our mind. We are not happy until we have spoken our minds and hearts to our friend. We ask for comfort in difficulty. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7). The Christian “must converse with his Savior continually, or he would faint by the way. And why is this? Simply because he loves Him.”

8. Finally, if we love Christ, we want to be with Him. Thinking, hearing, and talking are all important, but if we really love a person, we want to be near him. The true Christian wants to hold communion with Christ without interruption. The true Christian longs for that day when he will see Christ face to face. “Surely I am coming soon. Amen! Come Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20)!

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Fred Malone

Preaching Christ in Every Sermon

Should We Preach Christ in Every Sermon?

Faithful preaching is expositional, which means that it explains a biblical text in its context and applies the text to the hearers. There have been times, however, when I've heard expositional preaching that makes little or no mention of the Lord Jesus Christ (sadly, I've done this myself). If an unbeliever had been sitting among the hearers, he would not have heard enough of the gospel to be saved. Furthermore, saints would not have heard enough of Christ to move them to live and obey out of love for Him. Scripture teaches that every expository sermon should be Christ-centered.

True preaching is not:

1. An expositional sermon, even from a New Testament text, without mentioning Christ except in an evangelistic appeal at the end
2. A sermon filled with illustrations and humor, while only nominally mentioning a text, or Jesus Christ Himself, occasionally
3. A "practical series" on marriage, joy, etc., without explaining how the person and work of Jesus Christ applies to marriage, joy, etc.
4. A running commentary on a passage of Scripture without preaching Christ because He is not mentioned explicitly in the text

None of the above measures up to the Bible's requirement for preaching. Scripture gives us clear instructions about how to preach. Consider the following.

1. Our Lord Jesus and His apostles practiced Christ-centered preaching.

Every word our Lord uttered ultimately was about His own person and work as our Prophet, Priest, and King, even when He expounded Old Testament texts, which did not always mention Him explicitly. Christ's apostles followed His example in their preaching. Every evangelistic sermon in Acts and every epistle were centered on Jesus Christ. The epistles were read to churches in their entirety, including the parts about Christ and the gospel. In every application of the epistles, there is always a reference to Christ, His person and His work. I am not saying that Jesus Christ was mentioned by name in every text of His preaching and the apostles teaching. What I am saying is Christ was the foundation and goal in the proclamation of every word of God.

2. The Bible mandates preaching Christ to unbelievers and believers.

First, it is clear that the apostles preached Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to unbelievers (Acts 5:42, 8:35, 11:20). Jesus was the center of their message. When Paul first came to Corinth to preach the gospel to the unconverted, he said, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Jesus Christ was the substance of Paul's evangelistic preaching in Corinth. Peter also preached Christ on the day of Pentecost as well as in the other evangelistic messages of Acts (Acts 2; 10; 17).

Second, the apostles preached Christ to believers. The apostles constantly tied their rebukes, exhortations, and doctrinal instructions to the person and work of Christ, past, present, and future. It's impossible to read the epistles without seeing that the person and work of Jesus Christ is the center point of salvation and sanctification. To the Colossians, Paul described his preaching and teaching to Christians: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). It takes little research to see how Paul tied his exhortations to the Corinthian Christians to the person and work of Christ for them. For instance, when warning against adultery, Paul said, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Paul based his warning against adultery on Christ's work. Christ Himself was the substance of apostolic preaching, both to the unconverted and

the converted. The Bible mandates Christ-centered preaching both to the unbeliever and believer.

3. The Bible mandates preaching Christ in every sermon from every text.

In Genesis 3:15, Jesus Christ is declared the center of God's revelation to man. Adam represented all of his posterity and fell into sin, breaking the Covenant of Works, which required perfect obedience for life. But Jesus Christ, the last Adam, is the only mediator between God and man. Christ satisfied God's just wrath in the Covenant of Redemption and did what Adam failed to do. Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord of all who believe in Him. The Old Testament records the unfolding of the promise of redemption in Christ found in Genesis 3:15. And the New Testament reveals how Christ came to fulfill that first promise in Genesis 3:15. The Bible's own structure provides us with a theological mandate to preach Christ in all the Scriptures because both the Old Testament and the New Testament are theologically centered in Jesus Christ.

Preachers in the New Testament did not preach in the manner that has become customary to us. They did not take a text out of the New Testament, analyze it, expound it, and then apply it. What did they preach? They preached the great message that had been committed to them, the great body of gospel truth, the whole doctrine of salvation revealed from Genesis to Revelation. My argument is that this is what we should always be doing, though we do it through individual expositions of particular texts. That is the relationship between theology and preaching.

So, dear brothers, are you preaching the Lord Jesus Christ in every expository sermon? Could an unbeliever be saved through your exposition? Can a believer hear enough of Christ to be moved to love Him more and obey Him by faith working through love? May God help us to proclaim Him!

Why Should We Preach Christ in Every Sermon?

We have addressed the question: "Should we preach Christ in every sermon?" My answer is "Yes." Now we must ask: "Why should we preach Christ in every sermon?" There are two thoughts I would offer in answer to this: (1) Biblical Hermeneutics, and (2) Biblical Example.

Biblical hermeneutics requires us to preach Christ in every sermon.

The historical rise of literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutics in the history of interpretation has been a very good thing. There is general agreement among evangelical teachers that the Bible should be taken literally (unless it uses metaphor, typology, allegory, parable, etc.), grammatically (using the original languages for exegesis), and historically (dealing with the historical context of the text). As part of this method, we also include the idea of “Scripture interpreting Scripture.” This is the foundation of exegeting a text and then expositing it in the sermon. This method is intended to prevent eisegesis in a text in order to be faithful to God’s specific Word. Sometimes, this method is used to justify not preaching Christ in every sermon if He is not mentioned specifically in the text, especially when expounding an Old Testament text.

However, grammatical-historical exegesis is not the complete hermeneutical method used by Reformed interpreters. Reformed hermeneutics espouses grammatical-historical-theological exegesis. The addition of theological exegesis for each text is sometimes called “the analogy of faith.” It means that the exegesis of each text must look at the full theological context in which it resides; i.e., the place in biblical history, the covenant context in which it resides, and its relationship to the overall theology of the Scripture. This means that the overall theology of Scripture, which is Christ-centered, must be included in the full exegesis of the text. This is not eisegesis. It is theological exegesis.

Let me add that this theological element in hermeneutics is not quite the same as “Scripture interpreting Scripture.” An exegete may use cross-reference or word-studies of a text, comparing Scripture with Scripture and still miss the overall theology of Scripture in the exegesis. The analogy of faith takes the whole counsel of God into account, the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints, when interpreting the text. For instance, when preaching on an Old Testament text, one may use the literal-grammatical-historical method, including Scripture interpreting Scripture in cross-references and word-studies, expounding the text faithfully in its original meaning in the Old Testament. However, our Lord explained that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17). To explain the Old Testament text and to expound its original contextual meaning without taking into account how our Lord fulfilled it in His person and work ignores the full theological interpretation of the text. So, one may expound accurately the Old Testament text and its meaning in context without its full theological meaning in light of the completion of all revelation according to the analogy of faith.

