

Recovering a Lost Legacy
The Legacy of Expository Teaching
Selected Scriptures
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Well, this morning I want us to begin just a brief summer series that the elders and I have talked about its importance for some time. And this seems like the proper time to sort of just launch into it. Let me begin by reminding you of one of the most interesting places in the ancient world. The Library of Alexandria is the most famous library from antiquity. About 295 BC King Ptolemy 1 Soter of Egypt charged Demetrius, a former politician from Athens who had fled from Egypt to found the Library of Alexandria. A Greek document from the 2nd Century BC reads like this: “Demetrius had at his disposal a large budget in order to collect, if possible, all the books in the world. And to the best of his ability he carried out the king’s objective.”

Estimates vary as far as the total number of volumes that were accumulated in the Library of Alexandria. But everyone agreed that almost all of the collective writing of the ancient world was assembled there. The estimates ranged between more than 200,000 books to even 700,000 books, somewhere between that number were collected.

Tragically, with this accidental destruction by Julius Caesar in 48 BC, literally thousands of years of knowledge and practice were lost. Can you imagine what it would have been like to have walked into the Library of Alexandria with literally almost every book that had been written up to that time assembled?

As I thought about that library, I was reminded that also tragically over the past 150 years or so, the same thing has happened in the Christian church. The Christian church at large has lost its rich legacy of knowledge and practice. What is a legacy? Well, Webster defines a legacy in this sense as something handed down from the past. And that legacy, what has been handed down from the past to the church has sadly been lost today. In some cases it’s the result of carelessness and neglect. In other cases, some have intentionally abandoned their biblical legacy for some new philosophy, some new idea, some new approach, some cultural idea.

Many of you have come from churches where some or much of the Christian’s legacy has been lost. And you have come to CBC, and you have found things that have seemed new or certainly different from other churches that you have attended. The truth is there is nothing new here. We

are simply doing what much of the church has always done. But the elders know at the same time that that transition from where some of you have come from to what happens here can be a difficult one, a hard one. So, for the next few weeks until we get back into 1 John with September, I want to address some basic elements of the church's legacy, not our church, although that's true, but rather the church at large, the Christian church down through the centuries; some basic elements of the church's legacy that has been lost to many churches today. And I have a couple of goals. One of those is I want to help all of us to have a more profound appreciation for those beliefs and practices. More importantly, I want us all to understand that these things are rooted in the Scripture so that we treasure them, so that we defend them and so that we benefit from them as our Lord intended.

Today, I want us to focus on the recovery of the Legacy of Expository preaching. Now, for a few of you who were recently in the Faithful Stewards Conference, I covered these issues there. But for most of you, these will be new ideas, or at least they will be ideas that you don't think about all the time. Let me set some backdrops for you as to what's going on in the culture at large.

Back in 2009 Ed Stetzer of Lifeway interviewed Andy Stanley, the son of Charles Stanley and a pastor whose megachurch is well known for its seeker sensitive style. Stanley, at the time, had just written a book on preaching. That interview is, of course, now more than ten years old. But his controversial comments won't die. His comments about preaching continue to make the rounds on social media. Stetzer asked this question. "What do you think about preaching verse-by-verse messages through books of the Bible?"

Stanley's response was shocking. He said, "Guys that preach verse by verse through books of the Bible, that's just cheating. It's cheating because that would be easy first of all." Now there's a man who has clearly never done it. Then he added this theological assertion, here's the heart of what I want you to get, this is the idea that's out there, he simply gave voice to it, and he was talking about sequential exposition, and he said, "It isn't how you grow people." Is he right?

Is verse-by-verse exposition of books of the Scripture a manmade method that we can use or ignore at our own discretion? Is it a dated, useless approach? Sadly, most of the professing church today in America thinks so. This week, I did what I've done before, and I just took a short visit around to the websites of the largest churches here in our immediate area. So far this year not one of them has done anything like expository preaching. Right now, in fact, that largest

seeker sensitive church in our area is in a series called, “At the Movies.” Where the pastor plays a movie clip and then goes on to try to draw out of that contemporary movie something of God’s truth.

