



PREACHING SKILLS

Dr. Ram Raj David

Acknowledgements

I want to thank God for providing this opportunity. In completing this Book, I also want to acknowledge who teach me and encourage me. I want to acknowledge Pastor Rupert Bently Taylor, Pastor Ean Luis, Pastor David Seral and Pastor Philip Hair.



Contents

Preface	04
Introduction	05
1. Foundation for Good Preaching	06
2. Defining the Task	13
3. Making Sense of the Passage	17
4. Discipline of the context	26
5. Preparation of the sermon	35
6. Application of the sermon	43
7. Delivery of the sermon	49
Bibliography	53



Preface

After ten years of teaching homiletics, I am convinced of the need of a textbook which applies the principles of homiletics to the construction of discourses in such a manner that the student may learn from the outset how to prepare messages directly from the Bible. I am also impressed with the need in a work of this kind of an adequate number of examples which clearly illustrate the step by step processes in building sermons. I hope that in the writing of this manual I have been able in some measure to meet these needs and that the book may prove of value to students and preachers and to all who desire to learn how to prepare bible messages.

Most important factor in the preparation of sermons is the preparation of the preacher's own heart. No amount of knowledge or of learning or of natural endowments can take the place of a fervent, humble, devoted heart which longs for more and more of Christ. Only the man who walks with God and who lives a holy life can inspire others to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Such a man will spend much time in secret with Jesus, holding daily, uninterrupted, unhurried communion with Him in His word.

The preacher must also be a man of prayer who has learned the art of holy warfare upon his knees. Like Daniel, he must have the habit of prayer and find the time, nay, take the time, to pray daily and regularly in his closet. His sermons then will not be the product of mere intellectual effort but will be heaven-sent messages- sent to him in answer to prayer. E.M. Bounds, the mighty man of prayer, said in truth, "prayer puts the preacher's sermon into the preacher's heart; prayer puts the preacher's heart into the preacher's sermon."

The Bible teaches us that you cannot be a disciple of Jesus Christ if you do not have a regular intake of the word of God. On one occasion Jesus said to his followers, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32 KJV). As you look back through the history of the Christian Church, you find that the common denominator of every great man and woman of God is that they knew the Scriptures and spent consistent, regular time with the Lord in his word. Man who is to preach the message of the book must also be a man of the book. He must study the scriptures and must live in the book. The word of God must become his meat and drink.

Each section in this thesis is presented in such a way that any believer in Christ can follow the steps suggested and be able on his own to get something out of his study of the scriptures. I trust that your reading, study, and use of this thesis will make you into a biblically literate disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ- useful as a worker in your local church in reaching the lost with the Gospel and training believers in discipleship.

The purpose of this thesis is to teach you how to dig out the riches of the Word of God for yourself and preach word of God correctly. It will require some serious thinking, but an effort has been made to keep the procedures simple.

I trust that this thesis will become a well- worn and used reference tool which will guide you in a lifetime of preaching and in your teaching others to do the same.

Introduction

Who preach God's Word; face a higher court than the legal bar. James said, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment" (James 3:1)

No profession has as high a liability potential as that of the preacher of God's Word. God will judge every preacher on the truthfulness and accuracy of his preaching. Any failure as a spokesman for God brings not only shame (2 Tim.2:15) but judgment. The Holy Spirit has written that all who pastor God's flock must "give an account" (Heb.13:17). There will be a day of reckoning for the preacher. The standard is significantly higher for the preacher.

What is it that equips a man to be qualified for preaching responsibility? This is the preacher's only weapon-the most powerful, two-edged sword of the Word, which alone cuts to the depths of the soul and spirit.

Assuming God has designed a preacher with the mental skill, the personal discipline with diligence, and the gift of the Spirit for preaching, success still calls for a profound knowledge and faithful proclamation of the Word. The preacher must, become like Ezra, who had "set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances....." (Ezra 7:10) or like Apollos, who was "mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).

Expository preaching –expressing exactly the will of the glorious Sovereign- allows God to speak, not man.

Expository preaching - retaining the thoughts of the Spirit-brings the preacher into direct and continual contact with the mind of the Holy Spirit who authored Scripture.

Expository preaching frees the preacher to proclaim all the revelation of God, producing a ministry of wholeness and integrity.

Expository preaching promotes biblical literacy, yielding rich knowledge of redemptive truths.

Expository preaching carries ultimate divine authority, rendering the very voice of God.

Expository preaching transforms the preacher, leading to transformed congregations.

Like the subject of the preacher's commission, the scope is also stated in 2 Tim. 4:2 "Be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." The preacher is always ready to preach, whether or not it is convenient to do so. He is eager to expose sin and encourage righteous behaviour. He does it with patience and not with irritation, bitterness, or despair. His preaching is always sound doctrine that shows people God's true standard.

For those of you who want to preach the Word accurately and powerfully because you understand the liability of doing anything less, for those of you who want to face the judge on the day of reckoning and experience the Lord's pleasure with your effort, for those of you who are eager to let God speak His Word through you as directly, confrontively, and powerfully as He gave it, and for those of you who want to see people transformed radically and living godly lives, there is only expository preaching.

If you desire to be one of those shepherds after God's own heart, who will feed His sheep on divine knowledge of spiritual understanding through biblical exposition, this thesis is a must for you.

Chapter-1

FOUNDATIONS FOR GOOD PREACHING

Introduction: The Need

"It is wonderful to see what a spell he casts over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible. I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed sob....He speaks from a heart all aglow with love, and pours out a torrent of eloquence which is almost irresistible. Many, very many persons in Northampton date the beginning of new thoughts, new desires, new purposes, and a new life from the day on which they heard him preach of Christ and this salvation."

(1740 Sarah Edwards describes George Whitefield)

"Ultimately he announced his text and began his sermon in the same quiet voice. Then a curious thing happened. For the next 40 minutes I became completely unconscious of everything except the word that this man was speaking - not his words mark you, but something behind them and in them and through them. I didn't realise it then, but I had been in the presence of the mystery of preaching, when a man is lost in the message he proclaims."

(1944 Tom Allan describes Dr M Lloyd-Jones)

These two quotations, although two hundred years apart express the same experience of powerful preaching. There is a way to preach that changes people's lives. Week by week millions gather to worship the living God: in almost all of these gatherings someone will stand up probably with a Bible in their hand and begin to speak. The content and quality of what they say will under God, mightily effect the spiritual health and salvation of those who listen. "Man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4) said Jesus quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. Yet there is a grievous tragedy- many believers are half starved of the word of God by those who preach. Come with me to two possible scenes- in the first the preacher is full of life and vitality, very amusing, easy to listen to, very topical but apart from reading a passage at the beginning, what he says has no particular connection with the Bible. Indeed you don't need to bring your Bible to follow what is said. Now imagine another scene: a preacher who opens his Bible and with much reference to the original language, Greek grammar, first century culture and nuances of words, he speaks at length but with such dullness and so unapplied that it is hard to stay awake. The first is like a diet of ice cream, the second like eating uncooked potatoes.

John Stott: *'True Christian preaching (by which I mean biblical or expository preaching) is extremely rare in today's church. Thoughtful young people in many countries are asking for it but cannot find it.'*

Jay Adams writes, *'Men and women (and especially young people) are being turned away from Christ and His church by dull, unarresting, unedifying and aimless preaching.'*

Michael Green writes, *"The standard of preaching in the modern world is deplorable. There are few great preachers. Many clergy do not believe in it any more as a powerful way in which to proclaim the gospel and change the life. This is the age of the sermonette: and sermonettes make Christianettes."*

Some give up on preaching altogether: in an age of TV, film, entertainment and mass media who wants to listen to sermons? It is no easy task to proclaim God's word. It is a solemn and wonderful responsibility. My mind goes to 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. If we are to be preachers we need to understand what we are about. We hope to be practical and talk about preparation and delivery: but we can't start there. Good sermons are not just clever communication: underlying what we do must be convictions that impel us.

1. A Conviction about the Bible: God's Truth

Expository preaching is explaining what the Bible says and applying into people's lives. It flows out of conviction that although the Bible is an ancient book – 66 books, 40 authors, 3 languages, written over 1600 years- it is God's revelation for today, for people of every place and race.

a] The Bible has a unique authority and relevance.

- **we have found it to be like that.** The Bible does have power: does change people, does comfort and challenge and satisfy and humbles us. We cannot teach from the Bible if we have not tasted its power in our own lives. Martin Luther, the great German reformer wrote: *"The Bible is alive it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me."* In the words of Hebrews 4:12 *"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart"*. Ephesians 6:17 *"The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God."*

- **claims a unique value for itself:** authority and relevance. 2 Timothy 3:15-17 (*"All Scripture is God breathed"*). Note the claim of one divine author behind all the human authors without violating their personalities, but preserving them from error. Or again see 2 Peter 1:20-21 (*"Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*)

- **Jesus teaches us it is so.** He claimed the Old Testament to be the words of God which cannot be broken (John 10:35): claimed His words would never pass away (Matthew 24:35), and promised to His disciples that the Holy Spirit would remind them of everything he had said (John 14:26). We may not start our Christian life with much understanding of the authority of the Bible but as we submit to Christ's authority He leaves us with no alternative if we are to be His followers. Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is to *"make disciples"* (not just converts) *"teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you"*. Where do we find these commands of Jesus? In the

Scriptures. We have a God who speaks and has caused it to be recorded. Now there are many other arguments to advance the authority of the Bible – other verses, manuscript evidence, archaeological evidence – but we won't there's something more we need to be convinced about.

b) The Bible is relevant today

It is intended for us. A book can be full and very authoritative in its field without being relevant. The Bible is both God's truth and relevant. Romans 15:4 *"Everything that was written in the past was written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scripture we might have hope"*. See 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 *"He says this for us doesn't he? Yes this was written for us"* and 1 Corinthians 10:11 *"Written down as warnings for us"*. Who is it for? Useful for the unbeliever to bring him to faith: see 2 Timothy 3:15 *"able to make you wise for salvation."* Also useful for the believer: see 2 Timothy 3:16 *"Useful ... so that the man for God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* All humanity comes into those two categories. All need it and I need as a preacher to be convinced of that. Sometimes a passage does not seem useful, relevant or important. I have to approach it in faith believing that it is and proving that it is. If you do not have a high view for the Bible as authoritative, that it is from God and relevant for human beings you will not bother to preach. David Bast writes, *"There can be no high view of preaching without a correspondingly high view of Scripture."*¹ Bishop Jewel (1522-71) wrote: *"The whole Word of God is pure and holy. No word, no letter, no syllable, no point nor tittle thereof but is written and preserved for thy sake"*²

2. A Conviction about Preaching : God's Method

This is also essential. You could argue that if the Bible is authoritative and relevant just give people the Bible: that should be enough. It is of course true God can merely use the written word to touch people's lives. But usually, overwhelmingly and deliberately He uses preaching (Romans 10:14 *"And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"*) James Boice writes, *"The most important thing happening in the world at any given time is the preaching of the gospel."* God gave the Law at Sinai but time and again He sent prophets primarily to preach and apply and warn and implore and remind the people of what God had said and what He would do. We come into the New Testament and immediately we find John the Baptist preaching (Mark 1:4): and we find Jesus preaching – Mark 1:38 *"Let us go somewhere else so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come."* When the New Testament church burst into life it was as men preached. But this was not just a pulpit activity. The word 'preaching' is used of ordinary Christians going out and proclaiming the gospel. For example, we read in Acts 8:2 & 4 that there was great persecution after Stephen was killed *"And all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.... Those who had been*

scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and preached the Christ there". The New Testament pattern was explosive growth through preaching. Paul teaches us this in 1 Corinthians 1:12-24 At the end of his life, the end of apostolic age he wrote in his chains to Timothy of his great concern that – Timothy 3:14 (*"as for you continue in what you have learned"*) and 4:1-3 (*"Preach the Word..."*). Preaching is God's way of bringing his truth into the world. The idea of exposing people to what God has said and explaining it is not some new invention. In every local church established in the New Testament time elders were appointed. The one gift required of an elder or overseer was that he was *"able to teach"* (1 Timothy 3:2) Although they oversaw the general life of the church their most important function was to preach and teach : see 1 Timothy 5:17.³ But it is worth defining our language more clearly. By

¹ Peter Adam, *Speaking God's Word* (Inter Varsity Press, 1996), p. 119.