To preach Christ in every sermon is more than just preaching a text in its literal-grammatical-historical meaning then going off into an unconnected explanation of the gospel. Rather, it is to expound how that text is connected to and fulfilled theologically in Jesus Christ, the theological center of God's revelation to man. This method does not demean the Old Testament as less inspired or not as important as the New Testament. Such caveats are not helpful or accurate. Rather, it recognizes that every Old Testament text reaches its full meaning as contributing to the revelation of Jesus Christ in all the Scriptures.

One more thing about the theological method of interpretation: It recognizes that all men are born condemned under law in the fall of Adam and that from Genesis 3:15 on, the rest of Scripture reveals the coming of Christ under grace. This is the old Law and Gospel theology that was central to the Reformation's rediscovery of the gospel. All Scripture must be interpreted in light of the Law and the Gospel theology which reveals Jesus Christ to man. This enables the expositor to preach the gospel in every sermon legitimately without eisegesis. Charles Bridges, in *The Christian Ministry*, said:

The mark of a minister "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," is, that he "rightly divides the word of truth." This implies a full and direct application of the Gospel to the mass of his unconverted hearers, combined with a body of spiritual instruction to the several classes of Christians. His system will be marked by Scriptural symmetry and comprehensiveness. It will embrace the whole revelation of God, in its doctrinal instructions, experimental privileges, and practical results. This revelation is divided into two parts—the Law and the Gospel—essentially distinct from each other, though so intimately connected, that an accurate knowledge of neither can be obtained with the other (222).

Biblical example requires us to preach Christ in every sermon.

We now live under the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, the completed revelation of God to man. We have been given the full revelation of God in the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. Our example of preaching and teaching is now displayed in how Christ and His apostles preached and taught. His teaching of Himself, each sermon in Acts to unbelievers, and each epistle to believers is fully Christ-centered. Even if we take a text from Christ or the apostles' writings which do not explicitly mention the Lord Jesus Christ, they must be explained in light of their whole teaching in the context of His message and the whole epistle's message. These are our examples of biblical preaching under the New Covenant.

For modern-day examples of such preaching, you only have to look at the greatest preacher of the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon, and the greatest preacher of the 20th century, Martyn Lloyd-Jones. They both followed the grammatical-historical-theological method of hermeneutics to preach Christ in all the Scriptures.

How Should We Preach Christ in Every Sermon?

We have now addressed two questions: “Should we preach Christ in every sermon?” and “Why should we preach Christ in every sermon?” Now we must ask another question: “How should we preach Christ in every sermon?” In other words, is it possible to preach Christ in every sermon with hermeneutical integrity? I believe that it is possible and necessary. But how can one do this? Here, I propose two principles followed by one example.

1. We must remember that we are ministers of the New Covenant.

Paul taught that we are ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6). That means the New Covenant of Jesus Christ governs all our ministry. Ministers of the New Covenant are not free to be neutral in exegeting any text. To think that they should be is a fallacy of biblical scholarship. We must start as ministers of the New Covenant when we approach any text.

The faith has been delivered once-for-all to the saints in Christ through the revelation of the New Covenant. The New Covenant revelation of Jesus is our ministerial, historical, and biblical-theological context. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets and to establish His New Covenant, the only salvific covenant in Scripture. Ever since Adam broke God’s law in the Garden of Eden, all of the Old Testament proceeds from the gospel promise of Genesis 3:15 toward the full revelation of Jesus Christ as the “seed of the woman” who would destroy “the serpent and his seed.” The last Adam fulfilled the first Adam’s broken law and the gospel promise of Genesis 3:15 in His New Covenant. As ministers of Christ’s New Covenant, everything we teach must be viewed through that lens.

Paraphrasing Augustine: “The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed.” In this light, all of Scripture is ultimately about the revelation of Jesus Christ to fallen mankind for the glory of God. Jesus is our starting point and ending point in every New Covenant sermon. He is the Author and Finisher of faith. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, of God’s revelation to man.

2. We must exercise hermeneutical completeness.

First, we must interpret every text grammatically, understanding the original meaning of the words. Second, we must interpret that text in its redemptive-historical setting, understanding to whom God is speaking and what He is saying in their historical context. But, third, we must interpret every text theologically in terms of the completed revelation of God to man. This is the Reformed grammatical-historical-theological method of hermeneutics.

This third principle of “theological interpretation” is more than “Scripture interpreting Scripture” by citing cross references. Rather, it involves showing how each biblical text fits into the completed theology of Scripture. All of exegetical theology, biblical theology, and systematic theology serves the overall “analogy of faith,” which expounds each text of Scripture in light of “the whole counsel of God.” In some way, every passage is framed by the completed revelation about Jesus Christ; therefore, every passage must be interpreted and proclaimed in light of Him. No part of Scripture can be interpreted fully without understanding its ultimate hermeneutical connection to the revelation of Jesus Christ to man for the glory of God the Father.

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Fred Malone

Preaching Christ in the Old Testament Proverbs, Narratives and Leviticus

Some object to this biblical and Reformed hermeneutic by claiming that it results in eisegesis. But there is a difference between allegorically “reading Jesus Christ into each text” without proper hermeneutics and faithfully understanding that all of God’s revelation ultimately reveals Jesus Christ in some way. Let me offer some Old Testament example of this:

How should we preach Christ in the Book of Proverbs?

Some might say that a proverb is merely a statement of God’s wisdom and that it does not speak of Christ. They might say that preaching Christ from a proverb is adding to the Word of God. But if we understand “the analogy of faith,” then we will see how to preach Christ from each proverb.

The Fall of Adam

Isn’t it true that no man has kept any Proverb perfectly since the fall of Adam? Hasn’t every man sinned against each Proverb in some way? And isn’t it true that every Proverb is consistent with the Ten Commandments, the covenant law under which Proverbs was given? If that is so, then we may legitimately preach the sin and depravity of man from

each proverb. We should show that God requires each proverb to be fulfilled perfectly in every person. We should show how it conforms to God's Law of loving God and man according to the Ten Commandments. Each proverb demands that we preach man's failure to fulfill God's righteousness.

The Fulfillment of the Last Adam

Isn't it true that Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, fulfilled the Law and kept every proverb perfectly? Didn't He do so to offer a perfect satisfaction and atonement for those who sin against the Proverbs? Doesn't this grammatical-historical-theological exegesis of an OT proverb require Christ to be preached in each proverb? Shouldn't we show how He fulfilled each proverb as a man in His earthly life, born under the Law? Shouldn't we show how Jesus is a perfect Savior for those who have not fulfilled each proverb so that we can obey each proverb in love to Him who died for us?