Another large church in our area is trying to find God’s truth buried within secular songs. Now, I need to acknowledge that there are good churches scattered throughout the metroplex. We don’t have the Elijah syndrome. You know, we only are left, and they seek our life to take it away. So, God said there are 7000 left that have not bowed the knee to Baal. We freely admit that and are grateful for that. At the same time, they are increasingly hard to find. And it is fair to say that most churches have abandoned any serious attempt to study the Bible. But the legacy of the Christian church is that expository preaching of the Scripture is, in fact, the biblical pattern.

Now obviously, when it comes to expository preaching, you accept it, or you wouldn’t be here. And maybe you are even committed to it. But my question to you this morning is, “Do you know why?” Could you defend the practice of the exposition, the verse-by-verse study of God’s Word to someone who challenged you?

Well, we need to understand what the Bible says. That’s the most important thing. And we need to know why we do what we do. We must understand the arguments for sequential expository preaching. So, let’s see if we can to that this morning. I want us to begin with a definition, a definition of expository preaching. My definition is drawn very simply from 1 Timothy 4:13. We’re in the pastoral epistles. Paul challenges Timothy with this, “Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.” You’ll notice in that verse he challenges Timothy that when it comes to his ministry of the Word, he is to do three things. He is to read it. He’s to teach it or explain it, and he is to exhort it, that he is to apply the truth that is taught. So let me give you a definition then, An expository sermon is one in which the preacher reads the text, explains the text in its context and applies the text to the life of the hearers.

Here’s how Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:2, he contrasts adulterating the Word of God with making a manifestation of the truth. The Greek word “manifestation” is a word which means “a display, or an exposition.” That’s what an expository message does. It makes a display of; an exposition of; a manifestation of the truth. Expository preaching is almost always also systematic, consecutive, or sequential. I’ll use those words interchangeably this morning;

systematic, consecutive, or sequential. By that I mean it moves verse-by-verse through a book of the Bible.

But why is it that we should be committed to expository teaching? Is there biblical warrant for ordinarily preaching through books of the Bible? So, let's move on then, having seen a definition, to the arguments for expository preaching.

The arguments: there are several categories of supporting arguments. Let me begin with the sort of the weakest arguments. But they are still true, and that is the practical arguments. And this is where most people go and stay, as if these were the only arguments for expository preaching. But let me just mention them. There are practical benefits to preaching verse-by-verse, paragraph-by-paragraph through the text of Scripture.

First of all, it insures a completely Bible centered ministry. If I do it right, you are not hearing a lot of Tom Pennington. You're hearing the Scripture and you're seeing it explained.

Secondly, it allows those who listen to grasp the logical development of the Word of God as the Spirit inspired it.

Thirdly, it addresses, ultimately, all of the major themes of Scripture. If you are preaching through the Bible, you're going to come to all the themes that are there.

Number four, it provides a balance of emphasis. You know, we are all given to hobby horses, and the beauty of verse-by-verse exposition is that we end up dealing with biblical themes with the same frequency and with the same emphasis that God the Holy Spirit has.

Number 5, it forces us to deal with all Scripture, including difficult passages. I'll just be honest with you, if it weren't for the commitment to verse-by-verse exposition, there are passages I would never preach. I hate preaching on giving. Not because Scripture doesn't teach it, but because of how it's abused in our culture. But I don't get that luxury, when I come to it in the text, I have to deal with it. And of course, there are other difficult issues as well.

Number 6, it teaches us all how to read and study the Bible systematically, contextually for ourselves. I don't if you realize it or not, but even if you forget a lot of what I say every Sunday as we are going verse-by-verse through the Scripture you are learning how to approach the Scripture. There is a lesson in the method as well as in the message.

Number 7, it best promotes our spiritual growth. I would do this; I would preach expositionally if it were just for my own soul because I know I personally benefit most from it.

And number 8, and this is just for me, it aids my sermon selection. I hate having to choose what I am going to preach on because everything is important. How do you choose? And the beauty is the Holy Spirit has chosen the next passage for me. So, those are some practical arguments.