² Ibid., p. 32

³The main Greek words used in the New Testament for this were κηρύσσω/κηρυγμα (kerusso/kerygma)= to proclaim as herald (60 times): ευαγγελίζομαι (euangelizomai) = to bring good news (50 times): διδάσκω/διδαχή (didasko/didacch)= to teach, repeatedly to extend the hand for acceptance (95 times). The New Testament does not in fact make the commonly held distinction between preaching and teaching. The use of terms is more fluid, *'Although the distinction is commonly drawn between missionary proclamation and Christian teaching in practice the two were closely intertwined... and distinction here between preaching and teaching would seem to be inadmissible'* (Dictionary of New Testament Theology). So διδάσκω (teaching) can be used of proclamation to unbelievers (e.g. Acts 13:12) as well as instruction to Christians. Equally the gospel is not just message to be preached to the outsiders, but the very truth upon which Christians need to go on feeding and which is set out clearly in letters sent to churches. preaching we generally mean a public presentation of truth in the assembled congregation – it is a pulpit word. It is not actually a Biblical idea to restrict preaching in that way – for example in Acts 8:4 (as above) they *"preached the word wherever they went."* In fact the New Testament uses 33 verbs to describe a great variety of and forms of ministry of the Word, as Peter Adam has pointed out.⁴ These include words of information (teach, instruct), of declaration (preach, proclaim), of persuasion (explain, prove, convince), of conversation (say, speak, answer). Jesus teach great crowds, but also debated with small groups, taught the circle of His close disciples, and taught individually e.g. Nicodemus. Paul says of his ministry in Ephesus *"I have taught you publicly and from house to house"* (Acts 20:20). I don't say this to down grade public teaching – it has always been fundamental to the life of God's people whether in days of Moses, Ezra, Christ and the apostles or today. *"It is the central part of our ministry of the Word"*⁵ But it is not the only ministry of the Word – there are others such as training, private exhortation, counseling, writing, Christian literature and evangelistic conversation. Adam writes, *"Those of us who are committed to preaching need to be committed to a wider ministry of the Word as well ... it is important to grasp this point clearly, or we*

*shall try to make preaching carry a load which it cannot bear; that is, the burden of doing all that the Bible expects of every form of ministry of the Word ... our ministry may be pulpit centred, but it should not be pulpit restricted for such a ministry of the Word will suffer severe limitations”*⁶ Whether in public or private the Word desperately needs preaching.

Let me close this section with some example where people had the Word but needed a preacher.

See Nehemiah 8:8 (and verses 1, 3, 8-7) The Law needed to be not only read, but *“made clear (= “translated”), giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.”*

See Luke 24:25-27,32 : Why did Jesus conceal Himself? So he could preach to them and open their minds to what the Bible meant *“beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself”*.

See Acts 8:30-35 : The Ethiopian eunuch had the Bible, but he needed the preacher.

On Sunday 6th January 1850 there was a snowstorm in the town of Colchester, north east of London. A young man of about 16, forced by the snow to abandon a longer journey, went into a little chapel with only 12-15 people there. The Minister was not able to get there because of the weather. Eventually a thin looking, not educated man stood up to preach – his text was *“Look unto to me and be saved all the ends of the earth,”* After 10 minutes he more or less ran out of things to say – then he spotted the visitor at the back *“Young man, you look very miserable. Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing ‘to do but to look and live.”* The heart of that young man was melted. His name: Charles Spurgeon – the greatest English preacher of the last century. He wrote afterwards – *“my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books but for the preached Word – and that too addressed to me by a poor, uneducated man, a man who had never received my training for the ministry and probably will never be heard of in this life... The Books were good but the man was better. The revealed word awakened me, but it was the preached word that saved me”*⁷ This has been the experience of many. God is still committed to using preaching. Even in a TV age, even when people don’t want to listen : preaching saves.

⁴*Ibid.*, p 75 ⁵*Ibid.*, p 72 ⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 59 & 75

⁷Charles Spurgeon, *Autobiography* (Banner of Truth), volume 1, p. 86.

3. A Conviction about the Holy Spirit : God’s Power

On one hand we have millions in spiritual darkness and ignorance, objects of God’s wrath; or may be they are Christians but their hearts have lost their first zeal, dulled by love of this world – on the other hand we have the living God’s divine revelation written and recorded. How are we to bring the one to the other? How are we to bring conviction, life, light, salvation to needy people? The

fundamental answer is we don't; only God can. The preacher is only a channel, an instrument which a sovereign God chooses to use. When I switch on a light it is not that I have a wonderful switch or amazing cable – but it's the power source to which they are connected that makes the difference. If we are not persuaded about the work of the Spirit in the process of preaching we might as well to home.

(1) He enables the speaker

The supreme pattern is the Lord Jesus. Even He spoke as one dependent on another: John 12:49-50 *'I did not speak of my own accord but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say'*. When He came to speak at the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4) he read from Isaiah 61:1 *'The Spirit of the sovereign Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor'*. He was anointed to preach by the Spirit: how much more we need to be. The whole story of Acts is not just about bold men but about men who were made bold by the Holy Spirit. When threatened the church prayed and we read in Acts 4:31 *'After they prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly'*. Again of Stephen we read Acts 6:9 *"These men began to argue with Stephen but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke"*. Paul when he came to Corinth was an experienced and greatly used preacher, yet his only confidence was in power of God's Spirit upon him: see 1 Corinthians 2:3-4,13. John Piper write *"How utterly dependent we are on the Holy Spirit in the work of preaching! All genuine preaching is rooted in a feeling of desperation."*

(2) He convicts the hearer

The Holy Spirit does not only inspire the Word and anoint the preacher. He also must open the heart of the hearer. The same passage goes on – 1 Corinthians 2:14 (read) The Lord Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, John 16:8, *"He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement."* Peter's experience in Cornelius' house was this, Acts 11:44, *"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message."* If it were not so, no one would ever respond. See again 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 – It is *"only God who makes things grow."* This should keep us humble. It is only God who changes lives. Charles Spurgeon: *'The gospel is preached in the ears of all; it only comes with power to some. The power that is in the gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converter of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher's learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of men. We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were a mysterious power going with it – the Holy Ghost changing the will of man. Oh sirs! We might as well preach to the stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Ghost be with the word, to give it power to convert the soul'*⁸

⁸Peter Adam, *Op. Cit.*, p. 160.

[John Piper has a check list which he always runs through before preaching: he calls it APTAT, it helps him to trust in the Holy Spirit alone:

Admit utter helplessness

Pray for help, power, humility, freedom, love

Trust in a specific promise, a verse

Act in confidence God will honour His Word

Thank God for His help]

God's truth – God's method – God's power. If we don't start with those convictions with God at the centre we dare not start at all.



Chapter-2

DEFINING THE TASK

What are we doing when we preach? What are we trying to achieve?

Statement from Second Helvetic Confession 1566 says:

“the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God”

When we preach the word of God, then God chooses to speak through that preaching to his people. No wonder Martyn Lloyd-Jones said:

“The work of preaching is the highest, and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.”

So if we are to preach the Word of God – must preach what God has given us.

Our task is to make clear what is there in the Bible

1. Displaying what is there

This is what some writers have said about preaching:

“The task of the minister of the Word is to pass on correctly to the church here and now the Word which God spoke to a church in another place and another time, in another language and in connection with other circumstance” Holwarda

“In reading the Epistles which St. Paul wrote to this or that place, we must always think that God intended them to serve not only for one time or for one certain peoples, but for ever and the whole church in general.” John Calvin

“Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, the through him to his hearers” Haddon-Robinson

See how that is true even in the Bible itself: Nehemiah 8:5-8 Acts 17:2-3

Expository preaching is the only legitimate kind of preaching

- It alone is faithful to the Bible, and faithful to God.

a) A release

i) I don't have to decide what to say!

2 Tim 3:16 tells us ALL scripture ... useful

It is always relevant.

God will bring the challenges as well as the comforts.

I won't avoid difficult passage or concentrate on ones I like

ii) My preaching will have authority, because God's authority.

Look at the words used to describe preaching in the New Testament especially “kerusso” – proclaim on behalf of King – authority is his!

iii) I am protected against heresy, not because I always get to right,

But my congregation can CHECK what I say!

Acts 17:11

I must not impose my ideas on the passage

b) A discipline

The Bible reminds us there are right and wrong ways of using Word of God

2 Tim 2:15 - those who correctly handle the word of truth

2 Cor 4:1-2 - do not use deception

Jer 8:8-9 - the lying pens of the scribes

There is only ONE meaning for each passage in the Bible.

That is the author’s intended meaning and since it is inspired by the Holy Spirit it is God’s intended meaning.

There are some dangers to be avoided:

First danger is that we put our own personal interpretation on scripture.

We make it say what we think it ought to say, or would like it to say not what it actually does say.

Second danger is that we latch onto individual words, and when we see them in the passage, we simply preach the same sermon we have preached before: Charles Spurgeon criticized preachers of his day by saying:

“Thousand thousand were their texts and all their sermons one.”

Third danger is that is that we interpret it in the light of our expectations but don’t listen to what the Bible actually says. We have a FRAMEWORK – hopefully Biblical – which is based on all our previous understanding of passages of the Bible. That is not wrong – important. But we must not let our framework interpret the text.

For example, if a passage uses word “Grace” and I assume the word is used in same way everywhere in the Bible, I am letting my framework interpret the text. Rather, text must challenge and change/expand my framework.

Why is this here. What does this mean HERE?

Why does he say THAT? What are the surprises?

(eg. Colossians 1:29.. why is it “with all HIS energy!”)

(eg. Mark 8:22-26 .. why doesn’t the healing work first time?)

The text – the passage – must determine what we preach.

There is one meaning – and it IS possible to work out what that meaning is!

That is our task. But it is hard work!

So what is our task as preachers of the word?

2. Bridging two worlds

Preacher acts as a bridge between the world of the text and the world of the congregation.

Without the preacher message from text does not cross over to the 20th century hearer. So must be anchored in both places.

a) The World of the text

Already established that there is ONE meaning and that meaning is located in a specific situation in history. We can only understand the meaning when we have understood what it meant of first hearers. So to understand Paul's letter to Corinthians we must "travel back to Corinth" and understand, as far as possible, situation Paul addressed so we can understand WHAT God's actual message is. THEN, and only then, can we travel to Delhi to understand HOW that message applies to us. Our task is to understand the meaning of the text in its original situation then apply THAT meaning (ONLY THAT MEANING) to our situation today.

Two things we need to discover from the text in that part of our work.

1. What is the passage saying? MEANING
2. What is the passage doing? PURPOSE

Then we are in a position to move to

b) The world of today

And now our task is to apply the meaning and purpose of the text to our hearers today

The Bible was written to them for us! John 20:30-31

The Bible is written a purpose. 2 Tim 3:16-17

But it is important to remember that the BIBLE IS relevant; we don't MAKE it relevant – we SHOW that it is relevant by applying at APPROPRIATELY to our situation

2000/3000/4000 year is a long time. So when we preach there are some things that remain unchanged.

We stand firm on

i) Unchanging realities

It is the same gracious and merciful God who speaks, and speaks through his word – the Bible. He is, and always has been, the only true God, creator and sustainer.

We are the same sinful human beings. Technical progress doesn't alter sinfulness. We still rebel against God. Still prefer idols.

