

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION: THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

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The priority of preaching is underscored throughout the New Testament. Citing Isa. 61:1-2, Jesus described His own ministry of proclamation in His hometown synagogue: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:18-19, NASB). Jesus went throughout the country preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17, 23; 11:1; Luke 4:43-44), and instructed His disciples to do the same (Matt. 10:7-20).

The first public work of the church was Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). The office of deacons was established soon afterward so that the apostles could focus on a ministry of prayer and preaching (Acts 6:4). The preaching of the gospel flourished (Acts 6:7) through the consistent preaching of the *kerygma* (the gospel message of salvation through the cross of Christ) by early church leaders such as Peter, James, Stephen, and Philip (Acts 3:12-26; 4:8-20; 5:42; 6:8-7:60; 8:4-5, 35; 10:34-38; and 11:19-21).

Clearly, the Apostle Paul had a settled conviction about the centrality of preaching. He described preaching as the primary focus of his ministry (1 Cor. 1:17, 1 Tim. 2:7). In his missionary journeys, Paul and his team proclaimed the gospel throughout the Gentile world (Acts 13:43-49; 17:1-4, 10-13, 22-34; 20:18-21). Paul was able to preach without hindrance even during his Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:31).

Paul practiced gospel-focused kerygmatic preaching. He was told the Corinthian church that “I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2, HCSB). Although the Jews sought confirmation of the message by miraculous signs and Gentiles sought wisdom through philosophy, Paul asserted that “we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23-24, NASB). Paul recognized the supreme irony (even describing it as “foolishness”) of the earthen vessel of human preachers proclaiming the transcendent treasure of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:18-21, 2 Cor. 4:7), but nonetheless preaching was a key component of God's design for redemption. Paul expressed the crucial role of preaching in these words to the Roman church:

For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How welcome are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things! (Rom. 10:13-15, HCSB).

The New Testament model for proclamation is not only kerygmatic preaching, but it is expositing the Word of God. In Jesus' parable of the sower and the seeds, the seed being

sown is the Word of God (Mark 4:14). Paul instructed the young minister Timothy to “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2-5), and to read and exposit Scripture in teaching sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:11-16).

The theme of this issue of the *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* is “The Proclamation of the Gospel.” Preaching has always played a crucial role in the Christian church. The centrality of preaching was a hallmark of the Protestant Reformation, and has been characteristic in the Baptist tradition. However, some contemporary models of doing church seem to place a lower value on the role of preaching in the proclamation of the gospel. We hope in some small way to help refocus the attention of the church on the priority of preaching.

In an attempt to be consistent with the New Testament model, we will advocate *kerygmatic* preaching (gospel preaching focused on the cross of Christ) and *expository* preaching (preaching that is based upon and derived directly from Scripture). In the first section, we offer articles about different aspects of the art of preaching. In the second section, we are presenting a half dozen sermons as exemplars of the kind of kerygmatic and expository preaching that follows the New Testament pattern of proclamation.

The first section begins with four articles addressing the overall character of preaching. Dr. Dennis Phelps authors the first article, on “The Biblical Basis for Christian Preaching.” Dr. Phelps has served as an evangelist, a pastor of several churches, and as a faculty member of Bethel Theological Seminary. He currently serves as Professor of Preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, occupying the J. D. Grey Chair of Preaching. Dr. David Allen contributes an article entitled “Expository Preaching and the Mission of the Church.” This article originated at a presentation Dr. Allen made at the February 2005 Baptist Center for Theology and Ministry Conference, focused on the theme “The Mission of Today’s Church.” Dr. Allen has long been a passionate advocate of expository preaching. Dr. Allen serves as Professor of Preaching, occupying the George W. Truett Chair of Ministry, as Director of the Southwestern Center for Expository Preaching, and as Dean of the School of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Tony Merida’s article, “Preaching the Forest and the Trees: Integrating Biblical Theology and Expository Preaching” also makes the case for utilizing expository preaching to communicate sound doctrine. Dr. Merida serves as Pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, MS and Assistant Professor of Preaching (ministry-based) at NOBTS, where he formerly served as Dean of the Chapel. Dr. Jake Roudkovski, Assistant Professor of Evangelism, occupying the Max and Bonnie Thornhill Chair of Evangelism, and Director of Supervised Ministry at NOBTS, contributes a thoughtful article on “The Holy Spirit in Preaching.”

