

# Preaching the Gospel

**A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.**

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## THE TEXT

For most sermons there is a verse or there are verses at the beginning which are called "The Text."

The practice of beginning a sermon with a short passage evidently came from the fact that in the very early church preaching was usually a running commentary on a large passage of scripture. This kind of preaching is called "expository" preaching. Expository preaching is not easy. It takes a lot of study and careful work to preach really good expository lessons, and I intend writing about that at a later time.

But most sermons begin with a short passage of scripture which has within it the subject or theme of the sermon itself. John A. Broadus says, "The primary idea is that the discourse is a development of the text, an explanation, illustration, application of its teachings."

On pages 16 and 17 of *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, Broadus writes:

There are several advantages in regularly taking a text.

- (1) It constantly recalls the fact . . . that our undertaking is not to guide the people by our own wisdom, but to impart to them the teachings of God in his Word. This fact enables us to speak with confidence and leads the people to recognize the authority of what we say.
- (2) If the text is well chosen, it awakens interest at the outset.
- (3) It often aids the hearer in remembering the train of thought, having this effect wherever the sermon is really evolved from the text.
- (4) It affords opportunity of explaining and impressing some passage of Scripture.
- (5) It tends to prevent our wandering utterly away from scriptural topics and views.
- (6) Greater variety will be gained than if the mind were left altogether to the suggestion of circumstances, for then it will often fall back into its old ruts; and this variety is attained just in proportion as one restricts himself to the specific thought of each particular text.

Many times as the preacher is studying his Bible he finds a verse which suggests a sermon to him. This verse will then become "the text". At other times he will have a subject in mind which needs to be taught to the congregation. Then he will

search for a suitable text. In this case, the better Bible student he is the more likely he will be able to find what he wants.

At this point let me insert a suggestion which I will expand on in a later issue. You should have a “sermon garden”, a file in which you put sermon ideas. When you find a verse which suggests a good sermon, write the verse down and all the ideas you have at the time, then drop the paper (or type it into your computer) in your “sermon garden” and let it grow.

Usually the text should be read and explained during the introduction of the sermon. It may be necessary to explain the context. Then the connection to the sermon subject should be made clear. Sometimes the main points of the sermon are in the verse.

Not only should you make the meaning of the text clear, you should make it important. Really focus the minds of your hearers on that verse. Then your sermon has a good beginning to make an impact on your audience.

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## **FREE HELPS FOR PREACHERS**

### **A Free Bible Program for Computers**

Last year my grandson, Joel, installed the free Bible program e-Sword into my laptop. It is a fantastic program! You can get it online and download many versions of the Bible, (even the Zulu and Afrikaans translations!), many commentaries, dictionaries, and other helps. They are all very easy to access.

Yes, it is free. To open a couple of Bible versions, including the New American Standard Bible, you have to pay a fee to the Bible publishers. That is the only cost. Go to [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net)

### **A Preacher's Commentary**

Matthew Henry wrote his commentary on the entire Bible in the early 1700's. It is available on most computer Bible programs, including e-Sword. It is a preacher's commentary.

Henry does not comment verse-by-verse. Instead he takes a section of a chapter and comments on it with an outline of the whole passage. If you want to know how to preach expository sermons (sermons based on long passages), study Matthew Henry. If you want inspiration to higher things, study Matthew Henry. I think his commentary is great.

Of course he was a denominationalist, so you have to think for yourself. And since he wrote almost 300 years ago, his English is sometimes difficult to follow. But it is worth wrestling with his peculiar way of writing. Give him a chance and he will help you be a better preacher.

*Preaching the Gospel Magazine* is published about the middle of each month. It is free by e-mail, R24 per year by post in South Africa. Those who receive it are encouraged to print it for others. This file is formatted for printing on both sides of the paper, with room to punch holes on the left for inserting in a notebook.

### Model Sermons

For several years I have been receiving *Sermon of the Month* from the Westside Church of Christ, 2320 Imperial Dr., Irving, TX 75062 ([robertsmark@sbcglobal.net](mailto:robertsmark@sbcglobal.net)). This is a free cassette tape with two sermons preached by Mark Roberts. These are great sermons and profitable for everyone, but I recommend them highly to preachers and aspiring preachers as models of what a sermon can and should be. You won't be able, nor should you try, to copy Bro. Roberts's style of preaching. Each man has his own style. But you will profit from hearing how interesting and urgent a sermon can be. Notice how carefully crafted the sermons are, usually with THREE main points, yet how the sermons flow naturally. Notice how Mark keeps your interest all the way through by his vivid illustrations and applications. Try to imitate his careful yet simple way of handling scripture. You may even find yourself repeating the

scripture references five times! The Westside church will be glad to send you these sermons.