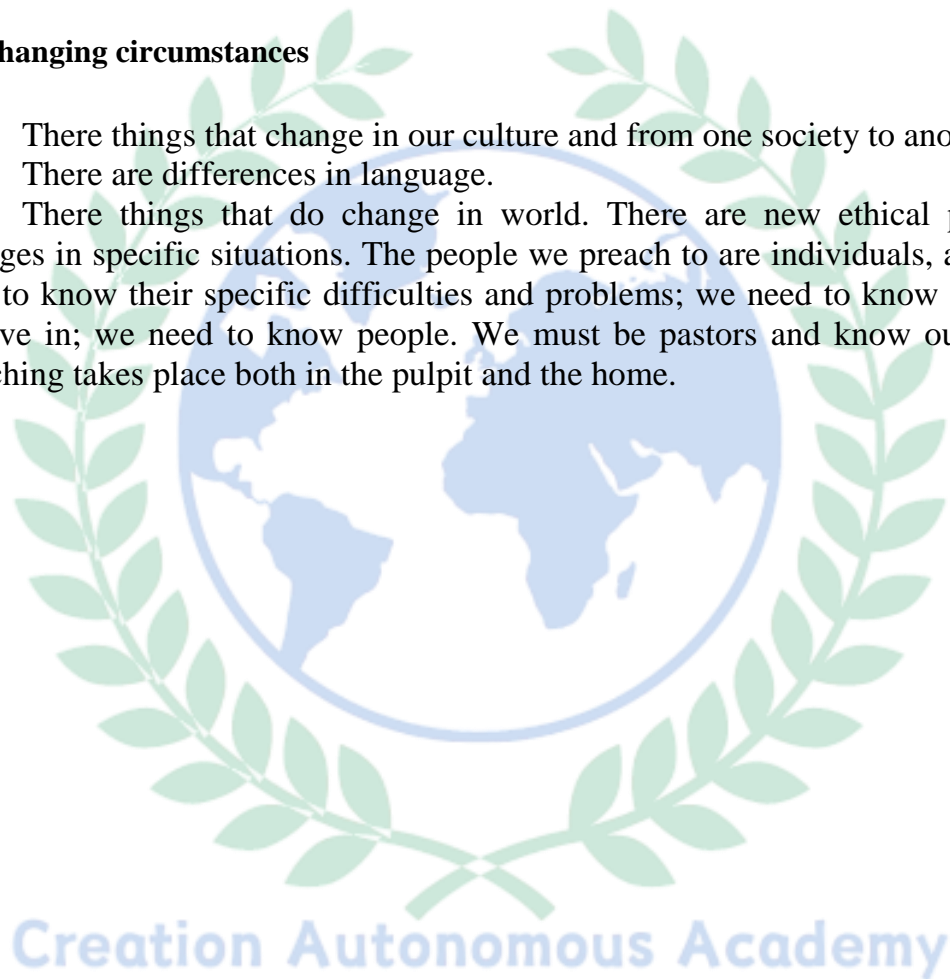
It is still the same way of salvation. John 14:6 is still true! Jesus is the only savior. John 3:16 still true! God so loved the world that he sent his only son, Jesus Christ....

ii) Changing circumstances

There are things that change in our culture and from one society to another.

There are differences in language.

There are things that do change in the world. There are new ethical problems. Changes in specific situations. The people we preach to are individuals, and so we need to know their specific difficulties and problems; we need to know the world we live in; we need to know people. We must be pastors and know our people. Preaching takes place both in the pulpit and the home.



Chapter- 3

MAKING SENSE OF THE PASSAGE

Introduction

Every verse and passage is in the Bible for a reason. Look for the **'big idea'**. Jay Adams writes, *"You must never preach on a passage until you are certain you understand why the Holy Spirit included that passage in the Bible."* This often takes time to discover. We need to observe carefully what God has put before us. Martin Luther likened studying the Bible to picking apples: *"First I shake the whole tree that the ripest may fall. Then I climb the tree and shake each limb, and then each branch and the each twig and then look under each leaf."* This requires discipline – *"The Scripture do not yield their treasure to chance enquiry"* (Sir Thomas Taylor). How do we go about it? How do we make sense of a passage?

1. The Natural Sense

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is common sense. God has not communicated with us in a way which is meant to be perverse or only understood by those with theological degrees (in fact, sadly, theological study can make is harder when students are taught unhelpfully!). it is true God has not told us details of some things we might like to know: it is true there are passages which are difficult and complicated. Yet a great deal, all that is really fundamental, God has clearly revealed for us. It is not a bad principle to start with, that the natural sense of a passage or verse is almost certainly the right sense. What do you think of this? Augustine of Hippo interpreted the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) like this –

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho = Adam

Jerusalem = the heavenly city of peace, from which Adam fell

thieves = the moon, and thereby signifies Adam's mortality

striped him = namely, of his immortality

beat him = by persuading him to sin

and left him half-dead = as a man he lives, but he died spiritually, therefore he is half-dead

The priest and Levite = the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament

The Samaritan = is said to mean Guardian; therefore Christ himself is meant

bound his wounds = means binding the restraint of sin

oil = comfort of good hope

wine = exhortation to work with a fervent spirit

beats = the flesh of Christ's incarnation

inn = the church

the morrow = after the Resurrection

two-pence = promise of this life and the life to come

innkeeper = Paul

Gordon Fee comments on this interpretation: *"As novel and interesting as all this might be, one can be sure that it is not what Jesus intended. After all, the context clearly calls for an understanding of human relationship ("Who is my neighbor?")."*

not divine to human; and there is no reason to think that Jesus would predict the church and Paul in this obtuse fashion!" The essential purpose of the parable is clear it teaches us what real Christian love is like and who really is our neighbor. It exposes prejudice and exhorts us to action. Notice also that the expert in the law was asking what he could do to inherit eternal life. Jesus in the parable sets a standard that only He has ever kept. Extreme allegorisation has been popular at certain times in Church history (e.g. The Jewish interpreter Philo of Alexandria affected Origin of Alexandria in the 4th century AD: it was also common in Europe in the Middle Ages before the Reformation.) But Calvin was wiser when he wrote: *"Let us know, that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions which lead us away from the natural meaning."* William Tyndale (1494-1536) wrote *"Thou shalt understand that the Scriptures hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And the literal sense is the foot and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err or go out of the way."* One of the dangers of allegorisation is that it makes interpretation only possible for special experts who can read the clues, and leaves the Bible as a complete mystery to ordinary believers. Remember, though, that sometimes the natural sense is figurative not literal, e.g. Jesus speaking of *"being born again"* and of *"living water"*. The Bible is rich in metaphorical language but it is usually quite obvious what is meant.

2. The Original Sense

The permanent and universal message of a passage is only understood in the light of circumstances in which the word was originally given. It is good to ask 'What did original writer intend to be understood? What would the original hearers have understood?' Certain things help to us the original sense:

a) The Historical Situation

Some understanding of the historical circumstances of a passage often help enormously in making sense of its relevance and meaning. Take the books of **Old Testament prophecy** such as Amos, Hosea, Joel or Jeremiah. We have got to understand that they were written at times of great upheavals. All 16 prophetic books come within the period 760-460 BC, which was the period of the divided kingdom: the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel : the Babylonian obliteration of Judah : the exile : the return. In studying **Psalms 51**, that great psalm of repentance, it is enormously helpful to realize that David wrote it after the exposure of his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Or again many have had problems with **Paul and James' apparent conflict over the issue of faith and works**. Paul says, *"To the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness"* (Romans 4:5), James says, *"What good is it if a man claims to have faith but had no deeds? ... Faith by itself, if not accompanied by action is dead"* (James 2:14,17). Luther declared James to be wrong and called his epistle as 'letter of straw'! This cannot be right! We take it as an absolute principle that God does not contradict Himself. So how do we make sense of it? Surely the answer lies

in the different context into which they were writing. Paul is refuting ‘legalists’ who believed that salvation is by works, James is refuting ‘religionists’ who believed that salvation is by orthodoxy. This is the key to their different emphasis. Salvation is by faith alone but true faith will be evidenced in your life. The epistles are not theological handbooks, they are ‘task theology’, that is, related to specific problems, questions, heresies, and individuals. There are many other examples where simply grasping the historical situation helps us to understand the text.

b) The Cultural Setting

Our perceptions are profoundly affected by culture we live in. The Bible records teaching and events that took place in a very different cultural setting from our own. People and spiritual needs remain the same but we can easily fail to understand the point of text when we don’t understand the culture. One of the tasks of the preacher, is to help his hearers understand the meaning of the text better by explaining any relevant cultural factors which are reflected in that teaching or account in order to bring God’s word home to the hearers. Sometimes a cultural understanding simply **adds a depth to our comprehension of the text**. For example Jesus tells various wedding parables – e.g. the parable of the 10 virgins. Five wise and five foolish. We all are familiar with the idea of a wedding. But in my society the centre of attention is the bride : but in the 1 st century the bridegroom was much more important. And the arrival of the bridegroom on the evening of the marriage day in great procession at the bride’s house was the great moment after which the marriage feast would be held. Jesus’ parable only really makes sense in the light of 1 st century wedding customs.

Sometimes cultural understanding solves a problem in understanding the text. Matthew 5:29-30, *“If your right eye causes you to sin gouge it out and throw it away ... If your right hand causes sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell”* or again Luke 14:26, *“ If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes even his own life – he cannot be my disciple”* . **Does Jesus literally mean this? Cut off limbs? Blind ourselves? William Tyndale translated the Bible into English in 1520s and 30s and smuggled it into the England. One man denounced the circulation of the Bible in the language people could understand because when reading Matthew 5 the reader might ‘pluck out his eyes and so the whole realm will be full of blind men, to the great decay of the nation and the manifest loss of the king’s grace; and thus by reading of the Holy Scriptures will the whole realm come into confusion’ (preaching Friar at Cambridge). Or how do we reconcile loving your wife as commanded in Ephesians 5 with the command to hate your wife? It helps to realize that purposeful overstatement was a method of instruction and teaching, driving the point home : hyperbole was a teaching**

method. The call is to be ruthless with sin and give Jesus first place in your life and heart.

Sometimes cultural understanding **make sense of things which seem simply pointless or arbitrary**. For example, Leviticus 19:19. If you start at verse 11 the commands seem all very relevant for today but suddenly you come to verse 19 which seems very strange. What is the point? The point is to do with the pagan culture surrounding the Israelites: God was forbidding His people to engage in the fertility cult practices of Canaanites. Their idea was 'sympathetic magic': they thought that symbolic actions could influence the gods and nature. Boiling kid in its mother's milk was meant to magically ensure the fertility of their flock : mixing animal breeds of seed or materials was thought to 'marry' them as so magically to produce offspring and a good harvest. God wanted his people to keep them away from such fruitless and pagan practices which could not save or help men. So God is not being arbitrary but gracious.

To discover this sort of information you need good commentaries, or a Bible handbook or dictionary.

c] Language

When we say that God verbally inspired the Scriptures we do not mean that every word of the NIV, RSV or KJV or any translation of the Bible is the verbally inspired text. All translation involves interpretation and difficult choices. What was inspired was the original Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew. Our translation can both help us and hinder us. A word in our language may have **connotations** which the original language did not convey. Take the word **ἐκκλησία** (ecclesia). **William Tyndale** in his translation of the **New Testament** in 1526 used the word 'congregation' to translate **ἐκκλησία**. Unfortunately in the 1611 Authorised Version (KJV) the word was translated as 'church'. The word 'church' could refer to building, a place or a denominational institution (Church of England or the Church of North India) whereas the word 'congregation' is a people word, and much better reflects the meaning of the Greek word. So that translation, using the word 'church' encouraged the attitude the church was building you went to on Sunday and then left behind you, rather than a fellowship of people, something you constantly belong to if you are a believer. Another example of a word with misleading connotations in English is the word 'heart'. In common English use the heart is distinguished from the mind, it implies an emotional response that may even be considered to bypass the mind. However in both Hebrew and Greek the 'heart' is seen as the whole centre of a person's being, the seat of a person's spiritual, emotional and intellectual life. In the New Testament there is a very close correspondence between the Greek word for 'heart' and the word for 'mind' and they are sometimes used in parallel or synonymously (see 2

Corinthians 3:14-15 and Philippians 4:7). Therefore the distinction in English between mind and heart is quite misleading.