Here's an outline that might be followed in a sermon from a proverb:

- I. What does it say and mean in its context?
- II. How have you broken this proverb before God?
- III. How did Christ fulfill this proverb for us in His life, death, and resurrection?
- IV. How should you walk as He walked as a redeemed soul in this proverb, living by faith in Christ?

I say we must preach Christ in every sermon from every text. That's because every text somehow teaches the demand of God's obedience from man, the failure of man to keep God's law, and the provision of a Savior to redeem us from the condemnation of God's law in order that we may obey and please God under grace in Christ. This is preaching in view of the "analogy of faith," the whole counsel of God, and the overall theology of Scripture which must complete our exegesis and frame every exposition. To fail to do this is to fail to preach the Gospel as Jesus and the apostles did. We are ministers of the New Covenant and we must proclaim Christ in all the Scriptures and in light of all the Scriptures if we are to be faithful to Him.

How should we preach Christ from Leviticus 18:5?

“So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD” (Leviticus 18:5).

As we approach this text, we must remember our ministerial perspective and hermeneutical completeness. We are ministers of the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:6), teaching the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints (Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 4:2). Further, we must follow the grammatical-historical-theological interpretation of each text. So, how should we preach Christ in Leviticus 18:5?

1. Grammatically (exegetical theology)

The term “keep” means to “guard,” “watch,” or “observe.” A word study shows that “statutes” refers to the Passover and festivals, the priestly rituals, and other ceremonial laws. “Judgments” refers to the civil laws of crime and punishment, justice and equity. “Live” overwhelmingly refers to earthly life rather than death. The verse means that if an Israelite keeps God’s statutes and judgments, He shall live in them or by them. God will preserve the nation’s or the man’s life on earth. Other cross-references and parallels include Leviticus 25:18, Ezekiel 20:11, Luke 10:28, Romans 10:5, Galatians 3:12.

2. Historically (biblical theology)

The historical setting is Israel living under the Sinai Covenant, which was added to the Abrahamic Covenant. In the historical context, there are five major interpretations of the meaning of “live” in this text: (1) that this is a promise of a blessed earthly life in the land of Canaan for obedience to God’s laws; or (2) that this is a promise of God preserving Israel as a nation or the earthly life of a man on the condition of obedience to God’s laws; (3) that this is a promise of spiritual life (maturity) if a believing Israelite obeys God’s laws; or (4) that this is evidence that the Sinai Covenant is a republication of the Covenant of Works, or (5) that this is a re-proclamation of the original Covenant of Works with Adam which drives the hearer to despair of self-righteousness in order to be justified by faith alone.

There isn’t enough space here to argue for a definitive conclusion. However, because of the historical-redemptive context of the Abrahamic and Sinai Covenants, in which both required justifying faith followed by faithful obedience, I believe that (1) and/or (2) is preferred (Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:33, 6:24, 8:1; 30:20); although I am not opposed to (5). If you take (4) as correct, then you have to overlook the Sinaitic sacrificial system as a shadow of Christ’s redemption as well as the call to faith (the First Commandment) and

love toward God as the basis for keeping His commandments (Deuteronomy 6:1–25). In all five interpretations, however, something is gained by obedience to God's laws. So, in some way, God promises life to obedience, which is a principle of works-blessing.

3. Theologically (the analogy of faith)

So how should a pastor preach Christ from this text? Does he simply explain the verse in context, argue for which position he takes, draw some applications about obedience to God, but leave Christ out of the sermon until he preaches a text that mentions the gospel explicitly? Or should he merely explain the text and then preach the gospel at the end of the sermon? He will not do this, if he follows biblical hermeneutics, including the “analogy of faith.”

When we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, there is no question that in Jesus' day, the Jews erroneously interpreted Leviticus 18:5 to mean that a person might earn eternal life by keeping God's laws under the Sinai Covenant (Matthew 19:17; Luke 10:25–28; Luke 18:9–18; Romans 10:5–6). So, we must preach this text in accordance with the way it is used in the New Testament. Paul used it in Galatians 3:11–12 to explain that anyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who seeks to be justified by law-obedience has misunderstood both the Old and New Testaments. We are justified by faith alone, as both Testaments testify.

Consider these elements of the theological interpretation of the text:

First, God gave Leviticus 18:5 to Israel because Adam fell, broke God's Covenant of Law-works, and passed on a fallen and condemned nature to all his descendants. Therefore, God proclaimed law-obedience to Israel for blessing because Israel stood under the condemnation of the Adamic and Sinaitic law. Leviticus 18:5 teaches that all men need to obey God for life.

Second, Jesus was born under this law (Galatians 4:4–5) and kept it perfectly in His life (2 Corinthians 5:21). So, in whatever interpretation, He fulfilled perfectly the requirement of Leviticus 18:5 that He might be qualified to die a perfect death in atonement for those who have broken this law of God.

Third, the preacher must preach Christ from Leviticus 18:5. He must preach that we have all broken God's law, including Leviticus 18:5. All have sinned against God's law. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). He must preach Christ's perfect life and show from the Gospels how Christ kept the law of God, including Leviticus 18:5, for us. He must

preach that Christ accomplished a substitutionary atonement for we who have violated God's law (Galatians 3:10–13).

Therefore, the preacher necessarily proclaims from Leviticus 18:5, “Let all sinners against God's law repent of sin, and trust in Christ as their perfect Savior and Lord. And let the believer rejoice that Christ has met the demands of perfect obedience, making full atonement for them so that they can now pursue obedience to God's commandments with the assurance of salvation, love, blessing, and care. Through faith in Christ, God promises His blessings upon those who obey Him, in this life and the next.”

We must preach Christ in every sermon from every text because every text somehow teaches either the demand of God's obedience from man, the failure of man to keep God's law, or the provision of a Savior to redeem us from the condemnation of God's law in order that we may obey and please God under grace in Christ (Romans 8:1ff). All these truths are connected in the overall “analogy of faith,” the whole counsel of God. The overall theology of Scripture must complete our exegesis and frame our exposition. Not to do this is to fail to preach the Gospel as Jesus and the apostles did. We are ministers of the New Covenant and must proclaim Christ in all the Scriptures and in light of all the Scriptures if we are to be faithful to Him.

How should we preach Christ from Old Testament Historical Narrative?

I would like now to illustrate preaching Christ from the Old Testament with an historical narrative: 2 Samuel 16:1–4.

The narratives of Scripture present a challenge to the preacher to be true to the text, the redemptive-historical context, and the analogy of faith. However, because we know the covenantal, law-gospel, justification-sanctification theology of all the Scriptures, we can justly preach Christ in all the Scriptures. Each sermon must have enough of the gospel to save the sinner and to edify the saint through the preaching of Jesus Christ Himself. 2 Samuel 16:1–4 says:

Now when David had passed a little beyond the summit, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them were two hundred loaves of bread, a hundred clusters of raisins, a hundred summer fruits, and a jug of wine. The king said to Ziba, “Why do you have these?” And Ziba said, “The donkeys are for the king's household to ride, and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, for whoever is faint in the wilderness to drink.” Then the king said, “And where is your

master's son?" And Ziba said to the king, "Behold, he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.'" So the king said to Ziba, "Behold, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." And Ziba said, "I prostrate myself; let me find favor in your sight, O my lord, the king!"

