

THE PASTOR'S STUDY

EXERCISING THE MIND || IGNITING THE HEART || PREPARING THE HANDS

A free quarterly paper for rural pastors.

Volume 2, Issue 2 (April-June 2022). Editor: Aaron Dunlop



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WELCOME TO THE PASTOR'S STUDY

Welcome to another issue of *The Pastor's Study*. We hope this quarterly magazine helps you not only in the study of Scripture but also in the work of ministry.

In this issue, we focus on 1 Samuel 17, the story of David and Goliath. Dr. Andrew Curry has written a helpful article on how God reveals himself in the story (page 5). I will take you through a short commentary on the story (page 6). I have also written an article on the Lord as our warrior which brings us to the cross-work of Christ (page 9). Rev. Calvin Goligher shows how we can look to David as our example of faith (page 10). We close with a devotional by Rev. John Dyck on David's service in the small things (page 20).

We have a couple of excellent articles on practical theology in this issue. Mrs. Grace Dunlop encourages us to embrace our weakness, and find strength in God (page 11). Dr. Joel Beeke shares some of John Calvin's thoughts on piety (page 14). Pastor Tonny Karwa encourages us to preach as clearly as we can, and shows us how (page 16). In our Church History section, Dr. Michael Haykin draws a lesson from the ministry of Thomas Dunscombe on the importance of the Bible (page 18).

Christians, and especially pastors, are called to spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-20). We hope that this study of David's fight against Goliath will strengthen you in this aspect of our calling.

Sincerely, Pastor Aaron Dunlop

Editor: Pastor Aaron Dunlop, krapfproject@gmail.com

Contributors: Dr. Joel R. Beeke (USA), Dr. Andrew Curry (Northern Ireland), Mrs. Grace Dunlop, (Northern Ireland), Rev. John Dyck (Canada), Rev. Calvin Goligher (USA), Dr Michael A.G. Haykin (Canada), Pastor Tonny Karwa (Kenya).

Layout & Design: Rev. Calvin Goligher (USA)

Distribution: Milton Issiye (Nairobi),
issiyemilton@gmail.com, + (254) 715-959-268

Printed by County Imaging (Nairobi)

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Published by The Krapf Project (UK)
www.krapfproject.com



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EDITORIAL: NOT AS SIMPLE AS IT SEEMS

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

The story of David and Goliath is a story of the honour of the Lord's name in the context of combat against evil. Goliath overshadows the story. He was big, bold, and boisterous. But we should not jump too quickly through the chapter and miss a different kind of enemy. Behind their giant champion, the Philistines were an insidious creeping intruder into the kingdom of Israel.

Israel's history with the Philistines was long and complex. The Philistines did not always present a threat to Israel, but they were always an enemy.

In Genesis 21:34, for example, Abraham lived among the Philistines and made a peace treaty with them. At this time, the Philistines were peaceful people living under a king (Abimelech). By the time of the Exodus, however, this had changed. They had settled around the area of Gaza (Exodus 13:17) and had developed into an aggressive war machine under five "lords," according to Joshua 13:3.

God told Israel to destroy the Canaanites and the Philistines (Numbers 33:55). God's instructions were clear: if you do

not dispossess the Canaanites, they will dispossess you, or they will become a thorn in your side and splinters in your eyes.

Our relationship with the world is not as simple as it might seem, or as we might wish.

Israel did not destroy the Canaanites or the Philistines. In the following centuries, the Philistines pushed further inland until they were in the hill-country of Judah (1 Samuel 14:1ff). They became a thorn in the flesh of Saul throughout his entire reign (1 Samuel 13-14, 17, 23, 27-29, 31).

The situation in 1 Samuel 27 is especially complicated. On the run from Saul, David lived among the Philistines at Ziklag. There is no mention of God in this episode, but David's plan works out. He escaped Saul's pursuit, destroyed many enemy cities, and made a fool of the king of Gath. But the question is, was David right in doing this? Our relationship with the world is not

as simple as it might seem, or as simple as we might wish. It is complex and it requires wisdom.

There are times when our relationship with the world will appear friendly. But the world is always changing. This affects many aspects of life in our society: relationships, activities, politics, medical and social ethics. Yet every situation needs to be addressed from this single principle. The world is our enemy, and there is always a potential threat.

