

# The Blue Banner

A Publication of First Presbyterian Church, Rowlett, Texas / Vol 2 #9-10 Sept.-Oct. 1993

## Scripture Explained: 1 Samuel 8

[Editor's Note: The following was edited from Pastor Bacon's explanation given during a Sunday morning Scripture reading.]

We're told here in this passage that Samuel was an old man. He had served the Lord since the time he was a child, and had literally "grown up" in the church. Now that he was getting old, we read that his sons didn't follow in his footsteps. What a heartbreak that must have been, to see that even though he made use of the means that God had appointed, nevertheless his sons turned out to be just like Eli's did. Let this be a lesson to us parents, that God is sovereign and if our children are drawn to him it is because of his grace, and not because we're better than Eli. We should make use of the appointed means, but we shouldn't expect that the means are trustworthy in and of themselves. One of the ways we sin against the third commandment is not just using unlawful means, but trusting in lawful means. We're to trust God. The means that God has given are not automatic, but we are still to make us of them.

That had to be the first heartbreak for Samuel. The second we find between the lines so to speak, when God comforts him by saying, "They haven't rejected you, they've rejected me." Samuel's reaction to Israel wanting a king may have been as if Israel had said, "Well, here's Samuel who has been judging us seventy years — we don't like that." But God comforted him. "Look, if they rejected you it's because they rejected me first. I've been putting up with this people since I brought them up out of Egypt. You've only had to put up with them for seventy years now."

God knew exactly what kind of people they were. He tells Samuel the kind of king they were going to have, and that they weren't going to listen, and that Samuel was to go ahead and make them a king anyway. Warn them, and let them go their way. This is a real sign of judgment, when we receive warning, and then go our own way. It is a sign of God's judgment upon our lives; he has taken away tenderness of heart. This is what had happened to the children of Israel. They were bound and determined to do what they wanted to do. Why? What was the reason they gave? "We want to be like everybody else." We want to accommodate ourselves to the surrounding culture. God

told them it wasn't good enough. Samuel said it wasn't good enough. But the people said it's good enough for us. They were bound and determined to have what they wanted. God warned them ahead of time what the consequences were going to be; the king would take away everything they thought they had.

There is an application for this country in this passage. Samuel thought he was telling the people something terrible, that the king was going to take away ten percent of everything they owned. How much are you paying in taxes? If you're paying ten percent you're doing well as far as your tax bill is concerned. The fact of it is that we pay more in taxes because this country is under the judgment of God.

Why is it when there are more evangelical Christians in this country than at any other time, that it doesn't make a difference? One percent of the population is homosexual, yet they're driving the agenda for this country. If there are so many evangelical Christians in this country, why are we refusing or neglecting to drive an agenda. Let me suggest to you that it is because the church of God is under judgment as well. The reason it is under God's judgment is because we have turned our ear away from hearing God's commandments. We've refused to hearken unto the Lord our God.

I know it's real easy for us who have a high view of the Law to become complacent. This is the danger we face more than anything else. Let me suggest to you that according to Scripture, we are never reformed enough. The old saying was, *Ecclesia Reformanda semper Reformanda*. The church that is reformed is always reforming. We can say the same thing about an individual Christian. The Christian who is sanctified is always being sanctified.

If there was a time in our lives when God was doing more, then we are backslidden. It's just that simple. I've been

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back slidden. You have. You know what it feels like and you know God isn't having any of it. God didn't put us there, we put ourselves there. You know if God is working in your life now like he was last week or last month, a year or ten years ago. If you don't then you need to start asking yourself that question. I want this to be a warning to you; not to discourage you. The biggest danger the reformed church faces is complacency. The very moment that we think that we're reformed enough, the very moment that we think that we're as sanctified as we need to be, the very moment that we think God doesn't have any more work to do in our lives — the devil won.

## Book Review

["The Burden of God," by Dr. Michael Kelley. Published by Contra Mundum Books. P.O. Box 32652, Fridley, MN 55432-0652, \$11.00. 151 pages. Christopher L. Stamper is a free lance writer and a graduate student in political science at Syracuse University. He is a member of Park Cities Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Dallas, Texas.]