1. Grammatically

There is very little of significance in the grammar of the passage. It is a straightforward report of the historical events. Ziba's response of prostration and request for favor (grace), along with his affirmation of David as king, seems to show his genuine devotion to David. However, as we shall see, not all is as it appears.

2. Historically

David is fleeing his son Absalom's treacherous takeover of Jerusalem and the kingship, even after David had been promised another born son to be an eternal King (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Psalm 3 records David's weary though trustful frame of mind when he fled from Absalom. As David descended the summit of the Mount of Olives, Ziba met him with gifts. Ziba was the steward of Saul's possessions before Saul's death. Since then, he had accumulated personal wealth from managing Saul's possessions. However, after Jonathan's death, David gave Saul's possessions to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son, making Ziba the steward. So, Ziba conceived a covetous plan to repossess all of Saul's possessions for himself. Feigning allegiance to David, perhaps hoping for his return to power, Ziba falsely reported that Mephibosheth stayed in Jerusalem to take over the kingship from Absalom which genealogically belonged to Jonathan his father. So, believing Ziba's false report, David pronounced that "all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." To which Ziba feigned loyalty to David. It was only after the defeat of Absalom that David discovered Ziba's lie about Mephibosheth. Ziba had left loyal Mephibosheth in Jerusalem when he deceived David. So, David divided the property between them (2 Samuel 19), though humble Mephibosheth was content with nothing but David's friendship.

3. Theologically

After studying the narrative of events, I would consider what the Law and the Gospel have to say about our text. The Law reveals the sin of Ziba in his deceitfulness to gain all of Saul's property. "You shall not bear false witness...You shall not steal...You shall not covet" condemns Ziba's treachery. The sinful nature of man and the condemnation of the Law for sin are seen in the deceit of Ziba. He manipulated David to get his way against God's revealed will, falsely accusing Mephibosheth of trying to overthrow David. This is the

strategy of Satan in the garden with Adam and Eve, falsely accusing God to manipulate them for his ends. Now man copies Satan's wiles. We all stand condemned by the Law.

Further, we see in David the faithfulness of God's covenant promises to the believer in spite of his remaining sin. God's Law required that every fact be confirmed on the basis of two or more witnesses. There was no reason to doubt Mephibosheth's previous loyalty. But David believed the gossip of Ziba on one witness and made an unjust ruling. Yet God overruled David's fallibility and prospered his battle with Absalom to be restored to his kingship according to God's sovereign will. So God used fallible David to fulfill His promise to bring forth the Son of David to be a perfect King who rules with justice (Isaiah 9:6–7). The Gospel is preached in this text by showing God's faithfulness and sovereignty to His covenant promises and by comparing David as a fallible type to our infallible antitype, the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul could say to Timothy: "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the descendent of David, according to my gospel" (2 Timothy 2:8).

In this historical narrative, we see God's predestined faithfulness to judge Adam's descendants for sin yet fulfilling His eternal promise to bring forth a last Adam to bear the sins of many and to re-establish His righteous rule among men. The theology of the Law and the Gospel makes Christ the center of God's revelation in every text, even historical narratives.

4. Preaching Christ in this Old Testament historical narrative

The Fallen Condition of Man

Ziba shows us the fallen nature of man, seeking his own will instead of God's by any sinful means. We stand condemned by the same Law. Have you ever lied, gossiped, or deceived to get your way? (apply to spouse, child, employee, parent, friend, enemy; see Proverbs on God's attitude on lying). God's Law condemns such sins of false witness, coveting, gossiping, slandering, or manipulation of others. And He will judge you at the last day. Ziba's sin was discovered by David later and brought to justice. How much more will our risen Lord expose and judge the secrets of men when we stand before Him. How will you stand before Him without a Savior and Redeemer?

The Sovereignty of God Over Man's Sinful Deceits

Ziba was not judged immediately and got away with it at the time. Why do the wicked prosper and the righteous Mephibosheth's suffer? God will bring all to justice at the last day and punish for sins (Psalm 37, 73). How patient God is to let such men like you

and me live, calling us to repentance (2 Peter 3) and faith in the only Savior of the world. If any here have not repented of your sins against God and His Law, God has been patient with you. But He will not be patient forever. You must repent of your deceits and lying now, fleeing to the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, if you would see life.

The Faithfulness of God to His Promises of Grace

Why does God let people like faithless Ziba and imperfect David live? It is because He is full of mercy and has declared the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be the way of redemption for Adam's sinful children (Genesis 3:15). Therefore, He kept His promise to David, planned before the foundation of the world, and restored him to kingship so that He would bring to fulfillment the perfect Son of David and Son of God born in Bethlehem. And He will keep His promises of redemption, adoption, and glory to repentant sinners like you and me who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even more amazingly, if God could use an imperfect man like David to bring in His eternal kingdom, if He could cause all things to work together for good in David's fallible life, then so can He use redeemed sinners such as ourselves to spread His Gospel from shore to shore. And so fallible Christians should be encouraged to persevere in serving the Lord. We have promises, in spite of our remaining sins, that God will not leave us or forsake us but actually use us for His glory as we overcome our own sins in the blessing of His forgiving grace.

There is no way you can make up for such sins as Ziba's or David's. Jesus had to die for such things as a greater King than David. Blood atonement had to be made by the perfect King for a just forgiveness for His subjects. Resolutions never to lie or sin again cannot make up for the past. You have to be humbled before God and by faith alone trust in Christ's substitutionary death to atone for your sins. You have to be covered with His righteous robes to stand before a righteous God, received as a gift by faith in Him, not of works lest any man should boast. Then, out of love for Him and His grace received, speak the truth each one with your neighbor... like both Ziba and David should have.

5. Principles for Preaching Christ in Old Testament narratives

Every post-lapsarian Old Testament historical narrative is populated by fallen sons of Adam and/or redeemed sons of God in Christ.

Wherever the Law reveals sin in the text, it must be shown and preached to all as condemning.

Wherever God's sovereignty is revealed over man's sin, the Gospel of Christ must be preached by way of God's covenant faithfulness to bring Christ into the world under grace.

Each text may be applied both to the unconverted and converted by way of exposing the Law and the Gospel behind each text.

These principles are neither allegory nor eisegesis; they are part of "the analogy of faith" which centers all of Scripture in the revelation of Jesus Christ to man. This how we should preach Christ in every sermon, OT or NT.