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## THE COST OF INFLUENCE AND REPUTATION

Bill Hall, Athens, Alabama

There are people in this world who are possessed with natural ability to lead and command respect of others. Call it charm, charisma, magnetism, or whatever, such people wield a powerful influence on those who look up to them as the embodiment of all they would like to become themselves.

Peter apparently possessed such qualities among the apostles; and there were David, Deborah, Nehemiah, and others. We have known such people in our day and have been influenced by them. Each reader can probably think of some "hero" of faith that he or she has looked up to through the years.

The opportunities for good that such people possess are tremendous; **but so are the responsibilities.** It is true that sin is sin, whoever commits it; that sin will separate one from God just as quickly as it will another. But the adverse consequences of one's sins increase dramatically with the increase of the influence and reputation he enjoys among others. The confidence of others is a trust that must be carefully protected. Once that trust is in place, the person to whom it is committed has responsibilities that others of more normal influence and reputation do not have; and the more people involved in the trust, the greater the responsibility. Those of reputation must be prepared for greater public scandal when they sin. Nathan told David that because of his adultery he had "*given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme*" (2 Samuel 12:14). Others had committed adultery in Israel, and their adultery had gone unnoticed by the enemies of God. But this was David! It was inevitable that the sin of this one man of influence and reputation would result in greater scandal than the sins of a multitude of people of lesser influence and reputation. Those of reputation must be prepared for sterner rebuke when they sin than those of lesser reputation. Paul speaks of withstanding Peter "*to his face*" when Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-14). Paul's rebuke of Peter was "*before them all.*" Peter was hardly the first Jewish Christian to refuse to eat with Gentile Christians, but Paul obviously recognized the seriousness of

Peter's actions because of his greater reputation and influence. Others were following his lead on this occasion, including Barnabas. Peter could not enjoy the luxury of a private meeting with Paul; Peter had to face the sting of immediate and open rebuke. Peter had betrayed a trust. Nothing less than open rebuke could counteract the harm that was resulting. Sterner rebuke is simply a cost—an inevitable cost—of influence and reputation.

Those of reputation must live more cautiously than others if they would maintain their influence and good name. Every Christian is warned not to place a stumbling block in his brother's way (Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9), but one who is known and admired by thousands of brethren in many places obviously will have to be more cautious than one who is known and admired by only a few brethren locally. Paul would have to give up far more to be "*all things to all men*" than would some Christian who had never been outside his home community. That's just the cost of influence and reputation. If one is not willing to pay that cost—if he is determined to be unbending in his conduct "no matter what others might think"—he needs to come to a greater appreciation of the value of a good name (Proverbs 22:1).

Those of reputation must be especially careful to build upon Jesus Christ, the true foundation, rather than upon themselves. The words, "*For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,*" must become their motto (2 Corinthians 4:5). Those who place their loyalty in men of name and reputation are in error. Their faith is not what it ought to be. But those who deliberately use charisma and flattery to attract a following are also in error (1 Thessalonians 2:1-13). The more natural charisma one is blessed (?) with, the more cautious he must be.

When "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, a star Chicago White Sox outfielder, was involved in the "Blackstocking" scandal of the 1920s and was on his way to trial, a small boy, hurt, disappointed, with tears in his eyes, was heard to cry, "Say it ain't so, Joe, say it ain't so." Each reader is likely somebody's hero. Other readers are men and women of widespread influence. Let each one, when he is tempted, and **before he yields**, look ahead to the tears, and hurt and disillusionment that he is about to bring to those who look up to him; let him hear their potential cries of "Say it ain't so, Joe"; and, motivated by their confidence and his own love for the Lord, let him "*resist the devil.*" For, if he betrays the trust that has been committed to him, he can be saved eternally through repentance and forgiveness—For this we are so grateful!—but he likely will never recover the confidence he has lost. Right or wrong, that's reality. It is the cost—the inevitable cost—of influence and reputation.

--*Two Men*, pages 136-138.

### **TO BE PUT ON THE EMAIL LIST**

Anyone may receive *Preaching the Gospel Magazine* by email. Simply request it from: [bible@netactive.co.za](mailto:bible@netactive.co.za). (You will then also receive my monthly report. If you want ONLY the magazine, say so and I will put you in another list.) Back copies available on request.

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PKW