Ecclesiastes strikes at the core of much of popular neo-Evangelical thought with its apparent negativism. It is not the stuff of which the Styrofoam self-help homilies that fill so many shelves of Christian bookstores are made. Many simply pass it by and turn to other texts that are more easily forced into a subjective man-centered mold.

Dr. Kelley argues against two different interpretations made by commentators, both liberal and conservative. One is that Solomon's wisdom reflects ancient fatalism, as of that of a stoic blindly following the bidding celestial dilettante. The other is the conclusion that the vanity found under the sun comes from man's finitude (the latter is a key assumption in neoorthodox thought).

The missing element in the discussion of Ecclesiastes is the difference in worldview between the covenant keeper and the covenant breaker. One has his hope in the Lord and the other has no hope at all. This has ramifications, not just concerning personal piety, but in all of civilization. Man's sinful rebellion against God and his claim to autonomy have destroyed the value of man's earthly labors. "Ecclesiastes is a relentless discreditation of humanistic man, man in rebellion against God, and all that his life represents," the author writes.

Since the Lord is in control of the times and seasons, the covenant-keeper can look at the world around him from a God-centered perspective. This is a central character of the OT wisdom books. Are the answers to man's social and political problems to be found in a demagogic leader or parental state? Will there ever be true peace and justice in a society that denies that the Lord is King?

Of course not; the wisdom of Solomon shows that man's corruption has led to devastation in every sphere of life that only God Himself can repair. To "adopt the humanistic wisdom," Kelley writes, "is to inherit its negative consequences. If the message of Ecclesiastes seems to echo so pessimistic a note, it is in order that God's own people may know what is at stake."

Solomon's wisdom is as clearly different from the mind

of the nations surrounding Israel as it is from the typical American or European. Kelley cites Egypt and Mesopotamia as totalitarian societies where the people lived trapped between opposing forces of metaphysical order and chaos. For example, Pharaoh controlled the harmony of the universe as well as the Egyptian people. The Greeks, however, went beyond this in taking the power over the natural order from the gods and giving it to themselves with ideas such as the hero myth and the rise of the polis.

The wisdom God gave to Solomon was not of Solomon's creation, but a special gift as part of His plan of redemption. This is the opposite of the Hellenistic model. As a covenant-head, Solomon is a type of Christ, whose wisdom is even greater. Obviously Solomon could not save nor could he claim that he is the Bread of Life and the only path to the Father.

God's law is the heart of all wisdom; without it, man would be without true knowledge of what is right or just. "At the core of lawobedience," writes Kelley, "throbs a pulsating 'fear of the Lord' - a sense that God has the right to define the ethical parameters of one's life, to dictate the terms that shape an entire philosophy of life."

"The Burden of God" is a good first lesson in how to think Christianly. Kelley wrote it primarily as a textbook for pastors or teachers who will be teaching about Ecclesiastes. Since many in Evangelicaldom have had a steady diet of shallowness, bad theology or pietism, this book calmly and thoughtfully challenges, without unnecessary harshness, many assumptions that are often taken for granted. It presents an excellent opportunity to introduce true spirituality and the Christian worldview into bible study meetings, college groups and Sunday School classes. Copyright © 1993, Christopher L. Stamper.

## Presbyterian Bibliography

*GEORGE GILLESPIE, PART FOUR. REASONS AGAINST THE SERVICE BOOK.*

Reasons For Which The Service Book Urged Upon Scotland Ought to be Refused. (1638) [Edinburgh: G. Anderson?] Published in whole in the Appendix of A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies (Dallas: Naphtali Press, 1993).

This article along with Reasons against the rendering of our sworn confession, which is attributed to Archibald Johnston, has been bound with editions of The confession of faith of the Kirk of Scotland, subscribed by the Kings majesty . . . 1580. With a designation of such acts of parliament, as are expedient, for justifying the union, after mentioned. And subscribed by the nobles, 1638 (Edinburgh: G. Anderson, 1638). These have also been printed with the Latin edition of the confession, and with Reasons for a General Assembly (1638).