Preaching Christ from an OT narrative flows from the analogy of faith, not just grammatical-historical facts and examples. The Law covenant in Adam reveals the sin and judgment of all men in our text while the Grace covenant in Christ reveals the need of the Savior, the righteousness of Christ in fulfilling the Law, and God's faithful provision in Christ for sinners. Application of the Law and the Gospel to the hearers means that the preacher must reveal their sins, God's judgment, their need of Christ, and the abundant provision of Christ, while also showing believers the encouragement of Christ's work on their behalf. If there is obedience to God's law in the text, the preacher must show that the gospel of grace has produced such obedience through the perfect work of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we would be teaching obedience to God's Law without the redemptive motive and power of grace to perform it. The analogy of faith requires that we preach the Law leading to the Gospel and that we preach the Gospel leading to faith-based obedience: "For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans. 6:14).

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Preaching Christ in the Psalms and Ecclesiastes

How Should We Preach Christ in Every Sermon? A Psalm (Psalm 42)

In this article, I hope to show how to preach Christ from Psalm 42:1–11:

“For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah. As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence. O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; All Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me. The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life. I will say to God my rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.”

The Psalms present a challenge to the preacher to be true to the text, the redemptive-historical context, and the analogy of faith. However, because we know the covenantal, law-gospel, justification-sanctification theology of all the Scriptures, we can justly preach Christ in all the Scriptures. Each sermon must have enough of the gospel to save the sinner and to edify the saint through the preaching of Jesus Christ Himself.

The Psalms are the inspired prayers of the believer. In them we find joy, sorrow, questioning of God's sovereignty and purposes, repentance for sin, and confessions of faith beyond circumstances. The Psalms run the whole gamut of human experience and soul-thoughts. Although our Savior had neither the weaknesses of a fallen nature nor the remaining sin of the believer, He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Being fully human, Jesus experienced the inner feelings of Psalm 42 in a perfect way. Upon the cross, He was attacked by His enemies, separated from God's immediate presence, mocked by unbelievers, and hoped to be restored to fellowship with God. Only One who sees purely and who cannot sin can feel the full power of earthly trials and temptations which come from the fall of man. Therefore, we can preach Christ from this Psalm.

Grammatical

This Psalm is a *maschil*, an instructive ode. It is constructed in two parts, each beginning at Psalm 42:1 and 42:6, both followed by the same refrain. Its title attributes its composition to the sons of Korah, the keepers of the gates to the tabernacle, but many attribute it to David himself. There is no sure quotation from this Psalm in the New Testament.

Historical

Amidst many possibilities, Keil and Delitzsch believe the author to be a Korahitic Levite who is with David in exile beyond the Jordan because of the rebellion of Absalom. It echoes the same sentiments that David expressed in other Psalms (Psalm 3; 63) yet stands as a separate author. Under the Sinai Covenant, he finds himself at a distance from the temple which the sons of Korah loved (Psalm 84) and surrounded by enemies who mock his God. He remembers the processions to the temple he participated in and weeps to join them again. He feels God's providence overwhelming as water overwhelms the falls somewhere beyond the Jordan in exile. He responds with temptation to despair in his soul, yet he repeatedly preaches to himself to hope in God alone. Under the Sinai Covenant, the tabernacle was the only authorized place on earth for God to be worshipped fully according to His instructions. The Holy of Holies was effectively the throne and presence of

God on earth, the very mercy seat of God. Even though the man of faith could pray at all places and times, to be separated from the tabernacle was to feel incomplete in worship. He longs to return to the tabernacle where God dwells on earth yet wrestles with faith that God will return him. So, he preaches to His soul God's faithfulness to deal with his thirst and despair. The end of the story is that God returned David and the sons of Korah to Jerusalem. God answered the Psalmist's cry.

Theological

Knowing God's overall plan in the Covenant of Grace to keep David as king and to bring Christ born in Bethlehem, we see the struggle of an OT believer waiting for that which is perfect to come. His experience before the New Covenant is real yet tied to the tabernacle in such a way that he feels incomplete away from its presence. And not only that, the confusion of God's enemies triumphing over David tested his faith in the covenant promises to David. His tears and mournings are real under the Sinai Covenant.

In light of all these things, the Bible student will study the whole counsel of God, the analogy of faith, and to preach this Psalm in its context, while applying it to today's hearers. In doing so, under the New Covenant, we find that our Lord removed the earthly temple as the official dwelling place of God on earth, giving a spiritual worship of God at every place in spirit and truth (John 4:21–24). No longer does the pageantry, the priesthood, the sacrifices and the Holy of Holies locate the primary presence of God to the believer. Distance from a tabernacle no longer interferes with the consciousness of true worship. Yet, even this spiritual worship does not remove the times of opposition from enemies who mock the faith of the believer. Paul's litany of soul struggles with the world and providence parallel the cries of the Psalmist (2 Corinthians 4:8–10). Even further, our Lord cried out to God with loud crying and tears at the oppression of the enemy and wrestling with the providential will of God, both in the garden and upon the cross (Hebrews 5:7–8). He was tempted in every point as was the Psalmist, even as we are, yet without sin, in his tears and mournings. Therefore he is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted to despair and mourning (Hebrews 4:15–16). He brings the place and experience of worship to them wherever they are on earth, lesson which the Hebrews' church had forgotten. This calls us to preach the same message which the Psalmist preached to himself: "Hope alone in God alone." Even yet we await the perfect worship in our heavenly place, sometimes with tears which one day will be wiped away.

Suggestions for preaching Christ in this Psalm:

Consider the wrestlings of the OT believer with worship and providence which Christians may experience.

Understand the greater worship and knowledge of God's providence for the NT believer through Christ's coming.

Believe in the soul-trials of Jesus Christ and His great salvation to overcome the temptations to despair, tears, and mourning in this world.

If we believe that our Lord was tempted in every point as we are, yet without sin, then we can preach the soul-life of the Psalms in their context yet show how our Lord went through all trials to accomplish our salvation and bring us to the heavenly tabernacle. We must put down despair of all kinds and preach to ourselves to hope in God in Christ. Hebrews 12:22–24 says:

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.”

There is no reason for the Christian to live in despair as did the Psalmist. God has proven His faithfulness, in which the Psalmist hoped, in the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself experienced as a man the trials of living in this world and can comfort us as our Great High Priest. Now we hope in God with greater assurance of that glory which is to come. This is how we should preach Christ in the Psalms.

How Should We Preach Christ in Every Sermon? Wisdom Literature

Now I hope to show how to preach Christ from Ecclesiastes 4:4, a single verse of the Wisdom Literature. Ecclesiastes 4:1–4 says:

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. But

better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun. I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind.

