

Applying Ancient Truth When Preaching to a Contemporary Audience

Sam Horn, Ph.D.
Northland Baptist Bible College

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

Qoheleth, Ecclesiastes 12:9-11

Someone once asked William Barclay how he had become such a prolific writer. “The key,” he said, “is learning how to apply the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair.” What he observed about writing is equally true about preaching. Each week the pastor stands before people who have come before him with one compelling question – is there any word from the Lord for me today?

*To the men and women who keep a sacred appointment on Sunday morning. Bewildered by seductive voices, nursing wounds life has inflicted upon them, anxious about matters that do not matter – yet they come to listen for a clear word from God that speaks to their condition. (Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, dedication)*

Although the answer to that question may seem obvious to preachers, it is not always so obvious to those who hear us week by week. Often the hearer sits through thirty-five minutes of preaching and leaves empty and unchanged. Sometimes the emptiness is due to his unwillingness to respond to the claims made by God through the message. However, many times his lack of response is due to a failure in the sermon. The preacher has prepared a fine homiletical meal. However, because he did not apply the meal in a relevant and interesting manner, the parishioner leaves as empty and as hungry as he entered.

*In a word, if we as preachers are not speaking to the needs of the contemporary world, it is a fair guess that we have not really heart the gospel of the early church. On the one hand, however much concern we may have about the contemporary world, that concern is not Christian except as it stems from the conviction that an event occurred in the first century in light of which alone the meaning of the contemporary scene can be understood and in the power of which alone the community we seek can be realized. Only authentically biblical preaching can be really relevant; only vitally relevant preaching can be biblical. (John Knox, *The Integrity of Preaching*)*

III. A Proposed Solution – A Return to Center

- A. Reestablish the foundational Role of Proper Hermeneutics

- B. Recommit to using the Rhetorical Process in Homiletics
 - 1. Explain the Truth _____
 - 2. Defend the Truth _____
 - 3. Apply the Truth _____
 - 4. Illustrate the Truth _____

IV. A Proposed Method – Preach exegetical truth for real life living

- A. Develop a proper Mindset for Effective Application

- B. Develop a Proper Model for Effective Application
 - 1. The Starting Point
 - 2. The Goal
 - 3. The Result

- C. Develop a Proper Methodology for Effective Application