Evidently it seemed advisable that these three papers be appended to the various publications of the confession to explain the *reasons* for the Covenanters' actions. Robert

Baillie ascribes the paper against the service book to George Gillespie (*Letters and Journals*, Vol. 1, pp. 90.). "We have some reasons against the service in print. . . I took the author to be Mr. Henderson, but I am informed since, they came from Mr. George Gillespie, a youth who waited on my Lord Kennedy, and is now admitted to the kirk of Wemyss . . . The same youth is now given out by those who should know, for the author of the *English Popish Ceremonies*: whereof we all do marvel; for though he had gotten the papers, and help of the chief of that side, yet the very composition would seem to be far above such an age. . . Yea, I think he may prove amongst the best wits of this isle."

The fame that was accruing to Gillespie because of his *Dispute* undoubtedly led to his being chosen to write this piece. In brief form he goes through six arguments against the imposition of Laud's liturgy. His first reason against the book is that it makes a significant change in the historic doctrine and discipline of the Scottish church. In reasons two and three he points out that the service has all the essential parts of the Mass as well as other popish superstitions. Even if these were removed, he shows that there are a number of material errors still remaining, which he lists under his fourth point against the liturgy. In the most lengthy point of this short work, his fifth reason against the service book, he explains that even if the before mentioned errors were all corrected, "yet such a liturgy were not lawful to be made the only form of God's worship in public." He then lists 10 reasons why it is unlawful for anyone to tie himself and others to a prescript form of prayer and exhortation. Some of the reasons given are:

"(2) It is against the dignity of Christ, in making his gifts needless. For, though he send down no gifts at all, they can serve themselves with the book, without them."

"(3) It quenches the Holy Spirit, because he gets no employment."

"(8.) It may be done by a boy of seven years old, and so every private man that can read; yea, a Turk if he may read, may be such a minister."

"(10) If any one stinted [prescribed] liturgy had been good, or needful, no doubt but Christ would have set one down for us."

In reason six Gillespie explains that even if a prescribed form of liturgy were lawful, yet there is no warrant for imposing it on Scotland.

This piece is important as the second production to come from the author's hand. As in the *EPC*, it shows the strength of his abilities to frame and make an argument. As in his first work, he backs his opponents step by step into a corner from which they are left with no answer upon which to stand.

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### **Some general observations concerning Preaching, and especially Application**

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[The following is one of the digressions which James Durham added into his Commentary upon the Book of

Revelation. The text is from the Glasgow edition of 1788, pp. 275-282. It was originally published after the author's death in 1659.]

Having now gone through these epistles, we may see how wisely and seriously our Lord Jesus, the prince of pastors (who has the tongue of the learned given to him) speaks from heaven to the condition of the churches to whom they are directed. Herein we have an excellent copy [example], according to which, ministers ought to carry themselves in discharging their trust. We conceive therefore it will not be impertinent to shut up these epistles with some general directions concerning the way of ministers making application to hearers. This can hardly anywhere else more clearly, fully, and together be gathered. Although everything may not be particularly pitched upon, which is necessary in preaching (that not being the Spirit's intent in the place); yet we are sure that as his prosecuting of the respective cases of these churches is very comprehensive, so it cannot be but most worthy of imitation.

1. In general we see that ministers in their application ought to conform themselves to the case of the church and persons to whom they preach: to erroneous people (or such as are in danger of error) more convincingly; to the secure, more sharply; to the afflicted and tender, more comfortably; etc. as may be seen in our Lord's dealing with these churches.

2. Ministers ought, in their doctrine, to apply themselves to all sorts of persons, viz. to rulers and people, to hypocrites and openly profane; yea, to the good, and these that have most tenderness; reproving all, convincing all, as there shall be cause: so that neither hopelessness of profiting some that seem to be desperate, nor preposterous affection to these who are tender and affectionate, ought to mar this manner of dealing. And thus we see our Lord Jesus threatens profane and gross erroneous Jezebel upon the one hand, and backsliding (though godly) Ephesus on the other. Sometimes it is more difficult freely and faithfully to reprove one that is godly, or to withstand one Peter, than to threaten or contend with many that are profane: and yet both are necessary and profitable for edification.