Greek is also a **more precise** language than English. So a famous example is for the one English word 'love' – Greek used for words: ἀγάπη (agape) = God's love; φιλία (philia) = friendship love; στοργή (storge) = natural affection, family love; and ἐρως (eros) = sexual love. Although the meaning of the words in Greek do overlap, it can be a great help to realize which word is used in a text.

In a perfect world the ideal thing would be to master the Hebrew and Greek, and if possible Aramaic too! Very few Bible teachers have done this. In a perfect world we would have excellent commentaries on each Bible book, but we don't! We may even have no commentaries at all. How can we find out these cultural and historical factors?

The place to start is in **the passage and the book** of the Bible it is in. If there are **cross-references** in your Bible you may discover more about the background to that passage. If you can read **more than one translation** of the passage. If you are able, buy what **commentaries** you can but use them without being enslaved by them. They can be wrong! Commentaries often refer to the original language and point things out that you would otherwise miss. (One American scholar suggests that all preachers should buy 750 particular commentaries to consult. He suggests that it might take ten years to get them all! I think this is an extreme suggestion, impossible for most preachers throughout the world and unhelpful if it makes a person look to commentaries as the key to effective preaching.) You can use **interlinear** versions and lexicons without being expert at Biblical languages. If you can get at the original sense of the words it can be a great help and save you from some misunderstanding.

3. Types of Literature

The Bible is written not only in 66 different books but in many different styles: and different styles of literature cannot be treated in the same way.

These different styles include

Narrative	Law	Genealogies
Gospel	Prophecy	Wisdom
Parable	Poetry	Apocalyptic
Epistles	Sermons	

It is very important when we preach from a Bible passage that we have some understanding of the type of literature it is. Walter Liefeld writes *"It is basic not only to the consideration of 'different' passage, but also to hermeneutics and the preparation of sermons in general that we recognize differences of genre in the Bible. The interpretation of a passage must be consistent with the nature of the literature"*

under consideration.” A very useful book that give practical advice on preaching from different sorts of literature in the Bible, is, ‘How to Read the Bible for All it is worth’ by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart. In the Advanced Course this year there will be a special focus on those in this course. I want just to take three types of literature and make some suggestions on how to take three types of literature and make some suggestions on how to handle them.

a] Old Testament Narrative

This is the most common of literature in the Bible. 40% of the Old Testament is narrative – Genesis, Exodus, part of Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles. And, of course, there is narrative in the New Testament, in the Gospels and Acts. God has put a lot of narrative in the Bible and all of it is *“Useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”* (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus Himself and many of the New Testament writers refer back to Old Testament characters and events for our instruction. For example Hebrews 11 is full of examples of faith from the Old Testament.

What principles do we need to bear in mind?

- Old Testament narrative is not just a collection of stories or myths, like Hindu epics. They recent true event and real people.
- Narrative has a natural appeal to people because there is a story to it, and it can often hold people’s interest quite easily, They are not just exciting stories for children, they are recorded for all of us, so do not hold back from preaching from them.
- They are not just stories about people. The **true hero of the Old Testament events is God Himself**. He is at work there. He does not change. The famous story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 is not about how wonderful David was but about how mighty God is (verses 45-47). Look for what a passage shows us about God.
- **Narrative is written in chunks**, often quite large units. The message is found in the overall story, not in each incident alone. Read the whole chunk and preach the whole unit to get the point.
- The **meaning of the narrative is not necessarily spelt out**. What is described, even when done by godly men, is not necessarily a good example (e.g. Jephthah’s oath in Judges 11). Do not look for allegorical meaning in details (references to ‘oil’ are not a coded reference to the Holy Spirit in each account). Sometimes judgements are made in the passage and you must preach in the light of them (e.g. 2 Samuel 11:27 on David and Bathsheba). Where no judgement is made we have to interpret the story in the light of teaching elsewhere.

- Look out for any **New Testament interpretation** because this is the Holy Spirit's own commentary for us. e.g. the references to Samson in Hebrews 11 and Lot in 2 Peter 2.
- There were perfect men in the Old Testament (not today!). Even the best fell short, and their failures highlight **the need for a better deliverer**, a perfect king and make our hearts long for Jesus. Preach the Old Testament so that your hearers understand how much we need Jesus, and how wonderful He is.
- Do not accept the idea of a grim, judging **Old Testament God** and a nice, loving **New Testament God**. God has always been holy, and always merciful. He still judges and still saves. Yes – He has revealed His love in a new way in the New Testament but not changed His nature. Work hard to understand the context of your passage : accept that you will not always arrive at perfect understanding. So stay humble but ask God to show you the key reason why that passage is there and what it has to do with us today.

b] Apocalyptic

Significant parts of the Old Testament and New Testament are apocalyptic in style – e.g. Ezekiel, part of Daniel, Zechariah, parts of Isaiah, and Revelation. In some ways it is the most difficult style of writing common among the Jews in the period of oppression when it was not safe to write openly. Apocalyptic literature uses coded language, symbols, significant numbers, fantastic images (horns, dragons, lots of heads etc.)

There are **two dangers** with sort of writing.

(1) There are those who have **handled it unwisely**, tried to identify every detail and taken extreme interpretations as the truth. The cults do this. A man came to our church declaring that the rapture was to happen by the end of 1997 and the end of the world between 2005 to 2007. One missionary family I know of went up a mountain to meet the Lord because they felt sure of the date of His return. They were wrong. Matthew 24:36 tells us that we cannot know the day : we must simply live in the light of that day. Sharp divisions between people over their understanding of the millennium has caused sad divisions among Christians.¹ Satan loves that.

(2) **Ignore** apocalyptic writing because it is harder. The danger then is that we do not preach much of the Last Things and lose the sense of urgency about Jesus' return.

Revelation 1:3 has a special promise of blessing in reading, hearing and taking that book to heart.

what the can help us make sense of it, especially of Revelation?

- The symbols, numbers and fantastic descriptions **represent realities**, they are not fictional although they are not intended as literal descriptions. They are symbolic of real

¹ Sharp disputes about how to understand the reference to the millennium in Revelation 20:3-7 have divided and confused Christians. Broadly speaking some take it to be a literal period of 1000 years, ushered in by the return of Christ, at the end of which Satan is finally defeated. This is called '**Premillennialism**'. Among those who take this view there are differences of opinion as to the timing of the rapture and whether there will be a restoration of Israel with a new temple. '**Postmillennialism**' sees the 1000 years as a period of gospel advance culminating in a unprecedented world revival and the conversion of Israel, before a final confrontation with evil and the overthrow of Satan. '**A-Millennialism**' sees the 1000 years as symbolic, like other numbers in Revelation, referring to the whole age of the gospel ending up with a final upsurge of evil before Christ comes to reign forever. Each of these views have had notable adherents and have strengths and weaknesses. Broadly speaking A-Millennialism is strong in the U.K and Premillennialism stronger in the U.S. and this is reflected in some of the commentaries from those countries. Please don't let these disputes stop you proclaiming Christ's return and preaching on Revelation. It is always wise to acknowledge other viewpoints without either ridiculing them or necessarily agreeing. in preaching through Revelation you will find that these disputed issues are usually not relevant to the passage in front of you.

forces and powers. For example: read Revelation 1:16. Does Jesus in glory have a metal sword sticking out of His mouth? No, it is a symbol of the power and authority of His word which is likened here and elsewhere (Hebrews 4:12) to a sword. In Revelation 5:5-6 Jesus is described, in the same scene, as a Lion and a Lamb looking as if slain. These point to real things about Jesus, not about His physical appearance. He is not part lamb, part lion and part man!

- John **gives us some keys of interpretation** which must be our starting point. For example the one "Like a son of Man" (1:13) is the Risen Jesus; the lamp stands signify churches (1:20); the terrible dragon is Satan (12:9).

- See the visions as a whole, the **general gist is usually clear**. Do not try to read allegorical meaning into all the details and do not major on unprovable current applications. Gordon Fee writes: "*What we must be careful not to do is to spend too much time speculating as to how any of our contemporary events might be fitted into the pictures of the Revelation. The book was not intended to prophecy the existence of Red China.*"

- There is a lot to be said in favour of viewing Revelation **not as one consecutive, chronological account** but as a series of descriptions of the same basic sequenced of events leading to final judgement, but viewed from a number of different perspectives.

For example we arrive at scenes of final judgement several times over such as in 6:12-17, 11:18-19, 14:14-20, 18:21-19:2, 20:11-15.

- Revelation was **intended to be relevant and understood** by the churches to whom it was sent, it was intended to help them.

Fee writes: "*The primary meaning of the Revelations is what John intended it to mean, which I turn must also have been something his readers could have understood it to men*". So what are the clear lessons?

- 1) **The church is on a collision course with the world order** without God – the power of the state, and of world ideologies and false religions all of which will be manipulated by the forces of evil to attack God's people
- 2) Satan will use two particular weapons to attack us – **deceptions**. Flash signs and miracles – **persecution**, often severe. Discipleship will be costly: "*God has not promised us freedom from suffering and death, but triumph through it*" (Fee). These things will intensify and at times the church will seem to be utterly overwhelmed.
- 3) Yet **God is absolutely in control**, He reigns over all, even most powerful forces of evil. The Day of Judgement is coming on all forces of evil and all who do evil. Christ will return as Judge and the present order will pass away. Beyond lies and incredible future, full of glory. There will be a redeemed creation, a new heaven and new earth. Satan will be eternally vanquished and there will be no evil or anything to spoil and we will be with God (and each other) forever.
- 4) **Therefore hold firm** in faith, live holy lives (2Peter 3:11-12) and set your hope on the glory to come. This is a very relevant message today. If persecution, in India and elsewhere, grows more severe we should not be surprised nor should we give up. They needed to know that in the first century, we need to know that at the end of the twentieth century. Do not hesitate to preach from Revelation: what could be more urgent message for our times?²

² A note on commentaries. I have found commentaries particularly helpful in sitting my mind in the right direction. They do not agree on every detail but the overall picture is made very clear. Among the most helpful that I know are:

Micheal Wilcock I Saw Heaven Opened (IVP) 1975

Leon Morris Revelation (IVP) 1987

Philip E. Hughes The Book of Revelation (IVP, Eerdmans) 1990

Robert Mounce What Are We Waiting For? (Eerdmans) 1992

Chapter-4

THE DICIPILINE OF CONTEXT

If we take words out of context. , we can make them mean whatever we want them to mean. Words only have meaning in context. So context must dictate meaning.

Exactly what the Devil does! In Matthew 4:6 the devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12. But he does so out of context. The psalm is not invitation to test God! We must be careful that we don't use words out of context. Context is vital Satan uses the Bible see in Matthew 4:6 his use of Psalm 91:9-12. What two things does he do?

"Every word of the Bible is true only in its context. Isolated from its context, it may be quite untrue" (John Stott)

1. General Context

Principle of harmony. Because there is only one author of scripture – the Holy Spirit – there can be no contradictions. One passage cannot mean something that is in direct opposition to another! Apparent contradiction are APPARENT, and can be explained by our lack of full knowledge or understanding, or by the limitations of human mind to grasp truths of God

There will be tensions in our understanding, but they do not contradict each other, even when we cannot resolve the tension.