Brethren, let us be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8). Let us know our enemy (2 Corinthians 2:11). There is always the danger of temptation or distraction. We can easily be tripped up (Galatians 6:1), or deceived (Jeremiah 17:9). We are engaged in a war. We can show up for the battle and not fight like Saul and the Israelites. Or we can fight by faith, look the enemy in the face, and take him down in the name of the living God.

***Aaron Dunlop** was a pastor for several years in Canada before ministering in Kenya. He holds a degree in theology from Geneva Reformed Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina, USA. Aaron is the director of The Krapf Project and now lives in the UK with his wife and five children. He blogs at thinkGOSPEL.com.*



PREACHING ON DAVID AND GOLIATH

Dr. Andrew Curry

Preaching Old Testament stories is hard. Most preachers approach these stories seeking to find themselves in the text or to find a word to encourage or guide them through the day. Scripture was indeed written to instruct (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and give us real encouragement and hope (Romans 15:4). But the Bible is God's Word, and it is in the stories that God reveals himself. This should shape how we approach the biblical text.

1. Why was Goliath an Enemy?

Goliath defied the God of Israel and cursed God's people. Repeated words are important; the word "reproach/defy" appears six times (verses 10, 25, 26, 26, 36, 45).

2. Why was Israel Weak?

The Israelites forgot who they were. They were God's people, but they viewed themselves simply as "servants of Saul" (verse 8). The Israelites were crippled by fear (verses 11, 24) because they only saw the giant and forgot that God fights for his people.

3. Why was David Victorious?

In verses 25-26 the soldiers could only see the giant, but David saw an uncircumcised Philistine who dared to defy the armies of the living God.

4. What's the difference?

David saw Goliath as God saw him. He had confidence because Goliath was an "uncircumcised Philistine" and God had promised to deal with thugs like him. God said he would bless Israel, and also that he would "bless those who bless them and curse those who curse them" (Genesis 12:1-3).

David saw the situation in light of God's promises. Notice the geography. This incident took place in Judea—the promised land! This was the land that God had promised to protect and deal with the enemies who entered it (Deuteronomy 7:1, 9:3-5, Joshua 23:5,9). David knew that God had promised to protect his people in this land.

God promises to deal with those who defy him, and we can trust him to keep that promise.

Andrew Curry is the pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Lisburn (UK). He graduated from The Master's Seminary in Southern California. He is the Associate Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at The Master's Seminary.

THE STORY OF DAVID AND GOLIATH

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

The story of David and Goliath is a best seller as far as Old Testament stories go. It has all the adventure and suspense of a thriller and has kept Sunday School classes captivated for many years.

But what is this story all about? This is a story of God's providence and protection for his people, and about the remarkable faith of a shepherd boy who rose from obscurity to demonstrate that he was the one who should rule over Israel and bring honour again to the name of the God of Israel. This story calls us to put our trust in the King of kings, who, against all opposition, has defeated Satan and delivered his people. It's the story of the gospel.

The Spirit has not only given us the drama of these events, but also the specific words, structure, and grammar of the narrative. In this commentary, we will pause and learn from these important aspects of biblical storytelling.

The Encroaching Enemy (verses 1-3)

The Philistines were Israel's ancient enemy (1 Samuel 7:13). In this story, they have threatened Israel by camping at Sochoh which

belonged to Judah. They were in the Valley of Elah, the most natural point of entry from the Philistine territory into the kingdom of Judah. Israel's future hung in the balance.

***This story calls us to
put our trust in the
King of kings, who,
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and delivered his
people.***

An Intimidating Champion (verses 4-11)

The Israelites were faithless and inactive in guarding against the Philistines. The only movement came from the Philistines (notice the verbs in verses 4, 8). Three things about Goliath intimidated the Israelites (verse 11): his size (verse 4), his resources (verses 5-7), and his words (verses 8-10). The repetition of Goliath's defiance shows that this was not a simple act, but a continuous attitude.

The Boy from Nowhere (verses 12-18)

David was at an awkward age, apparently too young to be in the army, but not too young to manage a flock of sheep or to travel alone. He was simply doing an errand for his father (verses 15-18). David had already been anointed as king (chapter 16) but the path to the throne would be difficult, and it would involve combat.

The Challenge (verses 19-27)

David was faithfully fulfilling his father's request. He arrived just as Goliath repeated his war cry (verse 20). The entire story hinges on a short sentence: "And David heard him" (verse 23).