3. This universal application to all sorts, should yet, notwithstanding, be managed with spiritual wisdom and prudence, so that everyone may get their own allowance. Hence the Lord threatens the secure and stubborn, that yet he excepts these who are not defiled; and so comforts the faithful, as the profane may not have a ground to take the same consolation with them. This is a main qualification of a minister of the gospel, rightly to divide the word of truth, and not to follow all applications promiscuously, and in heap together, in any audience, with such discriminating expressions as may guard against confusion therein; especially as to these four:

(1.) That a tender soul may be so strengthened and confirmed, as a secure person be not more hardened; and that a presumptuous hypocrite be so stricken at, as an exercised soul be not wounded;

(2.) When both the good and profane are in one fault, the one is otherwise to be reprov'd and restored than the other:

and we see Ephesus is more tenderly dealt with than Laodicea, according to the rule [of] Galatians 6:1.

(3.) The faults of believers should be so reproved, as with these their state, and what is commendable in their practice, be not condemned and rejected also: but that there be intermixed commendations, or approbations of what is approvable, lest godliness suffer, when the fault of a godly person is reproved; and lest the sentence go beyond the master's intent, which is not to condemn the person, but to reprove the fault, as the Lord tenderly distinguishes these in the case of Ephesus and Pergamos.

(4.) Times and cases should be distinguished also: and where outward affliction, or inward exercise have seized on a person or people, reproofs would be more sparing and gentle, than where there is outward prosperity and a readiness to settle in a formal discharge of duties, as by comparing the Lord's dealing with the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Philadelphia, and his dealing with Sardis and Laodicea, is clear.

4. The application should be pathetic, pungent and weighty, according to the matter pressed, so it may have weight upon the consciences of hearers. It is a main piece of ministerial dexterity to make a plain, obvious, ordinary reproof, weighty in application, so the matter may look serious to the hearers, and they be convinced that he is in earnest. For this cause, his convictions, reproofs, directions, etc. should not rest in the general: for the Lord is particular in all these epistles.

(1.) In mentioning the sins that he reproveth.

(2.) In giving the evidences of them, to show that he does not merely beat the air; and the more to bear in the conviction in the application: for, as general truths will need their proofs; so will particular applications, lest the conscience shift the challenge.

(3.) He rips up the heart, by chopping at inward sins, viz. *falling from the first love; thou sayest, I am rich, &c thou hast a name that thou livest, but art dead, etc.* It is a main part of searching doctrine, to repel the answers that a heart may have within against the power of godliness, though they be never expressed; and this is a main property of the word, to be *a discerner of thoughts* (Hebrews. 4:12). And thus John did with his hearers (Matthew. 3:9). *Think not to say within yourselves, etc.*

(4.) The Lord himself is in his expressions serious, that the conscience and inner-man may be carried along in giving heed to the words spoken to the ear, and that the outward-man may see the scope of the word preached (2 Corinthians. 10:4-5, etc).

5. Application should rather be squared [fitted] to the edification of the hearer, than simply and only regulated by the doctrine from which it arises. Sometimes there may be seemingly flourishing applications, when a minister speaks in the prosecuting of some truth, and in the pressing of some point with respect to the matter that he is handling, which is in itself good. Yet it may be of little use to the hearers to whom he speaks, as not being pertinent to them. Our Lord here conforms his application to these to whom he writes. Such truths ought to be insisted on and pressed

as befit the hearers.

6. The matter insisted upon is diverse; sometimes reproof, sometimes exhortation, sometimes it is in reference to corrupt doctrines, sometimes to the inward spiritual case, etc. This shows that a minister should not be addicted to, nor always dwell upon one thing, but should sometimes convince gainsayers and make truths clear, sometimes preach practical things, and that of diverse sorts. Faith and practice are the end of preaching; and clearness in, and acquaintance with truth, makes hearers solid and well-grounded in both. Besides that in numerous auditors there are varieties of conditions, which call for a variety of edifying doctrine.

7. In his striking errors, we find, 1. That he does not insist on questions of more remote concernment [interest], such as many were in these times; but on those that are in their nature more gross, and in their consequence more hurtful. 2. The errors that he touches were such as were presently troubling the church, and these churches in particular to whom he writes. Old buried errors are not fit matter for ordinary preaching. 3. He pursues these errors as most gross and abominable things to make them odious and abominable unto his people; and for that end, compares the promoters thereof to Balaam and Jezebel. It was regretted by holy Mr. Greenham (English Puritan, 1531-1591), *That some, by their trifling way of confuting error, made it but ridiculous, whereas they ought, by earnestness and gravity, to have made it hateful.*

8. His practical matter is near the power of godliness, viz. marking the spiritual declining of the sincere, pressing the exercise of repentance, and the performing of holy duties upon all; and withal, most searchingly and convincingly striking at hypocrisy, presumption, and self-confidence, as in the epistles to Sardis and Laodicea. Thereby he showed what doctrine, especially ministers, should insist on in congregations. If we look to our Lord's practice while in the flesh, we will not find him more frequent on any subject than this, viz. that the way to heaven is narrow, that many were first that shall be last, that hypocrisy should be guarded against, etc. as his parables of the sower, foolish virgins, marriage-feast, and many other instances demonstrate.