Let me quickly move on to just one theological argument. There are a number of them. I don't have time to walk through them. So let me just touch on a theological argument, and that the nature of inspiration. Consecutive, exposition flows naturally from the biblical doctrine of inspiration. God chose to give us His Word in cohesive consecutive units of thoughts that we refer to as books. Turn to 1 Corinthians 2. This is an amazing passage about the Scripture. He begins, beginning in verse 6, dealing with revelation, that God has revealed His Word to us. Verse 10, "For to us God [has] revealed ... [these things] through the Spirit..." But you get to verse 12, and He comes from revelation to inspiration. Look at verse 12 with me.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, [now watch verse 13] which things [the things that God has given to us Paul says we as an apostle] ... also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but ... [words] taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

Both the thoughts and the words that the authors of Scripture used were not ultimately theirs but were the Spirit's. That's what we call verbal inspiration, it means God has breathed out the very words of Scripture. You have often heard me say that 2 Timothy 3 says that all Scripture is the product of the breath of God. It is God breathed. The words of Scripture are as much the product of the breath of God as my words right now are the product of my breath. That's the point.

And so, if these are the thoughts of God, expressed in the very words of God, presented in the exact form and order in each book that the Spirit of God inspired, then what can we do to improve on that? Inspiration argues strongly that our common approach to the Scripture be consecutive, expository preaching. Now don't misunderstand, obviously, that doesn't mean that the pastor should never preach a topical sermon. There are examples in Scripture of that. This series, this sermon is an example of that. But, understand this, the church best reflects divine

revelation and inspiration when the consistent pattern of preaching follows the flow of the divinely inspired text. That's the theological argument.

Let's move on to the historical argument. A brief survey of church history reveals that the church's consistent commitment has been to expository preaching. In the mid-2nd century AD we learn about the earliest Christian services. Justin Martyr provides the first account outside of Scripture of a Christian church service. Listen to what he writes,

On the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gathered together to one place and the memoirs of the apostles, that's the New Testament, or the writings of the prophets, that's the Old Testament, are read as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president, that is the person presiding, verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things.

Did you see the picture of 1 Timothy 4:13 here? They read the text, explained the text, and applied the text. That's the earliest nonbiblical record of a Christian worship service.

Now, this pattern continues. Sadly, let's acknowledge that many of the early church fathers tended to stray from this pattern, but there were consistent bright lights. Augustine's sermons, for example, were often exceptions. As one author describes it, for him a sermon was first of all an exposition of Scripture. In the same period of time John Chrysostom was an exceptional example of a faithful expositor of Scripture. Hughes Oliphant Old who wrote a massive magisterial seven volume set on the reading and preaching of God's Word in the church writes this,

By far the largest number of John Chrysostom's sermons were his expository sermons. On occasion his series would be interrupted when he decided it was necessary to preach on some other subject. In principle however, he preached the "lectio continua" beginning each sermon where he left off the sermon before.

The reformers also argued for and displayed by example the consistent practice of sequential expository preaching. John Calvin for example systematically preached through books of the Bible. Whether the biblical book was long or short, he was determined to preach every verse. So, here's just a sampling. He preached 89 sermons on Acts; 174 sermons on Ezekiel; 159 sermons on Job; 200 sermons on Deuteronomy; 353 sermons on Isaiah; 123 sermons on Genesis; 109 sermons on 1 Samuel; and 87 sermons on 2 Samuel.

What about other reformers? Luther preached expositionally. Zwingli, the Swiss reformer decided that he was no longer preach on the passages that had been prescribed for him. Instead, he announced to his congregations that he was going to preach through the entire book of Matthew with his Greek text on the pulpit in front of him.

The Puritans followed the same practice. J.I. Packer in his book on the Puritans *Quest for Godliness* writes this, “The Puritans were devotees of continuous exposition and have left behind magnificent sets of commentaries on complete chapters and books of the Bible. Clearly then, beloved, understand that there is historical precedent for consecutive, expository teaching. The men on whose shoulders we stand believed and practiced this method. At the same time, let me acknowledge to you that historical consensus alone is not indisputable evidence. But the fact that so many of them believed consecutive exposition best honors God’s Word, best equips God’s people is an argument that we simply cannot ignore.

But let’s move on to the key, and that is the biblical arguments, the biblical arguments. Here with Stanley’s most serious charge against consecutive, sequential exposition in that interview, “No one in Scripture models that, there’s not one example.”