The next four articles focus on various important aspects of the proclamation of the gospel. Dr. Michael Miller, Pastor of First Baptist Church of Kenner, LA and an adjunct teacher at NOBTS, contributes an article on “Apologizing to Postmoderns: Developing an Effective Apologetic for Contemporary Gospel Preaching.” The article “Humor in Preaching: A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Pulpit” is co-authored by Dr. Jerry Barlow and Dr. Bradley Rushing, based on a paper they presented to the 2006 annual meeting of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. Dr. Rushing serves as Pastor of First Baptist Church in Cleveland, MS, and Dr. Barlow serves as Professor of Preaching and Pastoral

Work and Dean of Graduate Studies at NOBTS. Dr. Argile Smith and Dr. Eddie Campbell contribute another jointly authored article, “Rethinking the Value of Metaphors in Listener Sensitive Homiletics.” Dr. Smith has served as pastor of several churches in Louisiana and Mississippi, in the administration of William Carey University, and as Professor of Preaching at NOBTS. He currently serves as Pastor of First Baptist Church of Biloxi, MS. Dr. Campbell, whose Ph.D. is in Preaching, serves as Associate Professor of English in Leavell College. In the last article in this section, Dr. Mark Tolbert addresses the biblical basis for issuing an invitation in “The Integrity of the Invitation.” Dr. Tolbert speaks out of over 30 years of experience as a pastor, church staff member, and collegiate minister in Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama. He serves as Associate Professor of Evangelism and Pastoral Ministry and as Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at NOBTS.

It seemed inappropriate, however, to offer an issue of the *Journal* on gospel proclamation without offering some actual sermons which are exemplars of good preaching. All of these sermons are by nationally known Baptist preachers who exemplify excellence in preaching. The first sermon, by Dr. Jerry Vines, is an exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 regarding the resurrection. This message was part of Dr. Vines’ Stanfield Lectures on Preaching delivered on the NOBTS campus in September 1997. Dr. Vines is a former President of the SBC who is best known for his long pastorate at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, FL. Dr. Nelson Price contributes an exposition of Ephesians 1:4-6 entitled “What Happens to Persons Who Never Hear the Name of Jesus Christ?” Dr. Price served as pastor of Oak Park Baptist Church in New Orleans, but is most associated with his long pastorate at Roswell Street Baptist Church in Marietta, GA. He played a key role in the creation of the Nelson Price Drug Rehabilitation Center in association with the Georgia Baptist Convention, as well as the Nelson Price Center for Urban Missions and the Nelson Price Chair of Leadership at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Stephen Rummage has taught preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Formerly Preaching Pastor at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC, he recently became Senior Pastor of Bull Shoals Baptist Church in Brandon, FL. His sermon addresses the Great Commission in Matt. 28:18-20. Rev. Fred Luter, Pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, is always one of the campus favorite preachers in chapel at NOBTS. The Baptist Center hopes that someday he will be elected President of the SBC. (And there is no time better than when the SBC meets in New Orleans in 2012.) His sermon, “God’s Bailout Plan,” is based on John 3:16.

The last three sermons are by men who are beloved preachers on the NOBTS campus, each of whom has served as Dean of the Chapel and a Preaching professor at NOBTS. Dr. Jim Shaddix, currently pastor of Riverside Baptist Church in Denver, CO, contributes a sermon on Jesus’ call for us to take His yoke upon us (Matt. 11:28-30). Dr. David Platt, Pastor of Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, AL, shares with us the sermon based on Acts 3:1-10 that he preached at the 2009 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Louisville, KY. Tony Merida, Pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, MS, addresses the issue "Paul vs. Athens: Engaging the Culture with the Gospel" (Acts 17:16-34).

We hope that this issue will encourage our pastors and churches toward faithful kerygmatic, expository preaching of the Word of God!

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