9. The Lord does not insist upon the most high, sublime, and obscure things, either in his doctrines, reproofs or directions, such as are the most abstruse questions of the schools, or the most spiritual experiences of grown [mature] Christians, although this last, being well-timed, has its use. He presses the most plain, obvious, and incontrovertible duties of religion, viz. repentance, self-examination, faith, zeal, etc. It is a great and main part; yea, the very life of application, to stir up to the practice of acknowledged-duties, and to restrain from confessed sin: for, as mainly the life of religion lies in the practice of these; so the most powerful preaching is the pressing of them. We may to this purpose see also in that sermon of our Lord, which is recorded by Matthew in chapters 5 to 7 with what familiarity he condescends to expound the law to direct in the exercise of prayer and fasting, and other duties, both in

the first and second table, wherein certainly he is still pressing spiritual service.

10. In all these, the Lord so follows the application, as he may imprint it on the conscience, and leave some profitable fruit by it: and, in a word, he convinces, exhorts, reproves, offers counsels, etc. as they may be edified by it, and every word may gain its native end. Therefore we see when he convinces of, and reproves for sin, he charges them. *Secondly*, he does aggrege [make them odious]. These do first point at the particular sins wherewith he sins by showing the guiltiness and sinfulness of them. *Thirdly*, he proposes weighty and sad threatenings to scare them: and the more secure and self-confident they be (as in the epistle to Laodicea), he the more sharply rips up the inside, and the more emphatically and significantly expresses his abhorrence thereof, and their hazard thereby. Again, when he exhorts to duty:

(1.) He makes the duty plain, that it may be known what he calls for.

(2.) He gives some helps for furthering of them in the performance thereof, viz. the remembering of what is past, or their examining of their own way, watchfulness and advertency [heedfulness] for the time to come, and such like; which are both in themselves principal duties, and great helps in all the practice of holiness.

(3.) He presses these exhortations to duties with motives which comprehend both the prejudice of neglecting them, and that advantage that comes by the performing of them. Again, when he proposes the offer of the gospel, and invites to believe (as to the church at Laodicea):

(1.) He opens their sinful, dangerous and hypocritical case, and batters down the ignorant self-confidence which they had in their own formal profession.

And (2.) He proposes the right remedy; viz. himself and his benefits, his imputed righteousness which can only cover their nakedness, etc.

(3.) He clears terms upon which that *gold* and *white raiment* is obtained, under these expressions of buying, opening, hearkening, etc.

And (4.) He most sweetly, and yet most vehemently presses it: partly, by friendly condescending to counsel and entreat; partly, by making his offer large, free, and particular to any man that will open, etc. and partly by urging his call weightily and rousingly with a Behold, I stand; as if after he had made the offer, and had knocked, he were now taking instruments, in the consciences of hearers; thereby, as with a nail to fasten his invitation upon them: and so, pressing their closing therewith, or otherwise assuring that he will leave this instrument on record against them.

11. We find, whatever the case of the people is that he speaks to, the upshot and scope of his message is ever to persuade a closing of the treaty between him and them. Therefore, when he charges with sin, he leaves not there, but commends to them repentance and gives a promise of welcoming them upon that condition. When he quarrels for hypocrisy and deadness in profession, he proposes Christ, and advises to accept of him. When he exhorts to duty, as to repentance and zeal; even then does he propose

Christ's righteousness as the only cure and cover of their nakedness (as in the last epistle is clear): whereby we may see,

(1.) What a minister's scope should be, and where he should aim in conviction, reproof, etc. and where he should leave his hearers, viz. at Christ's feet, who is the end of the law for righteousness. And it is not unprofitable, even explicitly to make that the use and close of all.