There will be occasions when we can grapple with apparent contradictions by working out the separate meanings of different passages. Sometimes we can understand one passage by looking at other passages. We can understand more difficult passages by means of clearer ones. Cross reference are very useful in this way. But we need to see passages in the context of the whole Bible.

The Holy Spirit whole of Scripture and does not contradict himself 2 Tim 3:16. We need to interpret Scripture by Scripture. We must not interpret a text to mean something which clearly is contrary to plain sense of another Scripture e.g. verses about hating your parents in Lk 14:26. Got to consider alongside Ex. 20:12, Eph 6:1-3. We look for a reasonable harmony

But apparent contradictions in the Bible are just that: apparent. Sometimes there is a Biblical tension to be kept for example human responsibility and God's election of us. They do not contradict each other but need to stand side by side.

Cross references help to preserve the balance of truth God has revealed. *"However much we may be aided by human interpreters the key to all interpretation necessarily remains the comparison of Scripture with Scripture. A good cross-reference system remains one of the best commentaries on Scripture ... If the Bible is God's word, the whole Bible is the ultimate context of only part of it"*, (Peter Jensen)

Principle of 'antecedent theology'. If the Bible has one author and is a unity, then it has one theme.

So earlier scripture is fulfilled in later ones and later ones can be understood by reference to earlier ones. If I want to understand the cross, I need to go back to the Old Testament sacrificial system which lays the foundation for understanding what God does in Jesus. The paschal lamb prepares for Jesus, and so we understand what John means when he says: "Behold the Lamb of God". If later scriptures explain earlier ones, then the full meaning of earlier ones is understood by reference to later ones. Paul explains to us the full significance of Hagar and Sarah (Gal 4:21f) in a way we could not understand just from Gen. 16. The Book of Revelation explains to us the significance of the Beast in Daniel – although Daniel itself gives some interpretation of the vision.

References are made which are meant to remind you of some earlier events or teaching.

John 1:29 *Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world!*

What is the background?

John 8:58, *"I tell you the truth before Abraham was born, I am." At this they picked up stones to stone him.*

What is the background?

Brings to third basic principle

Principle of Bible's self interpretation. Bible often gives us a clear explanation of what a specific passage means. Sometimes that is found in the passage itself: such as in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:1-15). Sometimes it is given elsewhere in scripture. So we cannot understand Noah (Gen 6-9) without 1 Peter 3:18-22, and we cannot understand Abram (Gen 12f) without Hebrews 11:8f. we don't have to guess what they mean because the Bible tells us, if we look at general context.

Look out for the way the OT is used by NT e.g. the story of Lot in Gen 13 & 19 needs to be read in the light of 2 Peter 2:7-9 Don't preach on Elijah 1 Kings 17-19 without considering James 5:17 where Elijah is presented as the great man of prayer. If a Psalm or part of prophecy is used in the NT always check the inspired comment. Sometimes get parallel passage cast extra light – 1 & 2 King/1 & 2 Chronicles: or story in two gospels.

2. Salvation History Context

The Bible is the revelation of how God saves us. Every part of the Bible, every passage relates to that story of salvation history! The NT writers treat the OT and NT as totally interlocking two testament, one book.

a] One Theme

The whole Bible has one theme – one great message running through it from Genesis to Revelation. It is the theme of the Kingdom of God – of God's plan of salvation for mankind. That theme is consistent throughout. Every part of Bible has to do with that great theme.

It begins at creation where Adam and Eve are in a relationship with God (the King) and under his rule. The Adam and Eve were disobedient – rebelled against God – and so God called one man Abram and promised he would be father of mighty nation under God and that all the nations will be saved through him. So we find the people of Israel learning what it means to have God as their King, reaching culmination in the pattern of kingship in Solomon but then disintegration through disobedience to the exile. All this is to prepare the people of God for the Saviour, and everything focuses down into one person Jesus Christ.

This is important because it affects how we understand passage.

b] Two Testament – One Book

Consequently we will treat the two testaments Old & New Testament as one book. Acts 13:14-41 gives us the whole salvation history. It sees no separation of Old and New Testaments

c] Pointing to Jesus

Whole Bible comes to its focus in Jesus. John 5:39-40 tells us all the scriptures testify about JESUS. He is their subject, including the Old Testament! Luke 24:25-27 reminds us that Jesus explained everything that was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. In Acts 8:26-40 Ethiopian Eunuch hears the Good news about Jesus from the Book of Isaiah. And that is true for many of the sermons in Acts.

For each and every passage we must ask: How does this passage help us to understand what God has done in Jesus?

The early chapters of Genesis the **mess** we need to be saved from. Genesis 3:15, is first promise of the Saviour to come who will crush the serpent's head.

Go on to the story of Abraham **promise** in Genesis 12:2-3 of blessing will be to all peoples: see Galatians 3: 8-29

Jesus told the Pharisees *You father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad*, John 8:56. So it is right when I preach from Genesis I see Christ.

When you read in the historical books of King David and his successors you read of the promise, repeated in the books of prophecy, of a coming King, descended from David who will establish an eternal kingdom. See Psalm 2. Nathanael welcomes Jesus as that King *"Rabbi you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel"* John 1:49 And when Jesus hangs on the cross what are word written in three languages above him?

Jesus handled the Old Testament as being full of him: Beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself Luke 24:27..

Acts 8:34-35 Tell me please who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else? Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

Jesus himself says of Isaiah, said this because he say Jesus' glory and spoke about him. (John 12:41) The way of salvation was a great concern of Old Testament and New Testament writers: Peter was quite explicit 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Jesus is thus at the heart of the Scriptures Either distantly or directly every passage relates to that story of salvation. We should make it plain.

“Preach Christ in all the Scriptures: He is the subject matter of the whole Bible. He is there. Until you have found Him in your preaching portion, you are not ready to preach.” (Adams).

“When the Scriptures are seen as pointing us to salvation through faith in Christ. Then, if dealt with in its context any part of the Bible must be evangelistic ... If one cannot show how some part of the Bible first into the overarching revelation of ‘God reconciling the world to himself in Christ’ (2 Cor 5:19), there is a good chance that we have misunderstood it” John Chapman

3. Specific Context

(1) In the book

Bible comes made of different books. Each individual book has a basic purpose or argument. Sometimes the author tells us very clearly what the book is about. For example John 20:31 written *that you may believe that Jesus is Christ and have life in his name*. Luke has a similar declaration of method and promise, Luke 1:1-4 *so that you may know the certainty of things you have been taught*.

When you take a verse or a passage, it is helpful to take the whole book and see its overall purpose and intention. Sometimes we can miss the real point of a passage, purpose it was written if we fail to see it in the context of the whole book. For example 1 Corinthians 13. What context was it written for?

Take again Philippians 2:5b-11 a wonderful passage about incarnation and obedience to death of the Lord Jesus. But what does v1-5 tell us about its purpose.

Try to soak yourself in books not just in verses.

(2) Within the passage itself

Make sure you are preaching on the whole passage or are faithful to it if you are preaching on a section within a longer passage. You need to look carefully to make sure you do that. Sometimes printed divisions and verse divisions (none of which are inspired) are unhelpful eg: Eph

5:21 belongs with v 22. Look for the words like “*therefore, so, for this reason*”.

Beware bringing an idea of what a passage is about and not allowing the passage to control and change our ideas. Take an Old Testament example. Gideon’s fleece. Is it a way to find God’s will? Judges 6:14,16 then v 36-40

Discipline of context is very important if we are going to preach what God says rather than what we want to say. We need to be under the control of Scripture. Sometimes I have begun to prepare, write out a sermon: and then realized that it didn’t fit – that emphasis I was making was not the emphasis of the passage. It can make it much harder to preach but opens new doors of understanding. You will not be able to faithfully preach context. Looking at the context stops you from making over hasty assertions and inaccurate applications.

But remember 1 Corinthians 13:12 *Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully even as I am fully known*”. We do not have perfect understanding. Some verses remain difficult and obscure – see 1 Corinthians 15:29. So avoid being too dogmatic, stay humble before text and before each other and do not assume we have all the answers. God in His mercy still uses people who don’t get everything right.

The Wider Context

Jay Adams writes, “*You must never preach on a passage until you are certain you understand why the Holy Spirit included that passage in the Bible.*”

1. The Historical Context

Who wrote it?

Who was it written to?

When was it written?

What event have taken place?

2. The Salvation History Context

A time line of salvation history

a) One theme

The whole Bible has one theme – one great message running through it from Genesis to Revelation

b) Two Testaments – One Book

Consequently we will treat the two testaments OT & NT as one book
Acts 13:14-41

c) **Pointing to Jesus**

Whole Bible comes to its focus in Jesus.

John 5:39-40

Luke 24:25-27

How does this passage help us to understand what God has done in Jesus?

3. The Cultural Context

Understand the culture of the Bible, and its significance for the passage.

4. The Geographical Context

Sometimes geographical situation significant in understanding what is being said.

The Literary Context

Words only have a meaning in context. So the context must dictate the meaning.

Matthew 4:6(Psalm 91:11-12)

1. The Whole Passage

Make sure we are preaching on the whole passage, not part of passage.

Clues to whole passage: time/occasion/summary

Make sure you are faithful to the whole thought of the passage.

2. The Context of the Bible

Bible made up 66 books, each with a different purpose within the overall revelation of salvation history.

We need to understand some of the principle themes running through the book.

But we also need to know how a particular passage fits in the context of the whole book.

Types of Literature

Narrative	Old Testament history books (1 & 2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles: Acts
Law	Parts of Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers (but also found elsewhere)
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the “minor prophets”. (Occasionally found in the history books.)
Wisdom	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job
Poetry	Psalms, Song of Songs. (Occasionally found in other books)
Apocalyptic	Parts of Ezekiel, Daniel 7-12, Zechariah, parts of Isaiah, Revelation
Gospel	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – these are NOT just biography, but have

	an evangelistic purpose to present the Gospel.
Parable	Within the Gospels, and occasionally in other narrative and prophecy books
Genealogy	Within the narrative books and Gospels.
Epistle	New Testament letters.

Our decision on the type of literature will effect how we interpret the passage.

Narrative

- Learning for history (1 Cor. 10:6) This is not history for its own sake.
- This is true! The sequence of events is important
- The meaning may not be clear, but the New Testament may explain.
- The hero is God – what is God doing?
- The only perfect person is Jesus Christ
- Old Testament narrative looks forwards to a Deliverer
- Old Testament narrative works on a number of levels
 - God and individuals
 - God and the covenant community
 - God and mankind
- Look for patterns in the structure.
 - Repetition of phrases and structures
 - Chiasm
- Listen to the narrators point of view – he knows all
- What is the point of the narrative – where does it fit into the book
- Enjoy the narrative

Parables

- Parables have limited objectives
- There is usually one main point
- We are told if it is an allegory (where things in the parable represent other things)
- Look for the real-life context (when and why was it told?)
- What are the surprises in the parable?
- How would the original hearers have responded to the parable?

The Detailed Context

1. The Natural sense

Avoiding the flights of fancy!!
Don't try to be clever

Christian writer Augustine of Hippo once wrote an interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan in which he said:

Jericho = Adam Jerusalem = the heavenly city of peace, from which Adam fell Jericho = the moon, and thereby signifies Adam's mortality

thieves = the devil and his angels
stripped him = namely, of his immortality
beat him = by persuading him to sin and left him half-dead = as a man
he lives, but he died spiritually, therefore he is half-dead
The priest and Levite = the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament
The Samaritan = is said to mean Guardian; therefore Christ himself is
meant bound his wounds = means binding the restraint of sin
oil = comfort of good hope
wine = exhortation to work with a fervent spirit
beast = the flesh of Christ's incarnation
inn = the church the
morrow = after the Resurrection
two-pence = promise of this life and the life to come
innkeeper = Paul

Nonsense!! Cannot possibly mean that!

How could original hearers ever have got that out of the parable.