David was filled with righteous anger. He was concerned for God's glory, and so he was determined to find an opportunity for service. He showed this determination by carefully fulfilling his ordinary duties (verses 20 and 22), by his concern for the glory of God (verse 23), and by continuing to do the right thing in spite of opposition. Persistence in a good cause and with a clear conscience brought David before the king (verse 31, see also Proverbs 18:16).

Israel's Champion (verses 28-40)

Following David's voice, we can get a clear picture of the story and its meaning. Eliab tried to discredit David in a sharp and mocking tone. David responded with a firm commitment: "Is there not a

cause?" (verses 28-30). This passage calls all of us to rise and meet the demand of the hour. It is a call to commitment.

Second, David spoke to comfort the nation (verses 31-32). "Let no man's heart fail," he said. This was not a direct rebuke, but a word of comfort to the Lord's people.

Third, David called for courage (verses 33-37). David faced two disadvantages: he was a youth, and he had no military experience (verse 33). But he considered the situation with a quiet courage grounded in previous experiences of the Lord's deliverance (verse 37). He saw the past through the lens of his theology.

Fourth, David spoke with confidence (verses 38-40). He was badly outmatched, and no human equipment could make David equal to Goliath. If David will enjoy a victory, it will be entirely dependent on the Lord. So, after trying on Saul's armour, he soon put it off.

A Single Stone (verses 41-51)

Now the fight is on. David proved himself a match for Goliath, both in argument (verses 43-47) and in combat (verses 48-51). Goliath boasted of his ability and David in the living God. David came out as a man of action while Goliath's actions were slow and sluggish ("arose," "came," and "drew near," verse 48 and "fell," verse 49). With just a single shot, the giant's head

was crushed. Goliath fell on his face licked the dust (verse 49), just like his lifeless god, Dagon (1 Samuel 5:3).

Victory for the People of God (verses 52-54)

Israel's victory was more than the defeat of Goliath. It was the routing of the Philistine army. All the Philistine's hopes were on Goliath, and with their hope gone, the Philistines ran. The Israelites pursued them all the way to Gath and Ekron. Israel's enemy was put in his place (verse 52).

Whose Son is This? (verses 55-58)

Saul was impressed with David and sent Abner to enquire about his family background with the intention of keeping David at the palace permanently. For David, this was an important step to the throne. God had anointed him king (chapter 16), and his victory over Goliath had demonstrated his leadership ability. Eventually he would be crowned (2 Samuel 2:4), but for now Saul continued on the throne. The remaining chapters of 1 Samuel tell about the conflict between Saul's rebellious leadership and David's righteous leadership. This is another conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). Through much persecution, David will ascend to the throne and will rule his people.

POINTS FOR PREACHERS

Our enemy the Devil is:

1. Active (Job 1:7, 2:2; 1 Peter 5:8)
2. Articulate (Genesis 3:1-5; Matthew 4:3-10)
3. Armed (2 Corinthians 2:11)
4. Aggressive (1 Peter 5:8)

Three kinds of enemies

1. In your family (Eliab)
2. In your church (Saul)
3. In the world (Goliath)

Four kinds of opposition:

1. Indifference (verses 24-26)
2. Mockery (verses 28-29)
3. Suspicion (verses 33-37)
4. Defiance (verses 43-47)

David's Warfare

1. His Character (verses 12-27)
2. His Counsel (verses 28-40)
 1. Consideration (verse 26)
 2. Commitment (verses 28-30)
 3. Comfort (verses 31-32)
 4. Courage (verses 33-37)
 5. Confidence (verses 38-40)
3. His Combat (verses 41-55)

The Right Focus

David recognized the most important enemy was Goliath. He could have spent his time attacking the Israelites for their faithlessness, or Saul for his lack of leadership. Instead, he took on the most important danger.

OUR DIVINE WARRIOR

Pastor Aaron Dunlop

The whole Bible teaches that the Lord is a divine warrior. It is clearly taught in Exodus 15:3, “The Lord is a man of war.” We read something similar in Joshua 23:10, “The Lord your God is he who fights for you.”

God appears as a warrior in different ways in different parts of the Bible. In most of Israel’s history God primarily fought against the flesh and blood enemies of his people. As Israel persisted in rebellion, God fought against his unbelieving people by bringing the Assyrian and Babylonian armies against them. At the same time, the prophets delivered God’s promises of new warrior-king who would deliver the people from their bondage.