(2.) We may see, that the law and gospel should be both preached and pressed together, and that so, as the one seem not to encroach upon the other. And especially this would ever be clear, that the weight of our peace with God does not lie upon duties when they are pressed; but upon the righteousness of Christ. As it is a great practice in a Christian to give the law and gospel their due place in practice; so it is a main qualification of a gospel minister, rightly to rid marches between the law and the gospel; this makes so much insisting in the epistles to the Romans, Galatians, etc. to keep justification by faith in Christ clear and distinct from works and duties, even when they were much pressed and practiced. And it is no less dangerous to professors to rest on duties, than to omit them: and therefore the necessity of being denied to them in the point of justification, and of resting upon Christ alone, is to be cleared and pressed by preachers as a most necessary and fundamental thing.

12. For this cause, the nature of the covenant, and justification by Christ, are especially to be cleared, where a church is formal; that is, free both of errors in doctrine and gross scandals in practice, and resting there. Wherefore we see that in the epistle to the church of Laodicea (which is charged with neither of these) our Lord does most especially insist on this. The beating down of error, and banishing of gross profanity are but, as it were, the taking in the outworks of the devil's kingdom; therefore, when these are gained, the main batteries are to be directed against self-righteousness, hypocrisy, presumption, self-confidence, etc. that the soul may be brought to receive Christ in earnest, and zealously and seriously to study holiness without which a formal profession will be but as a stone of stumbling.

13. We see that our Lord Jesus puts together an entire mold of the whole doctrine and practice of godliness, giving as at one view, a sight of our natural sinfulness and hazard, and of the way these may be remedied. When he proposes any quarrel, he leaves not off till he propose also the remedy, press duty, and close with some encouraging conditional promise. This is also profitable for a mixed audience (especially at solemn times, and other occasions, wherein people are usually most serious and attentive) to give together a view of the doctrine of the gospel; so that when a conviction is pressed, and the hearer is made somewhat hot, he may have some present discovery of the way which he ought to take; and that he may either be informed, or, at least, be put in mind of as much of the gospel as may be a ground of his peace, if it be improved [utilized], though he should never afterward hear any more. This we see was the apostles' way in their occasional

sermons in the history of the Acts, wherein the sum of the gospel is usually comprehended; and the Lord himself does so with Nicodemus in John 3. And though there be difference now, in some respect, where the gospel is ordinarily and daily preached, so that this is not so necessary to be done always explicitly, as if they had never heard the gospel before: and although it becomes a minister to draw his doctrine from some particular text; yet considering that the generality of hearers are very ignorant of the series of the gospel, and others are weak and inadvertent [unheeding], even in things which they some way know: and considering withal, that a minister may have occasion by way of reason, use, mean, motive, question, or otherwise, to hint a view of the gospel, almost from any material doctrine, and that without any just imputation of impertinence, we conceive, that generally and usually it is expedient to follow this manner; especially on the Lord's day, which are most fit for gospel doctrines (people being then, for that end, set apart and sequestered from their ordinary business) and when the body of the most ignorant people are gathered together. This way certainly, by God's blessing, would look more like a mean of conversion (and has in experience been ordinarily found so) than when now one point, and then another, are distinctly handled; and so the one is either forgotten by the most part, before they hear the other, or, at least, is not so warm to them, although they have the knowledge thereof. And these things being the text of the Bible, to say so, and the great subject and errand which ministers have to insist on, it ought not to be accounted grievous, because of men's nauseating and loathing of them from the frequent mentioning of them, seeing to the people they are profitable and safe (as Philippians 3:1-2), and even that loathing should, in the manner of proposing the same things, be guarded against: that itching and curious ears get no occasion of contemning [lightly esteeming] the precious gospel, and thus but very few would be really able to discern that it is so.

14. In these epistles, there is a divine stamp bearing forth an efficacy in the manner of pressing all these things. And we will see,

- (1.) Authority in what is spoken.
- (2.) Evident plainness and clearness.
- (3.) Seriousness and vehement earnestness in pressing what he presses. Indifference and coldness in speaking of weighty things, is most unsuitable in a minister.
- (4.) There is love and affectionate tenderness to them to whom he speaks. Yea, even in the sharpest rebukes, he prudently intimates the same, that he be not mistaken. Ministers have gained much, when hearers are convinced that they seek their good in the sharpest words; and their way should be such as, without affectation, may evince [appear] in the consciences of hearers.
- (5.) There is much (O how much!) wisdom in his premising commendations, in his differentiating the guilty from the innocent, in his choosing such threatenings and motives as may gain most upon these he deals with respectively, and not using the same to all.