Don't try to be clever – just read it and read it and read it and ask
What does it say?

Of course, meaning is not always literal.
Must be born again – not return to mother's womb.
Symbolic language in apocalyptic etc.

But what is this real about?

Answer that first, then move on to detail

2. The meaning of words

-the original sense

Be careful with individual words.

Try to discover what the word meant originally.

Be careful that you do not rely on the contemporary meaning of a word

Four words for love in NT Greek

Philia (brotherly love)

Storge (natural affection – for family)

Eros (sexual love)

Agape (specifically Christian word)

- words change their meaning

Love in UK – feelings and emotions – commitment

Heart in UK – where we feel – seat of will

- but, though, and, so

Look out for the little conjunctions.

Epistles in two halves.

The structure of the passage

-looking for surprises

What is there that you don't expect?

Why does it say that?

- looking at the inter-relation of words/sections

Layout the passage according to interconnection of ideas

Putting it all together

The Big idea- what does it mean?

Key verse or section

Example of different literary type: Epistle



Chapter- 5

PREPARATION OF THE SERMON

I. Surveying the Scene

1. The Task is Demanding

"Happy go lucky sermons will lay no necessity upon the reason nor put any strong constraint on the heart. Preaching that costs nothing accomplishes nothing" (J.H. Jowett 1911)

"The hardest part of a minister's work is the preparation of sermons. It is a trying process. There is an agony in it, an act of creation" (Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones)

"Those who count preaching and its needful preparations to be slight matters, have never occupied a pulpit continuously month after month, or they would know better...Let those preach lightly who dare to do so; to me it is 'the burden of the Lord...a burden which at times crushes my whole manhood into the dust of humiliation...It is no child's play to be the occupant of a pulpit.'" (Charles Spurgeon)

"Good preaching calls for agonising, concentrated labour." (David Ebby)

"Preparation is everything. If I were asked what is the chief requisite... I should reply, 'preparation'; and what is the second, 'preparation'; and what is the third, 'preparation'; If I had prepared more for the pulpit I should have been a much better preacher". (Robert Hall)

But the demands of preparation are not just voiced by men-the New Testament call us to the labour of preparation – 2 Timothy 2:15,4:2

2. We are Different

Our methods, how we go about things reflect our personalities. What works well for me may not work for you. We can learn from others but we do not need to be identical to them. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones was a very famous preacher in England. Lots of other younger preachers tried to copy his style but it never worked as well as when he did it. Be yourself – you do not have to fight in 'Saul's armour'.

3. No perfect Method

There is no procedure which guarantees fruitfulness. In fact a method can become a false object of confidence, rather than God himself. A reverence for God, a dependence on Him, a love for people – without those the method amounts to nothing. God resists the proud – so beware feeling you are the expert. A humble heart is better than a full library. Remember God used a donkey to instruct Balaam and stars to teach the Magi! A servant heart is more important than theological degrees: in fact degrees can make it harder.

4. Crucial Priorities

Satan loves to undermine our priorities – often with good things which push out the crucial things. In Acts 6:4 we see the apostles' example of delegating of practical tasks. *"We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."* David Ebby writes: *"According to Acts 6:2 and*

6:4 preaching is your primary work, pastor, your priority task... Your mission is to proclaim and teach the gospel of salvation. You have no liberty to be distracted from your priority task. You are to feed the souls of men and women with the bread of life. Preaching publicly and from house to house is your best work. It requires your undivided devotion. It demands intolerance of all diversions.” If we are to preach we need to make time for study and prayer. Let us consider each in turn.

a] Time to study

If we are to obey 2 Timothy 2:15 and 4:2 we have to build that into our schedule: be realistic, it takes time. a very gifted senior Bible teacher in Britain if he found that it got easier to prepare sermons – he said “No, it takes me longer now (Alec Motyer)”. Jon Stott suggests that a sermon takes him 10-12 hours to prepare. 1 hour’s preparation = 5 minutes preaching. This priority comes under pressure in many ways

- (a) crises: illness, marriage crises, bereavement. God takes such things into account and gives extra grace.
- (b) False expectations: resist these, and re-educate those with the “Pastor has not been” mentality even when others have been!
- (c) Administration: be ruthless, not afraid to say “no” To be ready to preach is your first commitment; visiting though important, is secondary (and also endless). Delegate to others.

b] Time to pray

Prayer is the practical expression of a recognition of our need of the Holy Spirit to help us. Some time our family member are not sufficient for day. We can slip into made a of study without prayer – which is like driving car out of petrol, you can go so far but won’t make the journey. James Rosscup writes: *“It is puzzling that books on essentials of sermon preparation frequently do not discuss prayer...the apostles gave the importance of prayer in preaching: ‘We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word’.* (Acts 6:4). *The order of their words in interesting. Even if mentioning prayer first is not significant, it is certain that prayer is just as primary for preachers as is the Word”.* Ask others to pray: get the church to pray. Paul himself seems to have regularly asked others to pray for his preaching: see Ephesians 6:19-20, Colossians 4:3-4, 2 Thessalonians 3:1. Pray yourself. *“Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong... and makes it stick.”* (E.M. Bounds)

5. Choosing What to Preach On

Have you ever sat down to prepare and found yourself going round in circles as minutes become hours as you struggle to find what to preach on? I have occasionally. Some – like Spurgeon – never plan preaching ahead but only preach on what they believe God has put on their hearts that week.. I believe planning is wise – it saves you floundering around; gives your people a sense of direction; and enables you to be sure that you declare *“the whole counsel of God”* and not just your favourite bits. Planning does not mean you cannot be flexible and drop your plan or change it if you have

special reason. It is especially important to plan if you are preaching regularly in the same place.

a) You can preach topically: address current issues, important problems, themes which run through the Bible. This can grab attention especially of unbelievers. One preacher preach Known church in USA called Willow Creek. The title of the service that Sunday was “What would God say to Princess Diana?” this being just after her marriage broke up. Some Church did series on features of the Old Testament which run through to the New Testament: Tabernacle, Law, Priest, King, Land. Many people were helped by these kind of series because it helped them to see the Revelation and to the fulfillment of all the purpose of God. people often appreciate character studies. The danger with topical preaching is that it may not be disciplined by the text: the topic and not the Scripture rules. It can be valuable and refreshing but not as your basic ‘diet’, I suggest.

b) You can preach from single verses (text preaching). I have heard fine sermons on texts. Some texts are so rich it good to do it way. But the truth is that simply preaching on one text is often just a spring board into a topic not exposition at all; and the sermon could have been preached in reference to quit a different text which happened to have had the same word in it: such preaching sometimes totally ignores the context and misses the original point of the text.

c) Many people suggest that the best normal method is to preach systematically through the Bible books taking paragraphs or sections at a time: and alternating between Old Testament and New Testament and different sorts of books so that there is variety. This is how some of the early church Fathers like Augustine (354-430) and John Chrysostom (344-407) preached. This approach was taken up again at the Reformation – it is how John Calvin preached and many others. It is not commanded in advantages:

- it helps us to understand teaching in its context.
- it recognizes God’s wisdom seen in the form that His truth is presented to us in the Scriptures as the Sprit inspired.
- it helps us to cover the whole counsel of God and preach things on things God addresses which we would avoid.
- it touches on controversial and sensitive matters without you having brought it about.

I have found God sometimes organizes extraordinary coincidences. Bout don’t go too slowly and be prepared to break it up and do something different for a while.

A number of well known Bible teachers strongly urge others to concentrate on preaching through Bible books. *“Probably this way of preaching ought to comprise the bulk of ones preaching”* (Jay Adams)
“In my own view the bulk of our preaching ought to be expository (that is preaching our way through a book of the Bible verse by verse or chapter by chapter.” (Peter Adam)

“Preaching systematically through the books of the Bible is a most effective way of ensuring that the whole will of God is presented over a period of time, but it is not the only way. To follow the same method relentlessly can become monotonous and boring.” (Derek Prime)

II. Doing the Job

A) Gathering Material

1. Read the passage slowly and prayerfully to get an initial feel. Start with the passage without consulting commentaries. Very often you get an instinct for the main themes; sometimes for some possible main heading. I write out my own immediate analysis.

2. Pursue the context. John Stott writes, *“Every word of the Bible is true only in its context. Isolated from its context it may be quite untrue”*. A good example of this is how the devil, in Matthew 4:6, quotes Psalm 91 in tempting Jesus but cuts the quotation short to distort its meaning. (See Psalm 91:9-15) Look around to see the flow, the connections within the argument of the book/story : use cross references to help you understand the context of those verses within the whole Bible. Look out for the ‘antecedent theology’: for example, when John the Baptist said “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) there is the whole Old Testament background of the role of the lamb in sacrifice, which is essential if we are to grasp what John meant. Personally I make lists of relevant verses, writing them out in full.

3. Try to get at the original language (Greek or Hebrew), where possible, to get the full significance of the words used. You do not have to be an expert to use a lexicon and concordance. Good commentaries will give you most of what you need. Sometimes you can discover a seam of gold by doing this.

4. Read and make notes from commentaries. If you can, try to build up a library of commentaries. Sometimes commentaries are quite useless. Very often they help you to understand some of the specifics but don’t necessarily help you at all to know why that passage is there or how to preach it. But on occasions a commentary quite brilliantly opens up a passage for you. Some of the commentators I have found most helpful are Derek Kidner, John Stott, Leon Morris, Alec Motyer, Dale Davis and Don Carson. Bible dictionaries can also give helpful background. Where there is action in several places a Bible atlas is useful. You will not, of course, use all the information that you may gather: in fact it is important to be selective: Derek Prime writes, *“A danger when we first begin to preach is to try to say everything we have discovered about a subject or passage! We then make what we say indigestible... the mark of a good teacher is that what is difficult and complicated becomes simple to understand. We need to be selective in our use of what we have learned from a passage, and to be aware lest a mass of information obscures the actual message God wants us to convey.”*

I am very aware that you may not be in a position to consult commentaries or to get at the original language. That need not stop you preaching faithfully and powerfully. The greatest teachers are the text you have before you and the Holy Spirit within you. Simply do the best job that you can with what God has given you. All these steps so far are simply gathering materials. It is like being in a builders yard and you haven't begun to build the house.

B) Preparing an Outline

5. Grasp the Big Idea. Re-read all your notes so that you are familiar with everything and then answer the question that you ought to have had in your mind all the time: "What is the passage is really about? Why did God put this passage in the Bible?" The true significance of a passage is not necessarily at all obvious at first. We have to come to the Bible in faith, believing that God's word is always relevant (see 2 Timothy 3:16), even when we don't yet see the point of the particular passage in front of us. If I do not understand the purpose of the passage and its relevance my hearers will not either. Quite a number of writers recommend making a one sentence summary of the basic thrust and teaching of the passage so that clarifies your mind. Peter Adam writes: "*A ministry sentence is summary of the sermon, its main point... My ministry sentence helps me to focus my sermon, and helps my hearers to know what the sermon is about. It is a call, an appeal to action and response.*"

6. In the light of your understanding of the purpose of the passage, without basic outline by working out a number of headings which will give helpful from and structure to your message. I think it is good advice to build relevance into your headings. Take, for example, 2 Kings 19:14-19. You could use headings such as

1. Jerusalem threatened
2. Jerusalem's leader in prayer.
3. Jerusalem delivered.

These headings may divide the passage up well, but there is problem. None of your hearers live in Jerusalem and they may not be much interested in what happened in Jerusalem. How about making the headings such as could apply directly to them? For example what about,

1. *Test of Faith.* (Satan will test our faith too.)
2. *Response of Faith.* (We need to pray.)
3. *Triumph of Faith.* (God can deliver us too.) Jerusalem under threat is ancient history. But faith under the threat is a very contemporary experience, and could be acutely relevant to number of your hearers. We need to think how to present the message so far.

C) Review Progress.