Wisdom Literature in the OT includes Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Some would add Song of Solomon. Each of these books has a different form, but all of them intend to communicate the wisdom of life. Ecclesiastes relates Solomon's futile attempts to find happiness in the things of this world. Wisdom, riches, women, drunkenness, building projects, humor, entertainment, etc., can never satisfy the heart. At each point Solomon satiated himself and was disappointed, despairing of any lasting meaning or satisfaction in these earthly pleasures. At the end, in Ecclesiastes 12:13–14, he declares: "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

How should Christ be proclaimed from this passage? Christ must always be preached according to "the analogy of faith." Every passage of Scripture contributes to the overall message of the Bible: that human beings are fallen, that Christ has come to deliver us from the fall, and that life and happiness are only found in Jesus Christ, the supreme revelation of God to humankind. The Bible's overall message also includes the underlying theology of the covenants expressed in the Law (Covenant of Works) and the Gospel (Covenant of Grace). So, how should we interpret Ecclesiastes 4:4 in its immediate context and according to "the analogy of faith?"

Grammatically

The grammar of the passage is fairly straightforward and presents no significant translation difficulties. The word "labor" ("toil, trouble, travail") communicates the idea that all work is hard and wearisome in this fallen world. The word "skill" ("success, advantage") refers to the capacity for success in work. "Rivalry" ("jealousy, envy") denotes the character and motive of working in this world. The conclusion is that this characterization of work in this fallen world is "vanity" ("emptiness") and "striving" ("grasping after") after wind. The whole idea of the verse is that all work in this world and the seeking of success above others is motivated by man's envy and jealousy. It's ultimately empty of lasting meaning and cannot satisfy.

Historically

Solomon gave himself to great building projects (2:4–11). He built gardens, ponds, stables, and great buildings. He extended his rule even beyond the borders of David. He built the great Temple that God did not permit David to build. Solomon appeared to be the promised “son of David.” But his life shows that he was conquered by his wealth and women. He declined spiritually to such a degree that the veracity of his faith is called into question. Ecclesiastes testifies to Solomon’s wasted efforts, to his depression, and to his failure to seek God’s glory. He died (1 Kings 11:43) and Rehoboam took his place, which resulted in a divided kingdom of Israel.

Theologically

Finding a man like Solomon in Christ’s genealogy may be somewhat surprising (Matthew 1:6–7). But Solomon was part of God’s sovereign plan to bring the seed of the woman into the world (Genesis 3:15). This is a testimony to God’s covenant faithfulness throughout the OT, to His promise of a Redeemer to come from Israel, through the line of Abraham and David. Solomon was not worthy to be in Christ’s line. There are no good men of the flesh since the fall of Adam our father. We can see, however, the Law and the Gospel at work in Solomon’s life through what he concluded in Ecclesiastes 4:4. This verse reveals the futility of Solomon’s efforts without God’s glory in his eyes, the fallenness of man seeking the things of this world, and the very opposite of these realities in the glorious work of the Lord Jesus Christ and those who follow Him.

Consider the following preaching outline for Ecclesiastes 4:4:

Introduction

- The original meaning and joy of labor given to Adam and his descendants.
- The curse of death and toil in the fall of Adam and his descendants.
- The present attitude of labor and business in this world.
- The hope for the Christian to have a life of purpose and meaning.

I. First, the futility of Solomon’s labors for satisfaction under the sun.

- The amazing accomplishments of Solomon’s labor.

- The depressing lack of satisfaction after his success.
- His observation of the fallen world's motivation in all labor without God.
- His conclusion of vanity.
- Hope for Solomon: Ecclesiastes 12:13–14.

II. Second, the futility of all labor for satisfaction under the sun.

- This fallen world cannot fulfill man's search for success and meaning.
- Man's own fallen nature breaks God's Law against idolatry in worshipping pleasure and self-importance.
- Examples of such futility: Ecclesiastes 2:1–11; Luke 12:16–21, 16:19–31; Matthew 16:24–27.

III. Third, the perfect and glorious labor of the Son of God.

- His attitude – John 4:34: to do the will of His Father who is in heaven. Matthew 26:41–42 – your will be done. He fulfilled the Law's demand for perfect labor for God's glory.
- The difficulty of His labor in a fallen world: Hebrews 12:2ff.; Matthew 27:26ff.
- The perfection of His labor: "It is finished," John 19:30; Hebrews 5:9.

IV. Fourth, the redeemed and glorious labor of the child of God.

- The redemption of all labor unto the glory of God: Colossians 3:17.
- The hopeful promise of success in all our labor for God's glory because of the redemption and resurrection of Christ: 1 Corinthians 15:57–58.
- Our response in all our life and work: 2 Corinthians 5:14–15.

Conclusion

- All the labor of Solomon was vanity because he was condemned by the Law of seeking his own pleasure instead of God's glory.
- All the labor of Jesus Christ was successful and perfect because He sought the glory of God.

- Because Christ's labor fulfilled what Adam failed to do, and because of His success in His person and work for sinners, we may be forgiven of a self-seeking life and live a God-glorifying life that has true purpose and meaning.
- Therefore, let all repent of self-seeking and the idolatry of depending upon the things and people of this world for purpose and happiness. And let all turn to the Lord Jesus Christ for redemption from such sins and a new life lived for the glory of God.

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Preaching Christ in the Prophets

In this article, I'd like to provide an example of how to preach Christ from OT prophecy. Christ is not mentioned in the text of the prophecy itself, but He is in the whole. Malachi 4:5–6 says:

5. Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. 6. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

Using the “grammatical, historical, and theological” hermeneutic, we interpret each OT passage according to the whole counsel of God in light of Jesus Christ, the center of God's revelation to man.

Grammatically

In verse 5, God tells the remnant of Judah that “I am going to send” Elijah the prophet. He will come before the future day of Yahweh, described as “the great” and “the terrible” day. This is a specific day of judgment in the future (v. 1–3). It seems to refer to the same day described in Joel 2:31, Zephaniah 1:14, and Acts 2:20.

The time of blessing before this judgment day seems to come immediately after Elijah's arrival. Both the time of blessing and the day of judgment are compressed into one future event as is common in OT prophecy. In Joel, for example, the promised blessing of the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost appears immediately before the day of judgment. Yet we have waited 2000 years after Pentecost for judgment day. Events that appear compressed in prophecy are often distant in time.

In verse 6, God sends Elijah the prophet prior to the day of judgment. Elijah's mission is to "turn" (turn, return, restore) the heart of the fathers to (or "upon") their sons, and the heart of the sons to (or "upon") their fathers. This happens because of God's gracious promise. It is part of God's postponement of final judgment and destruction. Various other passages teach the same truth: Deuteronomy 30:1–6, Ezekiel, 36:25–26, and Jeremiah 31:31–34. A future kingdom of the heart will come because of God's promises.

The idea of turning or restoring the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers means that the believing hearts of father Abraham, father Isaac, and father Jacob will be restored to all the children of Israel. Elijah will do this in his future ministry.

Some have misinterpreted this as a restoration of "covenant family" love between fathers and sons, but its Malachi context refers to Israel's need of repentance. In Luke 1:17, an angel quotes this passage as fulfilled in the repentance of individual Israelites. While families may experience healing under the gospel, it will also cause division between fathers and sons (Matthew. 10:21, 35; Micah 7:6).