The most important question for us when it comes to any issue including how I and the other elders of this church handle the Word of God is, “Does the Bible itself include clear examples of expository preaching, and does the Bible demand this of its teachers?” We must be prepared to understand what the Scripture teaches and to defend this from the Scripture. So, let’s do that together. Let me give you the biblical arguments.

Number 1, the ministry of Moses, the ministry of Moses. The first clear example of sequential exposition in Scripture comes from the ministry of Moses himself. The foundation was laid back in Exodus 24. Turn there with me. Exodus 24, and look at verse 3. You remember Moses had been with God on Mount Sinai. Verse 3 says, “... Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of [Yahweh] ...and all the ordinances; and all the people [listened] ... with one voice and said, ‘All the words which [Yahweh] ... has spoken we will do!’”

Now, in verse 4, you’ll notice he writes all the words of the LORD down. Now look at verse 7. Moses took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that [Yahweh] ... has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” Folks, it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of verse 7. Think about this. From the first time that God revealed

Himself in written form, the consecutive reading of His Word became an essential part of the worship of God's people. Moses laid a foundation by reading God's Word to the people at Sinai. But Moses also established a clear pattern of consecutive exposition forty years later on the plains on Moab.

Turn to Deuteronomy 1, Deuteronomy 1. Verse 1 says, "These are the words which Moses spoke...." And then, verse 5 explains the contents of this book of Deuteronomy. "Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law...." So, Moses not only set out to read the law, which he had done from the very beginning, to read it through as it had been written down under the inspiration of the Spirit, but to explain it. The sermons in Deuteronomy then are Moses' inspired sermons on God's law. So, understand this then, Moses was God's instrument not only to initiate written revelation, but also to serve as a pattern for all future biblical preaching. He laid the standard. Read the text consecutively and then preach on the text, explain the text.

That brings us to argument number 2, the Old Testament corporate worship, the Old Testament corporate worship. The consistent practice of Old Testament corporate worship demonstrates this very same approach that had begun with Moses. You see Christian worship, our worship, finds its roots in the rich soil of the worship of Israel, worship that centered in the reading and preaching of God's Word.

Now typically, when you and I think about the tabernacle, and later the temple, our minds go to what? the sacrificial system. But God also demanded that His Word be taught at both the tabernacle and the temple. He assigned this responsibility to the descendants of Levi. Listen to Deuteronomy 33:10, "They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, And Your law to Israel...." A crucial part of the Levites' job description included teaching the people the Word of God. That's why, in part, God demanded that the Levites not live just in, ultimately in Jerusalem, where the temple was, but across the land Israel. They were to live across the nation so they could teach the Word of God on the weekly Sabbaths in their own communities. This was their duty.

Now, we learn the importance of this priestly duty in Chronicles, because in Chronicles the writer blames the decline of the worship of Yahweh on the priests' failure to teach the people God's Word. Wow, this is a sermon series for today. Why is American Christianity declining so rapidly? It's right out of 2 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 15:3, "For many days Israel was without the

true God (why?) and without a teaching priest and without [the] law.” God’s Word wasn’t taught, and therefore the worship of the true God declined. Jehoshaphat, a good king, instituted reforms to address this issue. And in 2 Chronicles 17:7-9 we read this,

... in the third year of his reign he sent his officials ... to teach in the cities of Judah; and with them the Levites ... and with them ... the priests. They taught in Judah, *having* the book of the law of the LORD with them; and they went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

Jehoshaphat was forced to institute this reform because it hadn’t been done as God had commanded it back in Deuteronomy 33. As a result, God’s people didn’t know His Word. So, as part of his reforms, he sent some of his own officials, some Levites, and among the Levites, a special group of Levites, the priests. The priests were not only descendants of Levi, but they were also descendants specifically of Aaron, Moses’ brother. They served in the sacrificial system, but they were also responsible, the priests were, to teach the people the law of God. Listen to Leviticus 10:11, they were to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.”

Now, some of the Levites were also scribes. That is, they were responsible to archive and copy the law. The most famous of the scribes was Ezra whose ministry provides a model for the use of the Word of God in worship. The record of Ezra’s ministry and his reform is in Nehemiah 8. Turn there with me. Nehemiah 8:1,

And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding ...