7. Submit to the discipline of the text. My job is to unlock what God has put in those verses: Alec Motyer says "*Exposition is a display of what is there.*" I must not be a magician inventing something to say from my mind. Charles Simoen, a great preacher in Cambridge in the nineteenth century, wrote "*I do*

not sit down to impose a sense on the inspired writers; but to receive one, as they give it to me. I pretend not to teach them, I wish like a child to be taught by them...My endeavour is to bring out of Scripture what is there; and not to thrust in what I think might be there. I have a great jealousy on this head, never to speak more or less than I believe the mind of the Spirit, in the passage I am expounding." I need to look over what I have so far planned to say and ask myself, "Am I handling the text?" One danger is that I find that my mind may be triggered off by particular word – such as 'redemption' or 'church', and I then say what I always say on that topic. It may be true but I have to ask myself, "is that what text is saying here?" Sometimes I have ripped up sermon notes halfway through and begun again. In this way you may well end up saying things that you would never have thought of if you had not forced yourself to look closer. Those new insights disciplined by the text can be especially powerful.

8. Be sensitive to the challenge of the listener. It is important that you do not avoid any obvious problems in the text: I heard a sermon on David's treatment of the Moabites in 2 Samuel 8:2. The preacher called us all to be ruthless with sin. However he never addressed the moral question, which was naturally in his listeners minds, as to whether such executions were right. This omission undermined the authority of the message. In fact it is sometimes through addressing such 'problems' in the text, that new doors of understanding open up.

It is also important to adjust your presentation in the light of who you are speaking to. When Paul spoke in Athens in Acts 17 he did not speak like he did to a Jewish audience. He was aware of their world and their beliefs, and presented unchanging truth in a way accessible to them. This is particularly important in applying and illustrating the principles in a passage.

D) Writing the Script

9. Write the script. Some people leave their script at home and preach without notes. I am very impressed by this but could not do it myself for a talk of any length without panicking! Others take only a very limited outline with them when they actually preach. personally I take a very full script with me I always know it well enough so that I do not have to read it word for word, but I do not then have to worry about forgetting something important or my mind going blank! This is a matter of personal preference. I always start by praying that the Lord will give me not just the right ideas but the right words. It is when you get to writing the script that you have to give attention to how to present your message so that the listener will find it easy to listen to you and to absorb the message. This will involve thinking about how to start, how to illustrate and apply as you go and how to finish.

Introductions. There is a Russian proverb that goes: *"It is the same with men as with donkeys: whoever would hold them fast must get a very good grip on their ears."* When Paul spoke in Athens he began in a way that made contact with the world of his listeners. Walter Liefeld says: *"A congregation usually*

remembers what they hear at the very beginning. The main impact of a sermon is often made ... in the first several minutes.” John Chapman write: *“While the introduction should take a very short time to deliver, it is very important. It should arouse attention and touch a point of interest or need in the hearer ... It takes me a great deal of time to work on this very important step in preparation.”*

There are certain dangers with illustrations. Sometimes illustrations can monopolies a talk , so that there is very little spiritual content. Some illustrations are very clever but all you remember is the illustration not the point being made. Avoid inaccurate illustrations (*“He got that wrong so why should I listen to what else he says?”*), or ones that you keep repeating to the same congregation (*“Here we go again...”*). A good illustration drive home the point that you are making and helps the listener to stay attentive. Jesus was a master of illustrating spiritual points in ways that people would remember. Charles Spurgeon said that a talk without illustrations was like a room without windows. Application is so important that we are going to devote a whole lecture to it. The conclusion: our sermons should not just end: they should end with force. There should be some reminder of heart of the message with an indication of what it should mean in practice for us and a challenge to respond. Personally when I get to the stage of writing the script I go over It again and again trying to sort it out more clearly in my own mind and working out how I may express things more effectively. Very often better or new illustrations, or a more satisfactory introduction or conclusion will occur to me as I go over the script later.

10. Leave your sermon and return to it later, with a fresh mind. I have found it extraordinary how I have sometimes returned to preparation after a break or a night’s sleep and immediately made so much better sense of something I was stuck on before. Peter Adam writes: *“Allocate your preparation time over several day .. so that your subconscious mind can work on your sermon while you are doing something else.”*

11. Pray it into your own life. There is a terrible snare of being a professional: where I prepare a message as something for others, but do not take it into my own heart. John Stott says, *“The preparation of the sermon. The preacher’s words, however clear and forceful, will not ring true unless he speaks from conviction,”* Our confidence must not be in our preparation or in our notes but only in our God.

Finally, a wise word of warning from Charles Spurgeon about the danger of going stale: *“We must be in dead earnest and full of living zeal. Do you not think that many sermons are prepared until the juice is crushed out of the and zeal could not remain In such dry husks? Sermons which are studied for days, written down, read, re-read, corrected, and further corrected and emended are in great danger of being too much cut and dried. You will never get crop if you plant boiled potatoes. You can boil a sermon to a turn, so that life remains in it... Give us sermons and save us from essays ... I speak advisedly when I say*

that some speakers want locking out of their studies and turning out to visit their people ... So long as the life of your sermon is strengthened by preparation you may prepare to utmost; but if the soul evaporates in the process what is the good of such injurious toil? It is a kind of murder which you have wrought upon the sermon which you have dried to death."



Chapter- 6

APPLICATION OF THE SERMON

1. The Priority of Application

Come to next stage in process of preparing a sermon. The Bible is written so that we can be changed. It is not just an interesting of passage but a book with a purpose.

John 20;30-31

So if we are to communicate God's Word in our preaching then we will need to apply the words of the Bible our lives and the lives of our congregations.

Isaiah 55: 1-11 tells us God fulfils his purpose through his Word.

It reminds us that he has a purpose behind his word, purpose in the lives of those who hear his word. It is true that same word of God brings salvation to some and judgement to others (John 12:46-47), but it is a word with a purpose.

So if we are to preach God's Word, we must preach with a purpose.

Peter's first sermon Acts 2 is triggered by the question in v12 "What does this mean", so it has a purpose to explain the meaning of the events IN THE LIGHT Of the Old Testament teaching about God's Spirit. Then Peter is further challenge by question in v37 "What shall we do..." And now Peter's sermon moves to apply what he has taught to the people listening.

In Jude 3, Jude explains that his original purpose was to simply write about the salvation he and the readers share, but then he felt he had to write for a different purpose:

Dear friends although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

Romans 15:4 where Paul reminds us that all Scripture is written with us in mind:

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

So if we want to be faithful preachers of God's Word it is vital that we apply the truth of scripture to the lives of our congregation.

But we need to take it stage further than that, because each passage of scripture is written with a purpose and our task as preachers is to preach the passage so as to achieve its purpose in the lives of today's hearers.

Jay Adams: "The principle task of the preacher is to discover the purpose of his preaching portion and preach it in order to accomplish what God commissioned it to do."

In other words: when we preach the letter of Jude we do so to urge our hearers to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. There may be other

things that we achieve in the process such as informing them ABOUT that faith but the ultimate purpose will be to URGE them to CONTEND for the faith.

In that sense we will know whether we have succeeded by the extent to which our hearers contend for the faith more effectively as a result of our preaching.

Let me give you another example from Philippians 2:6-11. It is a great passage to preach from. We've all heard many sermons on pattern of humility and exultation in Jesus: sermons on the doctrine of Jesus' incarnation. But we must ask - is this the PURPOSE of the passage? Look back to Phil 1:27f. v5 tells us why this passage is here! It is not here so that we can be incarnated like Jesus. It is here so that we might be challenged to have the same attitude and might be given hints about how we do that!

The task of all preaching is to effect a change in the hearers. We must always ask the question: Why am I preaching this sermon? What changes do I hope and pray I will see in my hearers as a result of preaching this portion of God's Word? And we should be ready to state clearly in terms we can actually measure what we expect people to do as a result.

As Bryan Chapell Says:

"The application of the sermon is the present consequence of spiritual truth."
This is what these truths mean for us today!

Now, of course, we are not alone in fulfilling that purpose. The Holy Spirit is the author of scripture and He is the one who will bring about his purposes through us. But we must cooperate with the Spirit. We must do our part as faithfully and carefully as possible working with an understanding of the Holy Spirit's purpose as he put this particular passage in the Bible.

2. The Principles of Application

i) We need to know what the passage means before we can apply it.

The purpose of the sermon must be in harmony with the purpose of the text. Very often passage will contain hints or statements of their purpose actually in the text. Sometimes there is an overriding purpose in the whole book. Sometimes there will be a more specific purpose within a particular passage, but it will not contradict the overriding purpose of the book or of the whole of scripture, but will relate that to a specific area.

ii) We need to remember there is both continuity and discontinuity between the world of the text and the world of our hearers.

There is Discontinuity in the situation of life, language, culture, place, the circumstances we find ourselves in, the issues that face us day by day. So if we are to apply the Bible correctly we will need to understand the world we live in, and we will need to understand the lives of our congregation.

But there is also Continuity. The same holy and faithful God, who demonstrates his mercy to people and who is concerned with the present, who is concerned with the lives of individuals and with the lives of nations. The same sinful human beings

So if we are to apply the Bible in a relevant way we must also know the character of God and the nature of our fallen humanity.

If we are to apply the Bible properly we must act like a bridge between two worlds: the world of the first hearers of the Bible and the contemporary world of OUR listeners.

iii) The task of the preacher is to demonstrate the relevance of the passage.

NOT to MAKE
the passage relevant.
2 Tim 3:16-4:2

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

All scripture is relevant. Our task to show its relevance to the situation of our lives today.

Preach the Word: be prepared in season and out of season: correct, rebuke and encourage--- with great patience and careful instruction.

As we apply the Word of God we must take care that our application is

Relevant - related to the situations of our hearers

Achievable-not so far beyond what they can reach that it becomes depressing

Biblical - the actual application of scripture, not our just good ideas.

iv) Some warning

There is a danger that we make the same application from each text.

Whatever the passage we preach on Christian love, or the need to pray more, or the need to read our Bible's more. These are all good and true, but a superficial diet for believers week by week

There is a danger that we use the sermon to preach at one individual.

While need to know our congregation, the place for challenging individuals is face-to-face. That doesn't mean we don't tackle issues we know are relevant to individuals, but do so with care by preaching to all. The Holy Spirit will convict individuals, we don't need to.

There is a danger we fail to distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive passage. Sometimes the bible will simply describe a situation without intending that we should follow it to the letter.

Passages can be descriptive without necessarily implying that we must follow the same action ourselves.

One last danger – the danger of over simplicity.

“For every complex issue there is a simple answer – and it is usually wrong.” Good application demands thought and prayer. It is hard work. But it is the application that changes a theology lecture into a sermon.

3. The Process of Application

So if the application is so important, how do we go about putting application in our sermons?

1. Listen to the passage in the Bible.

Having understood what the passage means, we must keep reading it to hear how it affects our lives. There is often a hint in the passage itself; perhaps a verse that tells us the purposes of passage, or perhaps we have to go back further in the book as a whole. We must ask “Why did God put this passage here? What did God expect the original hearers to do? The application of the passage today **MUST BE** in harmony with the intended application of the passage in its original setting.

It's a good idea to write down a sentence that describes the original application of the passage. That will form the control for your own application. The detail will be different, but the principles will be the same. eg 1 Cor 9:7011

2. Visualise the hearers and their situation.

In what ways is their situation similar to the original hearers? In what ways might the purpose of the passage apply to the situation of the specific hearer today? Sometimes that will be easier than others. Sometimes it will demand more thought. Get your mind to understand the situation of your hearer. And **THEN** you can begin to apply the unchanging truth of scripture to the contemporary and individual situations of your hearer.

3. Decide what response you expect from the hearers

Ask yourself, what do I pray people will do in response to this sermon? eg Peter's expectation in Acts 2:38. Peter expected people to repent and be baptized, and about 3000 responded in that way!