Historically

Malachi is the final book in the OT canon. The name means "my messenger." It was probably written during the Persian period, after the second temple in 516 B. C. (1:10, 3:1, 3:10). The mention of a governor (1:8) points to the period of restoration, the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. During this time, both the priests and the people committed sinful abuses (Nehemiah 3:5, 5:1–13). These abuses likely occurred before Nehemiah's second visit in 432 B. C., when he brought further reform (Nehemiah 13:7ff).

The two parts of the book address the abuses of the priests (1:6–2:9) and the unbelief of the people (2:10–4:3). God still loves them (1:2–5) and sends Malachi to encourage a disheartened people looking for prophetic predictions to be fulfilled. Malachi calls the people to repentance for their unbelief. True faith is more important than half-hearted rituals.

Theologically

Judah and Jerusalem had profaned the Second Temple worship and returned to sin. Because the previous Prophets had prophesied a glorious return with David as king, the people thought God had forgotten them. They left the faith of their fathers, Abraham and David. Now God prophesies again that Elijah will come before the great and terrible day of the Lord, restoring the hearts of the believing fathers to the unbelieving children and the hearts of the unbelieving children to the believing hearts of their fathers. God has not forgotten His covenant promises and will fulfill them in His time and way.

The meaning is explained in the NT. John the Baptist fulfills the prophecy of Elijah (Matthew 11:14). He comes in the spirit and power of Elijah to preach and restore the hearts of the believing fathers to the hearts of the unbelieving children and vice-versa. Physical descent does not matter in that day; God is able to raise up children of Abraham from stones (Matthew 3:9). This was accomplished in John's ministry by calling the unbelieving children of Abraham to repent and be baptized before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

This day is the ultimate judgment of the world which begins at Christ's first coming and is consummated in His second coming. The axe of judgment is already laid at the root of the trees (Matt 3:10–12). This day is explained in the NT as Christ's ministry from His first to His second coming, ending in the day of "unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

So, John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ who began to fulfill the judgment of the prophecy. Under John's preaching, the believing hearts of the fathers were restored to the unbelieving children and vice-versa. Now, having heard of Christ's first coming, we wait for that final day of the Lord's judgment.

Consider the following sample sermon:

Introduction

Judah and Jerusalem declined spiritually after God delivered them from Babylon and Nehemiah rebuilt the temple. The priests offered blemished sacrifices and did not teach the Word of God faithfully. The people felt God had not given them the prosperity of David's restored kingdom, which He promised after their return. Their hearts were not right with God. They complained against His plan.

So, instead of living faithfully and awaiting the Lord's blessings in His time, they complained that God did not love them, and it was useless to be faithful.

So it is today. Many who profess the name of Christ only go through the motions of Christian living and worship. They think that God has not blessed them enough. They do not seek to live a holy life, no matter what happens. They are not thankful for God's grace in Christ. Instead, many seek teachers who "tickle their ears" with erroneous promises of prosperity. They are not content with Christ alone.

Yet God was patient with Israel and promised to send Elijah to restore their unbelieving hearts to the believing hearts of their fathers. He promised a day of spiritual renewal as He had always promised. Who was this Elijah and how would he restore the spiritual life of Israel? When would He come and what would happen? And what does this mean for us today?

I. First, the future coming of Elijah

A. Elijah was one of the greatest of the OT prophets. He preached against the sins of Northern Israel. He performed great miracles. He brought down the Baal worship and defeated Ahab and Jezebel. He preached judgment against sin and mercy from God. Now Malachi promises that Elijah would come before the great and terrible day of God's judgment. He would restore the unbelieving hearts of Israel to the hearts of their believing fathers and vice-versa. He would bring the spiritual change needed by Israel and a kingdom of the heart.

B. Jesus taught that John the Baptist is the fulfillment of this prophecy. The Jews waited for the literal Elijah to come but Jesus said John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah to fulfill the prophecy. Some still wait for a literal Elijah to fulfill this prophecy. But God's manner of fulfilling His prophecies is not always in the exact form of the prophecy. His fulfillment is better. His fulfillment brings in the spiritual kingdom of Christ superior to the greatest physical fulfillment of the OT kingdom.

As Elijah did, John preached against the hypocrisy and unbelief of the covenant people of God. He called them to repent of their sins and be baptized to start a new life of faith and obedience. God could raise up children of Abraham from stones. But what He wanted was heart-children of Abraham's faith. They were to believe in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Son of David and Son of God. Christ's coming was one of salvation and judgment, the Holy Spirit and fire, before the final great and terrible day of the Lord. This is how John fulfilled the prophecy.

II. Second, the Mission of John the Baptist.

A. The spiritual condition of the Jews. Just like the days of Malachi, the priests and the people went about their lives and worship without renewed hearts. They sought to please God by their own works and rituals. Yet they believed God did not care for them and give them the life they wanted.

B. The message of John the Baptist. But John the Baptist preached repentance from sin and belief in the Messiah as the way to be restored to God. He preached a life bringing forth the fruits of repentance in a holy life. In so doing, he prepared the way for the coming of the Son of David to set up the kingdom of God in the hearts of the people. He preached the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

C. The fulfillment of John's mission. When Christ came on the scene, John said "He must increase but I must decrease." (John 3:30). The people followed Christ for His miracles. But, as in the days of Malachi, when Jesus' concept of the kingdom was not prosperity but righteousness, the people turned against Him and crucified Him. Yet in so doing, God provided the sacrifice to build a new kingdom of the heart. John's mission was successful because He pointed to the true kingdom of God.

III. How does this apply to us today?

A. As in John's day, many go through the motions of religion to make God prosper them. They depend upon their rituals instead of their repentance. They still look for a kingdom of prosperity instead of righteousness. Yet the real need is repentance and faith, a life of righteousness in following Christ. Is this your concept of being blessed by God?

B. Are you such a one? Are you still looking to your own half-hearted works and formal worship as the reason God should bless you with prosperity? You need to hear the message of John the Baptist before the great and terrible day of the Lord. You need to repent of sin and self-righteousness, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and enter the kingdom of righteousness by faith in Him. You must be born again to see and enter the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

Ritual and going through the motions of looking like a Christian is not true Christianity. It saves no one. You must repent of sin and bow to Christ as your personal Messiah to enter

the kingdom of God. You must follow Him into fruits worthy of that repentance in a godly life.

If you profess to be a Christian, are you following a life of repentance and faith? Must you repent of love grown cold and ritual going through the motions? I have good news for you, Jesus Christ is still the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Go to Him, repent of your sins, believe in His atoning death for your forgiveness, and begin today to follow Him before the great and terrible day of the Lord.