Those promises were fulfilled in Christ’s earthly ministry. He fought against Satan by casting out demons, healing, and preaching the truth. The apostles taught the church to continue this spiritual warfare, especially through prayerfully preaching the Gospel all over the world. The book of Revelation teaches us to expect that this warfare will end in a great victory.

This broad backdrop helps us to appreciate the story of David and Goliath. It is not just a story of one ancient battle, but a picture of the grand conflict between God and his enemies that stretches across the whole Bible.

This famous story illustrates some of the New Testament’s teachings about the way that Jesus and his people fight against Satan.

Like David, Jesus is a shepherd who risks his life to protect us. (John 10:11). Like David, and all Israel, we are called to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). We have this calling because we too have an enemy who wants to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8).

Goliath fought for his false gods, and our warfare is also against spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:12). David’s strange choice of weapons reminds us that our weapons are not human but have “divine power” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

As David said, the battle belongs to God (Revelation 2:16). As Goliath’s grim end shows, our enemy will soon be crushed (Romans 16:20).

FOLLOWING DAVID'S EXAMPLE

Rev. Calvin Goligher

Following examples is a big part of the Christian life. Jesus tells us to follow his example (John 13:15). Paul also tells us to follow his example (Philippians 3:17). Church leaders are to set an example (1 Peter 5:3). James tells us to look for examples when we read the Old Testament: "As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord" (James 5:10).

When we look for examples to follow, we are really looking for glimpses of Christ.

But we must look for Bible examples correctly. We should not look for them in a legalistic way, as mere rules to follow. Examples do not show us how to earn salvation by obedience, but how to offer obedience to our Saviour.

Looking for examples does not take attention away from Christ. When we follow a believer's example, we are imitating the part

of him that is like Christ. Paul said: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). So, in the story of David and Goliath, what examples are there for us to follow?

David's diligence

When his father gave him a job, he "rose up early in the morning" to do it (verse 20).

David's humility

He replied to Eliab's harsh words with a soft question (verse 29). Speaking to king Saul, he called himself "your servant" (verse 34).

David's wisdom

It would have been foolish for him to fight with armour he had never practised with. He wisely refused Saul's armour and went with a weapon he knew (verse 39).

David's faith

With his eyes, David could see the giant and his weapons. But with his ears, David had heard God's promises, and he believed them (verse 45).

Calvin Goligher is the pastor of First OPC in Sunnyvale, California.

WILLING TO BE WEAK

Mrs. Grace Dunlop

Today's culture idolizes strength. Kids are told that they can be whatever they wish; sports heroes, film stars, and fashion icons are held up as examples of what is possible for everyone.

This way of thinking is unhelpful, unrealistic, and unbiblical. Weakness comes in many forms: poverty, tragedy, conflict, grief, illness.

We don't always see weakness as a good thing, but as Christians, we can, and we must if we are to be like Christ, who was "subject to weakness" (Hebrews 5:2).

He was born in poverty in a nation occupied by a foreign power, he avoided the elite and gravitated toward children, sinners, and defiled women. In the end, he died on a cross as a common criminal.

So where is the victory in the life of Jesus, or for the Christian who is "subject to weakness?"

First, weakness forces us to search the Scriptures for answers, to understand God's sovereignty, or the reality of His love.

Second, we rely more on the Holy Spirit for our joy. As daily life becomes burdensome, frightening, lonely, and helpless, we realize that our joy must be in the Lord, the Holy Spirit.

Third, we are forced to "look for the life to come" and realize that our truest reality is not what we can see here and now. So much more awaits the Christian!

Fourth, we realize that weakness is a spiritual exercise, and we will come to see that in these experiences the spiritual exercise has worked!

Christians should own weakness as a gift and embrace it as a tender push into the love and strength of the living God. When we are weak, we realize that we are not in control and that we can be strong in Christ and through Christ—this is spiritual maturity.

Grace Dunlop is married to Aaron and they have five children. Along with caring for her family, Grace writes at "A Table in the Wilderness" on the thinkGOSPEL.com blog.