What we need to do is to take the **PURPOSE** statement we have written from the passage and now turn it into an applications statement clearly stating what response we expect from our hearers. Sometimes the response will be primarily in their minds that they will understand something more fully. Sometimes the response will be in behavior, that they will do things differently.

Four questions we should be able to answer at the end of the sermon if the application has been clear:

What does God now require of me? – what should I do?
Where does he require it of me? – in what sphere or spheres of my life?
Why must I do what he requires? – what is the motivation?
How and I do what God requires? – what practical steps must I take?
And if we have done our job properly our hearers should be able to answer each question FOR THEIR OWN LIFE even though it may be different from the person next to them. We can sometimes use questions towards the end of a sermon to help people think through the implications for THEIR LIVES.

4. Structure the sermon to fulfill the purpose!

After all, the application is what the sermon is about. Without the application there is no sermon! So the whole sermon must be structured in such a way as to communicate and help people to apply what God is teaching in his Word. The whole sermon must carry the purpose of the passage forward into the lives of the congregation.

Some people like to give all the teaching points and then apply them at the end so the application is left in the minds of the hearers. But that can make the application appear tagged on as an after thought. What is better is to apply as you go along. Because then people see how you have arrived at the application from the text. The application is tied clearly to the text and the whole sermon fulfils God's purpose.

4. A Particular Application

Preaching evangelistic sermons.

1. Select your passage with care

Since whole Bible points to Christ, we can preach evangelistically from any passage if we place it in context (Luke 24:27 and John 8:39). All the scriptures point to Jesus, and so we could preach any of them as evangelistic sermons. But there are obviously some passages that lend themselves more specifically, not least the Gospels, which were written for evangelism. In particular use passages that point us to the Lordship of Christ passages that urge us to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Some suggested passage:

Isaiah 52:13-52:12

Mark 4:35-41

Acts 17:24-34

Romans 10:1-13

Mark 1:14-15

John 3:1-21

Romans 3:1-31

Hebrews 2:14-18

And having selected your passage, stick to the text, expound the text and don't use it as a springboard to your own ideas. It is God's Word which is sharper than any double-edged sword, so use it

2. Prayer is vital

That's not to say that it is unimportant when preparing other sermons, but in the area of evangelistic preaching we are even more clearly in the area of spiritual warfare. We need to surround our preparation and our preaching with prayer and we need others who are praying for us in our work. Remember what Paul says in 2 Cor 4:1-5. We need to pray that God himself will open the minds of unbelievers, because otherwise, they will never hear and understand the Gospel.

3. Be honest in your exposition of the text.

It is very easy for us to twist the words of scripture because we want to see people respond to the Gospel. In fact, when we do that, it is not the Gospel they respond to but our twisted version of it. So it profits them, and us, nothing. (2 Cor 1-5)

The fact that the sermon is evangelistic should not alter the process of understanding the passage. The only thing it will affect is the specific nature of the application. And even there, we will need to think hard about our hearers to understand how to show the relevance of the passage to them as unbelievers.

4. In your application, make it very clear

THAT we must respond in repentance and faith, and make it clear HOW we can do that. Sometimes, sermons that were meant to be evangelistic fail because they explain the Gospel but do not tell people what they must do. Look at Peter's sermon in Acts 2 again! Make sure no one is in any doubt about WHAT they must do to be saved, HOW they can do it, and that they must do it NOW. And evangelistic sermon demands a response there and then.

Some people will not respond. That was the pattern I Acts 17:31-34, but we must give people the opportunity to respond there and then. Satan will tell us it's not the right moment! But it is. And we need to help people to do that.

Finally, in all our application of scripture, we must apply the text to ourselves first, and only then to our listeners. If we cannot see the relevance of scripture to ourselves how will we ever demonstrate its relevance to others?

Chapter-7

DELIVERY OF THE SERMON

A sermon is not a process of preparation, not a script – it is an event. It only happens as it is delivered. Each occasion is unique.

1. Be Dependent

Satan tries to make us falsely confident.

Possible sources of false confidence when we preach:

There is no substitute for dependence on God alone. Charles Spurgeon wrote *“If you do not understand a book by a departed writer you are unable to ask him his meaning, but the Spirit, who inspired Holy Scripture, live forever, and He delights to open the Word to those who seek His instruction”*

I sometimes feel that I am given more appropriate words and even fresh insight and more effective illustrations even as I preach. Praise God you don't have to be a perfect preacher to be used by God. it's good to take to heart God's word to Moses in Exodus 4:10-12.

2. Be Expectant

There is a famous promise in Isaiah 55:10-11.

Charles Spurgeon: *“Do not go up into the pulpit preaching the truth and saying ‘I hope that some good will come of it’; but confidently believe that it will not return void, but must work the eternal purpose of God. Do not speak as if the gospel might have some power or might have none. God sends you to be a miracle worker. Speak boldly; for it you speak by the Holy Spirit you cannot speak in vain. Oh that we could make our people feel that we believe what we are saying!”*

One of the features of William Carey's evangelism in India was that he anticipated victory.

3. Be Clear

I mean by that make the progression of your thought, your mind headings clear. A well communicated structure helps people retain the key points. Repeat as a running summary. Make it easy for people to follow you.

4. Be Plain

That is, in the language you use so that you communicated effectively. Again Spurgeon says it so well: *“Love for souls will operate in many ways upon our ministry. Among other things, it will make us very plain in our speech. We shall say to ourselves, ‘No: I must not use that hard word, for that poor woman in the aisle would not understand me ... ‘ To hide plain things in dark sentences, is sport rather than service to God. if you love men better, you will love phrases less.”*

Walter Liefeld writes *“Good expository preaching does not impress the congregation; it feeds them.*

You need to be plain for children to understand. You do not have to be childish to communicate. The essential content of a message for adults – or children should be the same- it is in the delivery, the vocabulary and illustration you make it accessible to children.

5. Be Conscious of your Manner

We do not only communicate words. Your appearance, your movements, your face, your tone all communicate too. If your subject is the joy of the Lord how should that affect your manner?

It helps greatly if you look at people. Eye contact is the single most effective means of non verbal communication. It helps you to know if people are with you; it helps them to keep attentive.

And be warm in your manner. You are representing a God who cares and loves.

Try not to be distracting. Think about your gestures, the way you are dressed and your mannerisms

6. Be Zealous

You are not looking simply to inform people but to persuade, to win and to move them to response. On the Day of Pentecost Peter warned and pleaded with them (Acts 2:40.) *“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation”*. Paul says to the Ephesian elders: *“Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears”* (Acts 20:31). To the Corinthians he wrote – 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2 *“we implore ... we urge .. we tell you.”* Is that passive information? People have minds, emotions and wills and we want God’s truth brought with rich persuasion to their minds, that their emotions may be moved and wills touched to respond.

Richard Baxter said *“Preach to your people as to me that must be awakened either here or in hell. Oh speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell. Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest.”*

Charles Spurgeon said *“When I have thought of the preaching of certain good men I have wondered, not that the congregation was so small, but that it was so large. The people who listen to them ought to excel in the virtue of patience for they have grand opportunities of exercising it. Some sermons and prayer lend a colour of support to the theory of Dr William Hammond that the brain is not absolutely essential to life. Labour to discharge your ministry reader your ministry largely effectual for its sacred purpose.”*

7. Be Careful

Be careful of your power. Words can be very powerful. They can also be used to manipulate people. Paul who could write and speak so passionately was careful how he spoke. 1 Corinthians 2:1-4 *“I did not come to you with eloquence or superior wisdom...I came to you In weakness and fear and with*

much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power". (2 Corinthians 10:10 "In person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing".) In 2 Corinthians 4:1 "We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. on the contrary by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Some of you here may be very gifted as public speakers: make you use that gift in a godly way. You can use words to manipulate people's emotions in public meetings. John White warns *"Unfortunately you can stir people's emotion without their understanding being enlightened at all."*

8. Be Humble

We are preachers only by the grace of God and we depend entirely on Him.

Much of our preparation takes place in prayer, for understanding of the passage and for application of the passage. Our prayer, and the prayer of others committed to our ministry. Pray as you prepare, pray before you preach, pray after you preach.

Dependence on God requires humility. God speaks to us first and only then can we preach to others. If we are not prepared to sit under God's word, we should not preach.

9. Be Confident

Have confidence in God's Word. Don't be tempted to preach your good ideas – just explain and apply God's word

Have confidence in Preaching as God's chosen method. if we are concerned by the apparent lack of results from our preaching, we should remember parable of the seed. God is responsible for results (Ezekiel: watchtower)

Have confidence in the God who speaks that he will speak through us. Word of God is a two-edged sword- for judgement and salvation.

10. Be enthusiastic

Be enthusiastic for God. 2 Timothy 1:6 Have a real desire to do his will, and let that be seen in your preaching.

Be enthusiastic for God's Word (Psalm 119) and for your responsibility as a preacher and teacher.

Be enthusiastic for People. Have a real burden for people concerned to see them become Christian and grow. Love theme enough to speak truth, correct and rebuke as well as teach.

11. Be Prepared

Last minute preparation is not honoring to God and is not fair on listeners.

Give time to preparation. That may mean not doing other things. (cf Acts 6)
And having prepared your sermon, get to know it. Feel comfortable with it, so when you speak, not worrying about what you have written and you can explain what you mean.

12. Be yourself

“Preaching is God speaking through personality of the preacher”

Philip Books *“Truth poured through personality”*

God has called YOU to this task. Don't try to be someone else. But do try avoid your annoying mannerisms such as walking up and down or pushing the hair out of eyes, or hopping!! They will distract from God's word.

13. Be Wise Afterwards

In the parable of the sower the Lord describes birds which come to eat up seed that fell on the path: *“The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved”*. (Luke 8:11-12). It seems to me that sometimes we make Satan's task easier.

We need to try to reinforce God's message – one way is to give space for prayer at the end of the message. We then can meditate on and respond to God's Word.

Be wise in enough to receive feedback. There is real value in having a few people who you trust, who can comment on your message. We can always learn to preach better.



Creation Autonomous Academy

Bibliography

- Gibson,RJ, Interpreting God,s Plan, Paternoster,1997
- Klein,William W, Blombrg, Craig L and Hubbard, Robert L Jr, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Dallas: Word 1994
- Henry A.Virkler, Hermeneutics, Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation,
- Baker Books a division of Baker Book House Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49516-6287
- Mark, Rene Introduction to Hermeneutics, New York: Herder and Herder, 1967
- Palmer,R.E., Hermeneutics, Evanston,Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1969
- Donald K.Mckim, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979
- Berkhof,Louis, Principles of Biblical Interpretation, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1950
- Mickelsen,A.Berkeley, Interpreting the Bible, Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1963
- Ramm, Bernard, Hermeneutics, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971
- Terry, Milton S., Biblical Hermeneutics, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974
- Roy B.Zuck, Interpretation, OM Secandrabad, 2002
- John Mac Arthur, JR.,Rediscovering Expository Preaching, Grace to India 1992
- Blackwood, Andrew. Expository Preaching for Today. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Baker 1975
- Broadus, John A. Treatis on the Preparation and Delivery of sermons. Rdv. Ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1944
- Interpretation Studies, www.info.com
- Interpreting the Bible, www.bible.org
- Bible Interpretation, www.yahoo.com
- Expository Preaching, www.gotquestions.org/expository-preaching.html
- Expository Preaching, www.googflight.com/Expository Preaching.html
- Expository Preaching, www.expository.org
- Powerful Expository Preaching, www.expository.org
- What is Expository Preaching, www.bbcchurch.org/art-expository-preaching.pdf



PREACHING SKILLS

Dr. Ram Raj David

Duluvamai, Manikpur, Pratapgarh,
Uttar Pradesh – 230202

Email: draramraj64@gmail.com



Creation Autonomous Academy