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Book Review

The Art of Divine Meditation

The Art of Divine Meditation by Edmund Calamy

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Reviewed by Jared R. Longshore

Edmund Calamy was one of Westminster divines who gathered at the Westminster Assembly of 1643. Calamy argued for the Presbyterian position in the midst of 17th century English Puritanism. He was a part of getting Charles II to the throne in England. Nevertheless, when the Act of Uniformity was instituted in 1662, Calamy would not submit to the act and was therefore ejected along with many other puritans. His work *The Art of Divine Meditation* charts out the many different aspects of divine meditation. Calamy uses Genesis 24:63 as a launching point for his instruction on meditation, which reads, “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening.” Calamy’s work is uniquely fitted for the common man as he seeks to approach God in sweet meditation. Furthermore, Calamy’s work practically leaves no nuance of meditation untouched. He manages to speak to the obligation of meditation on all different types of people. He addresses the division of meditation between holy meditation and evil meditation. In classic puritan style, he goes on to divide holy meditation into two sorts. First, there is occasional meditation. In occasional meditation there is an excellence since Christians can engage in this sort of

meditation at almost any moment. God has abundantly provided through creation for the Christian's engagement in occasional meditation. A great benefit of this type of mediation is that it can be practiced at any time. Especially in the western world, with the incredible progression of technology and society, the time seems to run off the clock. How useful is occasional meditation in such a society? Also, Calamy shows that this type of meditation can be practiced in all places. Anywhere one goes, he or she is confronted with God's creation. Every spot on the globe is profitable toward contemplations that can lift the Christian's mind heavenward. There is a negative or cautionary motivation to engage in occasional mediation as well. Calamy notes that to neglect God's creation is a grievous sin. God's word says that the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. If indeed God has created the world to declare his glory, then it is sinful for man not to use it to that end.

Calamy proceeds to address another type of meditation, namely solemn meditation. Solemn meditation is a very different sort than occasional mediation. Solemn mediation is most pointedly illustrated in the beast that chews the cud. In the same way that a beast of the earth slowly and thoroughly chews its food, so the Christian fixes his or her mind on the truth of God and repeatedly thinks upon God's word and sets his or her heart upon it. Calamy warns of the great problems that come from not engaging in this type of meditation. He remarks that neglecting solemn meditation causes great sin in the Christian. Neglecting this duty specifically makes the Christian's heart hard. Furthermore, if a believer neglects to meditate in a solemn sense, then he or she will not make good use of sermon. In fact, Calamy employs vivid language to show the danger of a believer not making good use of sermon. The Christian who does not meditate on a sermon is like one who eats meat only to vomit it up. Such a person will not get the nutrients of the food, so neither will the believer who merely hears a sermon. In the same way, one who eats only to have the food pass through him or her quickly will not get the vital nutrients, but will left deformed. Calamy says that this is the result of God's people if they neglect this vital duty of engaging in solemn meditation. Problems abound when solemn meditation is neglected. For instance, God's word is full of promises and his word is sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. Yet, believers will not be able to relish the sweetness of God's promises if they do not take the time to consider and meditate on them. These promises include both warning promises and merciful promises. When God warns his children concerning sin it is a sober thing that is to cause one to stand in fear of God. But when a believer does not meditate, he or she is not sobered by God's warnings. In the same way, when God's mercies are made an object of meditation it will result in joy in the believers, when they are not made an object of mediation, then the believer will neglect God's mercy. In Psalm

103, the psalmist exemplifies how a believer should recall God's mercy and meditates on his kindness. He preaches to his own soul saying, "Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Calamy labors the point to show how detrimental the lack of meditation can be. He highlights that through want of meditation the Christian will begin to doubt God's truthfulness. God is faithful and will provide for his children, but how will a Christian who does not consider this think? Such a person will not only doubt God, but will be suspect of other believers. The one who passes on solemn meditation will be distrustful man of his brother or sister, constantly seeing fault in other while not seeing any in himself.

On the other hand the fruit of solemn meditation is sweet and compelling. The one who meditates will grow in love to God and faith in his goodness. Not only will he grow in love to God, but also he will grow in love to Christ specifically as he sees that all of God's promises are yes in him. Solemn meditation will cause one to hate the world and the things in the world. This is critical in light of living in a world where temptation will come with violent threatening. The one who has made a practice of divine meditation will be able to turn from sin with a grateful heart. He will not lust after the world for he knows that God has blessed him beyond measure. Again, the one who meditates will be able to bring out God's eternal promises even in the midst of terrible circumstance. Finally, the one who meditates will be aided in obeying God's commands.

Calamy marks out those who refuse to meditate and makes a point to warn those who will not obey God's command to do so. First, there are those who are simply ignorant and do not know how to meditate. Second, there are those who are forgetful and foolishly forget God. Third, there are those who are rash-headed believers. This group often gets into trouble as they speak often when they should not, and make errors due to acting too quickly; Calamy states that such people will not endure until the end. Finally, there is a type of person who neglects meditation because they are slight-headed. Calamy wisely distinguishes between the one who has a natural inability to think long on a subject and those who sinfully neglect to do so.

Calamy proceeds to address the place and time for meditation. Isaac is an example that he went out to the field to pray. Christians can learn from this example that they should find a place that is secluded so as not to be distracted as they seek to fix their mind on God's truth. Concerning the time, Calamy notes that it is beneficial to meditate morning, noon, and night. Christians should set aside a specific time each day when they can engage in solemn meditation and then add to that times of occasional meditation throughout the day. In puritan fashion, Calamy adds that the Sabbath provides a day in which solemn

meditation should abound. This call to devote one day in seven to the Lord is a hallmark of puritan spirituality and a needed point to modern believers.

Calamy not only speaks to the nature and need of meditation, he specifies certain topics for divine meditation. He proposes that the love of God the Father and God the Son make for first order topics of meditation. Christians can move from the general topic of God's love to the specific love of Christ in giving of himself on the cross for sinners. As a believer consider the dying love of Christ, he will be moved to see the true sinfulness of sin and make this his constant meditation. As believers spend time thinking specifically on the ugliness of sin, they will feel a real sense of their own depravity. This sense of their own need of grace makes up another topic of meditation.

The meditation that Calamy speaks of is no easy task. He emphasizes that the one who engages in meditation must persevere in meditation. The very nature of meditation takes a mental focus that calls for great energy. Also, meditation is not something that is to be done once every now and then. Rather, meditation is something that believers should engage in often. Believers should not let their thoughts drift off to abstract concepts, but instead they should consider how God's truth applies to their own life. True meditation takes God's truth and considers it in reference to one's own heart. He specifically mentions that meditation must engage three areas. First, meditation must engage the mind or the intellect. Meditation is not a mystical experience that bypasses the mind; rather it requires the focus and active engagement of the mind. But thinking is not enough when it comes to meditation. Second, meditation requires the engagement of the affections. Meditation is a matter of the heart where the believer seeks to get his will in alignment with God's glory. Finally, meditation includes one's conversation. To speak of one's meditation is the way to bring out the abundant fruit of meditation. In conclusion, Calamy has provided a classic puritan work on *The Art of Divine Meditation*. It is a stirring and detailed call to believers to love the Lord with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength.

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