Verse 3 ... He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of [the] men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And [there] ... [next to him were these others who were responsible] Ezra, verse 5, opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

What's interesting is several common practices today can be traced to this day in Nehemiah 8. Ezra stood on a raised platform on a wooden podium, not only so all the people could see, but there was a picture that he was standing between God and them, as God's instrument to teach them God's Word. Our platform and our pulpit trace back to that day, and although you don't stand for my entire sermon, for which you can give God thanks. Throughout church history Christians have stood as we do for the reading of God's Word out of a sign of respect. That all goes back to Ezra. It goes back to 500 years before our Lord. But look at verse 6.

Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. Also ... these Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place. They read from the book of the law, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

So, what did they do here? They read, and they translated. That could mean they translated the Scripture from Hebrew to Aramaic because most of the people no longer spoke Hebrew. More likely, they explained the meaning of the reading. But regardless, they did that. We know they explained the Word because that's what God had called them to do, and verse 7 clearly says that they explained what was read. So, what was happening here? Ezra and the Levites reestablished the pattern. In their reform they reestablished the pattern for the corporate worship of God's people. They read the text, and they explained the text. They read the text, and they explained the text. This was the biblical pattern.

A third biblical argument is Jewish synagogue worship. Worship in the synagogue followed the same pattern. In the first century the Sabbath worship focused on reading and explaining the Scripture. James describes this practice in Jewish synagogues at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15:21, this is what James says, "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Did you hear that, Moses is read and preached, read and preached, read and preached. That was the pattern.

Philo, the first century Jewish philosopher, describes the typical weekly synagogue service at the time of Christ. "They come to the holy places called synagogues according to their age in order. The young men sit under the elders at their feet and with a descent composure attend to the

hearing. When one, taking the book reads, and another one of the most skillful explains what is not known. They read and explain. They read and explain. So, in the synagogue during the time of Christ, the most skillful teachers read the Scripture and then another, the same one, explained that portion of Scripture.

The typical synagogue service then in the first century: it included readings from the law, the first five books of the Old Testament, and prophets, that's the rest of the Old Testament. So, there was a reading from Moses, the first five books, and there was a reading from somewhere in the rest of the Old Testament every Sabbath. And the sermon was connected to those readings. And the reading was, like, all the way back to Moses, intentionally consecutive. Week-after-week the teacher read the next portion in the law and the next section in the prophets and explained the reading. Undoubtedly, there were times when the leaders of the synagogue may have given a teacher the liberty to choose a passage to be read, but ordinarily first century synagogues followed a systematic, consecutive reading of Scripture from the law and then from the prophets. And then a sermon explained that day's reading. Normal synagogue sermons then were consecutive expositions of Scripture.

Now, don't misunderstand, that doesn't mean they were always good expositions. Jesus often corrected the content of their sermons, but He never took issue or disparaged their method of consecutive exposition. The teacher read the next passage beyond where they ended the previous week and explained it. That was the pattern of synagogue worship. And that is crucial to understand to get the next argument.

And the next biblical argument is this, our Lord's teaching ministry, our Lord's own teaching ministry. Again, Hughes Oliphant Old writes, Jesus was preeminently a preacher of the Word. His three-year ministry was above all a preaching ministry. A crucial part of Jesus' preaching ministry, however, listen carefully, a crucial part of Jesus' preaching ministry was in synagogues on the Sabbath. Matthew 4:23 records, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom...." Jesus, Himself said in John 18:20 to Pilate, "I have spoken openly to the world, I always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all the Jews come together.

But you can see this most clearly in Luke's gospel. Turn with me to Luke 4. Luke drives this home. Luke 4:14, "And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him

spread through all the surrounding district.” Now, verse 15 explains the focus of His ministry in Galilee. “... He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.” [all around Galilee.] So, the focus of His ministry, this new ministry in Galilee was preaching in the synagogue all over Galilee.

Now the next verse, verse 16, describes His return to His hometown. He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and [notice this] as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. He took the book of the prophet Isaiah that was handed to Him, opened the book and found the place where it was written.... You’ll notice verse 20 concludes after the reading. And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all the congregation were fixed on Him.