PREACHER'S WORKSHOP

EXEGETICAL NOTES

(Notes on the text, words, and grammar)

verses 2-3

The author highlights the division between the two armies: they are separated by the valley (verse 2), the ravine (verse 3)

verses 4, 8

notice the verbs: Goliath “came out,” “stood,” and “shouted,” The Israelites were inactive.

verse 10

The verb “defy” is repeated throughout the passage (see also verses 25, 26, 36, 45), indicating a continued attitude of defiance.

verse 45

“You...but I” David identifies the contrast between the two armies.

verse 46

“this day” (twice) points to the certainty and decisiveness of David’s confidence. See verse 10 where Goliath used the same words.

verses 49-51

David’s victory in a rapid use of verbs: “put,” “took,” “slung,” “struct,” “prevailed,” “struck,” “killed,” “ran,” “stood,” “took,” “drew,” “killed,” “cut.”

PREACHING NOTES

(Points for explanation and application)

verse 3

while the Israelites were fearful, they did “take their stand.” They did not have the faith to advance, but they showed up and held the Philistines back.

verse 16

“Forty days” shows the persistence of the enemy, but forty is also a number related to testing. Goliath’s challenge was time of testing of the Lord’s people. See also Noah (Genesis 7:12), the Israelites (Exodus 16:35), Moses (Exodus 24:18), and Jesus (Matthew 4:2).

verse 26

David’s first words and action as king present him as a warrior.

verse 51

The Philistines had hope only while they had Goliath. The Israelites had persevered for forty days without a champion.

A person can dishonour God by open defiance (like Goliath), faithless opposition (like Eliab) or fearful inaction (like Saul).

QUESTIONS

These questions will help you focus your sermon. You might choose to mention these questions in your sermon, or you might not. Some suggested answers are provided.

1. What does the story teach about God?

God is alive, and he is able to save even without human strength.

2. What does the story teach us about ourselves?

We are too prone to fear, too little concerned for God's glory, and too inclined to trust in our own methods and resources.

3. What does the story teach about Christ?

He is a humble king that unexpectedly arrives to defeat his and our enemies. He cares about his Father's glory more than anything else.

4. What does this story tell us to do?

We should overcome Satan by putting our faith in God. We should serve God with bravery. We should meet God's enemies with God's Word.

What would you add to these questions and answers?

APPLICATIONS

Application is an important part of every sermon. Show how the Bible's teaching affects your hearers personally. It is best to apply your sermon specifically to different kinds of people. Here is an example:

The Lost

Like Eliab or Saul, you can be part of God's people, but lacking in faith. You must personally put your faith in God.

The Lazy

One reason that we are lazy in serving God is that we do not care enough about God's honor. His enemies defy and mock him, and we do not mind.

The Weak

Like the Israelites, we are weak people saved by a strong king. If you feel weak, do not despair but trust the Saviour whom God has sent.

The Wandering

There are only two sides: God's people and God's enemies. If you are drifting from faithful service to God, remember that the only alternative is to fight for God's enemies. When David killed Goliath, *all* the Philistines were defeated.

JOHN CALVIN ON PIETY

Dr. Joel Beeke

John Calvin (1509-1564), who wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as a young man, has earned the reputation of being the leading theological mind of the Protestant Reformation. His reputation as an intellectual, however, should be seen in the spiritual and pastoral context in which he wrote his theology. For Calvin, theological understanding and practical piety are inseparable.

Calvin's concept of piety (which means "godliness" or "holiness") is rooted in the knowledge of God. It is evident in people who recognize that they have been accepted in Christ, engrafted into His body, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For Calvin, the idea of piety is fundamentally biblical, with an emphasis on the heart (affection) more than the mind (intellect). Head and heart must work together, but the heart is more important. Piety is one of the major themes of Calvin's theology.

For Calvin, piety designates the right attitude of man towards God. It is an attitude that includes true knowledge, heartfelt worship, saving faith, filial fear, prayerful submission, and reverential love.

Knowing who and what God is (theology) embraces right attitudes toward Him and doing what He wants (piety). In his first catechism, Calvin writes, "True piety consists in a sincere feeling which loves God as Father as much as it fears and reverences Him as Lord, embraces His righteousness, and dreads offending Him worse than death." In the *Institutes*, Calvin is more succinct: "I call 'piety' that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces." He says, "The whole life of Christians ought to be a sort of practice of godliness."

Calvin's commentaries also reflect the importance of piety. For example, he writes on 1 Timothy 4:7-8, "You will do the thing of greatest value, if with all your zeal and ability you devote yourself to godliness ['piety'] alone. Godliness is the beginning, middle and end of Christian living. Where it is complete, there is nothing lacking."