And He began to say to them. Now the word “began” means Luke didn’t record Jesus’ entire sermon. But what I want you to get is in His hometown synagogue, Jesus did exactly what was done in the synagogue. He read the text, and He explained it. Jesus was an expository preacher. After the people of Nazareth rejected Him, Jesus continued teaching and preaching in the synagogues in Galilee. Look down at verse 31. “... He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath....” This was His regular practice.

Verse 44, “... He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.” Notice there it says of Judea. This was the focus of Jesus’ ministry not only in Galilee, but also in Judea. That is either a reference to the region around Jerusalem, or it might be the entire land of Israel. But either way, this is what Jesus did. Every Sabbath Jesus never failed to worship on the Sabbath, and every Sabbath He read the text, and He explained the text.

Verse 6 of chapter 6 adds this. On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching. Luke 13:10 again mentions, He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. Listen folks, examine the life of Jesus, and you will find the pattern. He often taught during the week. Those are some of His most famous sermons. There are countless examples of His teaching from boats in the Sea of Galilee, from hillsides, the temple grounds in Jerusalem and many other venues during the week.

But the primary focus of Jesus’ teaching ministry, week in and week out was preaching in the synagogues. And there Jesus participated in the normal routine of synagogue worship, the consecutive reading and exposition of the Word of God. Jesus was a sequential expositor. So,

don't you believe those who try to convince you that there is no example of this in the Bible. This didn't happen. They're just making this up. No, this was Jesus' primary approach to the teaching of God's Word.

Let's move on to a fifth biblical argument: the New Testament church, the New Testament church. Here we discover yet another argument for exposition that is ordinarily sequential or consecutive. From the beginning the church's leaders were devoted to teaching God's Word, and God's people were equally devoted to the apostles' teaching according to Acts 2:42. You remember in Acts 6 the apostles faced, at the church in Jerusalem, a surprising distraction from their teaching. What was it? It was the ministry of caring for widows, an important ministry, but one that threatened to distract them from praying and teaching God's Word. But they determined to focus their greatest priorities in this way, Acts 6:3 and 4.

“... brethren, select from among you seven men ... whom we may put in charge of this task, But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

That was the priority of the apostles as they ministered to the church in Jerusalem, but that wasn't merely the apostles' priority. That became the priority of the local church elders, the primary duty of New Testament elders. This is clear even in what distinguishes elders from deacons and others. It is an ability to teach God's Word; 1 Timothy 3:2, ... they must be able to teach.

Paul describes the elders that the church should support financially when he writes to Timothy, talking about the church in Ephesus in 1 Timothy 5:17. He says you need to support financially “those who labor at teaching and preaching,” because of the priority it has in the life of the church. The priority of the ministry of the Word is also clear not only in the New Testament examples but in its commands. Paul insists that both the Old Testament and the growing body of New Testament inspired documents were to be read and explained in the corporate worship of the church.

I started with 1 Timothy 4:13 where he says, Until I come, give [your wholehearted] attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to teaching [that is to explaining it] and to exhortation, [that is to applying it.]” And he goes on to say, be completely devoted to this, be in these things so that your progress will be evident to all. He says, Timothy, to shepherd, you have one chief duty and

that is to feed the sheep. Read the text, explain the text, apply the text. That was the job, the job description of a New Testament elder.

In 2 Timothy 4:2, “preach the word, be read in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” Under the authority of Christ Himself, 2 Timothy 4:1, Paul demanded that New Testament elders read and preach the Scripture, not only the Old Testament, but Paul’s letters were to be read as well, showing that the New Testament is to be treated in the same way.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:27 Paul writes, “I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.” The clear implication is that the reading was to drive the explanation. And ordinarily, the reading would have been consecutive. Again, the clear implication is that Paul’s letters were to be read in their entirety as he had written them, and the elder who read 1 Thessalonians to the congregation there was to read the letter as Paul wrote it and he was to explain whatever he needed to explain to make it clear, just as he would do with reading the Old Testament Scripture. So, by apostolic command then we are to read and explain the New Testament books and the Hebrew Scripture of the Old Testament.