Calvin continues, "Thus the conclusion is that we should concentrate exclusively on godliness, for when once we have attained to it, God requires no more of us." Commenting on 2 Peter 1:3, he says, "As soon as he [Peter] has

made mention of life he immediately adds godliness [“piety”] as if it were the soul of life.”

The Goal of Piety

The goal of piety, as well as the entire Christian life, is the glory of God. Glorifying God supersedes personal salvation for every truly pious person. The goal of piety—that God may be glorified in us—is that for which we were created. The pious man, according to Calvin, confesses, “We are God’s: let us, therefore live for him and die for him. We are God’s: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God’s: let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our only lawful goal.”

God redeems, adopts, and sanctifies His people that His glory might shine in them and deliver them from impious self-seeking. The pious man’s deepest concern, therefore is God Himself and the things of God—God’s Word, God’s authority, God’s gospel, God’s truth. He yearns to know more of God and to commune more with Him.

But how do we glorify God? As Calvin writes, “God has prescribed for us a way in which he will be glorified by us, namely, piety, which consists in the obedience of his Word. He that exceeds these bounds does not go about to honour God, but rather to

dishonour him.” Obedience to God’s Word means taking refuge in Christ for forgiveness of our sins, knowing Him through His Word, serving Him with a loving heart, doing good works in gratitude for His goodness, and exercising self-denial to the point of loving our enemies. This response involves total surrender to God Himself, His Word, and His will.

***“I offer thee my heart,
Lord, promptly and
sincerely.”
John Calvin***

Calvin says, “I offer thee my heart, Lord, promptly and sincerely.” That is the desire of all who are truly pious. However, that desire can only be realized through communion with Christ and participation in Him, for outside of Christ even the most religious person lives for himself. Only in Christ can the pious live as willing servants of their Lord, faithful soldiers of their Commander, and obedient children of their Father.

Joel R. Beeke is a minister of the Heritage Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA), and President of the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, where he is also the professor of Systematic Theology and Homiletics. He is the author of many books.

PREACH WITH CLARITY

Pastor Tonny Karwa

At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (Colossians 4:3-4)

Gospel clarity is Paul's priority in this text. Let me suggest three things we can do to improve clarity in our preaching.

Emphasis

Think of a sermon as a mango tree. Mango trees have several branches. However, even if some of the branches are cut off, you can still clearly identify it as a mango tree. The point is that although the branches are important, the tree can still exist without them, but the branches can't exist without the tree.

Make the message as accessible to the audience as possible.

So it is with a sermon. A sermon should have only one main theme—one main point to be emphasised

from introduction to conclusion. When we understand preaching this way, we will improve clarity and avoid the tendency to preach multiple sermons in one sermon.

Let each of the sermon parts (the introduction, sub-points, illustration, and conclusion) emphasise your main theme. Each sub-point should be brief and always lead to the main theme, which is the main point of the sermon.

Explanation

The preacher's task is to make the message as accessible to his audience as possible. This involves describing or defining difficult words and ideas in the passage. There are many ways to do this. First, we may explain what the passage does not teach. This is a good way to clear any misunderstanding from the minds of the hearers. For instance, in John 3:16 the word "world" is not the same as "earth" as we would commonly use it.

Illustrations also make things clear. I have borrowed the image of a mango tree to paint a word picture in the mind to enhance your understanding of it. Illustrations

like this help us bring clarity to the passage. The preacher must not assume that his hearers are familiar with the words and ideas in the passage.

Exhortation

Back to our illustration of the mango tree. Why do we plant an orchard of mango trees? To enjoy its fruits. We don't harvest mangos until we have planted the mango trees.

So it is with every sermon. We don't apply a sermon until we have explained its message. But then we explain how it applies in the life of the hearer. We aim to change the sinful attitudes, affections, and actions of the hearer—to cause him to repent from his sins and believe in Christ or to cause him to walk in obedience towards Christ. This is what the exhortation does. There must be a clear connection between the exhortation and the sermon. That is, the exhortation must be drawn from the sermon. The point of the sermon becomes clear with the exhortation.

***Tonny Karwa** is the pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Kisumu, and a missionary with Heart Cry Missionary Society. Before his call to full-time ministry Tonny studied Mechanical Engineering at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, and theology at Trinity Baptist College in Nairobi.*

QUOTABLE

John Chrysostom

“Goliath had the external protection of his glittering breastplate and shield; David shone from within with the grace of the Spirit. This is why a boy prevailed over a man, this is why the one wearing no armor conquered the one fully armed, this is why the shepherd’s hand crushed and destroyed the bronze weapons of war.”

Matthew Henry

“David's victory over Goliath was typical of the triumphs of the son of David over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whom he spoiled, and made a show of them openly (Colossians 2:15), and we through him are more than conquerors.

Charles Spurgeon

“While he used soft words [to answer Saul], he brought forth hard arguments; he mentioned facts, and these are always the best weapons against carnal reasoning.”

Dale Ralph Davis

“All the believer’s life and all the church’s life requires theocentric thinking. The tragedy is that were someone to hear our thoughts and words in our dangers and troubles they would never guess that we had a living God.”

THOMAS DUNSCOMBE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin

Christians have always been a people with a high view of the Scriptures. They have been shaped by a loving interaction with and submission to the Bible. In doctrine, life together, and spirituality they have been a people of the Book.



The Baptist chapel in Cote, Oxfordshire

Consider, for example, the witness of Thomas Dunscombe (1748–1811), the third minister of a Baptist congregation in a village called Cote in England in the eighteenth century. Dunscombe went to Bristol Baptist College, where he studied from 1770 till 1772, when he was asked to preach at Cote. After a year of supply preaching, Dunscombe accepted a call to the Cote pastorate and was ordained on August 4, 1773. His teachers from Bristol, Hugh Evans

and his son Caleb Evans both preached on the occasion.

Exactly twenty years later, Dunscombe was asked to deliver a memorial address for Caleb Evans after Evans' death. In this address, he made the following remarks about the Scriptures:

God and his Word ... are distinct but ought never to be divided. We should acquire a habit of intercourse with God himself by meditation and prayer; and we should seek an intimate acquaintance with his Word.

His Word is his voice; what that says to us, God says to us; to consult that, is to consult him; to be guided by that, is to be guided by him.

If we want to find out the mind and will of God, if we wish to have his counsel and direction, we must go to the Word of his grace [Acts 20:32]: let but his word "dwell in us richly in all wisdom" [cf. Colossians 3:16] and it will be "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path" [cf. Psalm 119:105].

Here Dunscombe emphasized a critical principle—to read the Scriptures is to hear the voice of

God. God and his Word are inseparable. He emphasized that the Scriptures are “the grand instrument” that God uses to bring sinners to faith in Christ and then to sanctify those who have been converted:

God, in all his processes with us, uses means; and if we were to trace effects up to their causes, we should find that his Word is the grand instrument which his Spirit uses in all his transactions with us and influence over us.

There is nothing deeply, lastingly, and profitably impresses the mind but the Word of God.

If we take the Word of God for our guide, it will edify us, it will sanctify us, and it will support and comfort us.

Dunscombe finished this reflection on the Scriptures by emphasizing that “there is a fullness, a perfection in the Holy Scriptures,” for it speaks to every aspect of the human condition.

Michael A. G. Haykin is the author of many books and articles. He is Professor of Church History and Biblical Spirituality at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kentucky, USA) and Director of the Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies.



ALWAYS SERVING FOR GOD'S GLORY

Rev. John Dyck

Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry.

(1 Samuel 17:20)

The Lord prepares us for greater things when we are faithful in little things. David was diligent in ordinary affairs of life, keeping sheep and running errands when he rose to defend the honour of the living God. He was opposed on all sides, by the Israelites, by his brother and even by king Saul.

But David's faith was strong. He was not discouraged, nor frightened. He asked, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" They were brave words for a young shepherd boy with no military training. But David understood that the "battle is the Lord's," and victory was sure.

How did David come to that conviction?

The Lord had prepared David while he was a shepherd boy. David was content to serve in work that others looked down on. When he saw a lion and a bear stealing his

sheep he went after them and killed them. Was his life in danger? It certainly was, but it was not his courage and strength that gave him victory, he recognized that it was the Lord who delivered him, and he reasoned that the Lord would "deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

Brothers in the ministry, you will receive opposition. You should expect it (John 16:33). It may also come from those who you thought were on your side in the battle. But be faithful in little things that God sets before you. No one else may notice you. David wanted God's glory, not his own.

What is God calling you to do now that no one else may notice? It will require courage and wisdom. Perhaps God is preparing you for greater battles. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

John Dyck graduated from Western Reformed Seminary in Tacoma, WA (USA) in 1989. He has pastored Edmonton Bible Presbyterian Church in Canada since 1990. John has visited East Africa many times.



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