So, let me summarize it this way. The Word has always been central in the worship of God. It has always been the key element of worship. That’s why there isn’t an altar here at the center of the pulpit in the front of this church but a pulpit that pictures the reality that this has been the central role. All the way back to Moses, and especially to Ezra in Nehemiah 8. The ministry of the Word has commonly been the systematic, consecutive reading and then explaining of God’s Word. That’s exactly what we do here week-after-week, month-after-month, year-after-year. Why? Because we like to do it? No, because that is the biblical pattern and mandate for the leaders of the church; always has been and always will be.

So, let’s move then to the implications of this. What are the implications of this determination that you need to have, that I need to have, that as a church we need to have to recover the Legacy of Expository Preaching? Let me give you several.

Number 1, understand this, that any church that is not wholeheartedly committed to expository preaching, and I say this with grace, but it’s true, from what we’ve just seen, has lost through carelessness of its leaders in the past, or abandoned intentionally, out of the greatest amount of

pride, the legacy of the Christian church. This is what has been done. A failure to do it is either carelessness or pride. This is what God has demanded of His church.

Number 2, personally, personally, you need to embrace the biblical priority of and develop a personal appetite for expository preaching. Look, I get it, we live in a sound bite world. We live in a tick tock world, an instagram world, where everything is here and done, here and done. Tom, can you hurry it up? I've got other things to do. You need to develop an appetite for what God has demanded happen in this church. If you can sit and watch a baseball game for three hours; if you can sit and watch a movie for two hours; if you can sit and binge in Netflix for hour upon hour, you can listen to the Word of God for a few minutes.

Develop an appetite for expository preaching because this isn't something I decided I should do. This is what the church has always done because it is what God commanded be done, and there is example after example in Scripture, and throughout church history. And why should you do that? Because this book that you hold in your hand, that book contains everything you need for life and godliness.

In fact, Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:15, he said to Timothy, the Scripture, listen to this, the Scripture, what's in between the covers of this book, is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Listen, you want to be forgiven of your sins, you want to know God your Creator, the answer to that is not found out there somewhere. It's found in the covers of this book. It's found between the covers of that book you hold in your hand. This is God's wisdom that will point you to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

And if you have already come to know that salvation, Paul goes on to say in that very same passage, that the Scripture is able to equip you for every good work. That's why we are so careful with it. Because if you are in Christ, you are not going to find help in self-help. You are not going to find help on the internet unless it comes from explaining this book. This is what God has given you for life and godliness, and His Spirit to help you understand things, and the teachers in the church to help you further understand it. This is God's way, so embrace that.

Number 3, choose only churches that take God's Word seriously. And that is demonstrated by a pattern of sequential, expository, preaching. Listen, if you are visiting and have decided this church isn't for you, I understand you saying that. But don't you dare go to a church where God's Word isn't taken seriously, because this is what God has demanded of His church. And

some guy who gets up and gives a twenty-minute chat with all of his jokes and stories, and doesn't read the text, explain the text and apply the text is a travesty on the ministry, and he is unfaithful to Jesus Christ' glory because that's what has been required. Don't choose a church that doesn't take God's Word seriously.

Number 4, value the treasure of God's Word. Read it yourself. Study it; meditate on it; obey it; and teach it to those under your influence. If this is the priority when we come together for worship, then it should be the priority when you worship individually. Worship is not about a feeling. Feelings follow truth. It's about the truth.

And number 5, be a good expository listener. If I am commanded to be an expository preacher, you need to be a good expository listener? How do you do that? Well, it starts with bringing your Bible with you where you can track with me and hold me faithful. You ought to be able to leave here going, yep, I see that, I see that's exactly what that says, that makes sense. If it's something esoteric, and you look at it and go, I have no idea where Tom got that, that's a problem. You need to be tracking with me.

I encourage you to consider taking notes. You don't have to take notes. That's not required biblically. But consider it, to aide as a memory tool, to aide in focused listening.

Review the passage that we deal with during the week. Go back, read it, think about what you learned. Seek to apply it. Take your role in this process seriously. This is for your soul. It is for my soul, but it is not solely for my soul, it's for all of us. Beloved, let's insist on the legacy of expository preaching because this is what the Scriptures teach. This is what faithful men have always done. And that's why we do it here. So, it's not new. It is not new, this is old, and it's because God commanded it. Let's learn to treasure it.

No prayer