15. His style of speaking is sweet and heavenly, yet plain

and familiar: it has a sweet stateliness in it, and is far from trivial expressions, which may make the matter spoken weightless; yet is it plain and equable; because now he is speaking to edification in practical things, therefore does he abstain from the dark manner of expressions, which afterward he uses in the following prophecy. But

(1.) His plainest words are most significant, massy [solid], and apposite [suitable].

(2.) The titles that are given to him are stately: weighty expressions and titles of God, and of Jesus Christ, become [suit] the preaching of the gospel well; and are useful to keep up the reverend estimation which hearers ought to have of him. It is suitable usually to name him so, as at the mentioning of him, it may appear that the heart is affected with the excellency that is in him; and that the man does not speak of that glorious Majesty, as of other subjects: even as ambassadors should give honorable titles to their masters.

(3.) The similitudes are pertinent and grave, serving more to illustrate the matter and make it plain, than to please the ear and tickle the understanding, as the comparing of Christ's righteousness to gold and raiment, and the closing of the covenant or believing on him, to buying, opening, etc. which manner is useful to people; and that way of speaking in parables, was much used by the Lord, who also interpreted them to his disciples, to make the significance thereof the more apparent.

(4.) He does ever express heaven by some notable, borrowed, and various expression, thereby to commend the same: partly, because it is a great advantage to have hearers in love with it; partly, because more proper expressions will not always so clearly, fully, and to the life, suit and hold forth the thing that is to be spoken of: whence it comes to pass, that sometimes there is an allowance granted to use borrowed expressions in such cases.

16. We will find an orderly method in all the epistles. There is indeed no affected curiosity, neither are there any philosophic terms made use of. Yet, method being useful in itself, to clear the matter, and to help hearers to conceive and retain what is said (and so, subservient to edification) our Lord also condescends to that way. Therefore, in general, we see all these epistles have: (1.) A preface, (2.) A narration, (3.) A conclusion; as if he had purposely cast them in one mold, more particularly, we see:

(1.) He begins them all with this, thus saith he, etc. thereby to evince [show] it to be his word. A main thing to be adverted to, as the foundation both of preaching and application, that it may be made out, at first, to be warranted by the Lord; and so to be his word, as, if he himself were speaking.

(2.) He proposes in them all, some stately style and title of himself; which is also a main thing to be adverted to in preaching, that at the entry, both ministers and hearers may be affected with the majesty of him, who is master of the ordinances, by some serious, grave and weighty insinuation, thereby to dispose both for the more fit speaking and hearing. (3.) He begins at these things which are more general, and belong to information, as in letting them know

their case, and his thoughts of them: then he comes to particulars.

(4.) In particulars he permits clear discoveries and convictions of sin, to exhortations, to duties, and offers of the gospel: and he premises exhortations to motives, whereby he presses them. And lastly, he closes with what is most pathetic [passionate] and affectionate; either in way of threatening or promise, having that weighty admonition added, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear, etc. And so he begins by working them up to some serious composed frame of spirit, and closes with some affectionate impressing of the thing upon them in the most pathetic manner. Although this here, be most in application; yet we conceive that this order of proposing what is more general and doctrinal, and which serves to the clearing of the judgments in the first place, and the subjoining of what is more convincing, pathetic, and affectionate, which is done by way of use and application in the last place, that thereby hearers may be dismissed with some impression of the thing; this order, we say, may be well gathered hence. And indeed, it is the most native and genuine order, first, to inform the judgment and thereby to make the readier way to work upon the conscience, will and affections. To this purpose see Acts 13; how Paul there proceeds and closes (vv. 38, 39, etc).

17. In all this, the Lord's way holds forth his great design of gaining them to whom he speaks: so as it satisfies him not to exoner[ate] himself (to speak so of him) in doing of his duty; but he is zealous to get his message received; and, in sum, to get them saved; therefore weightily does he follow it, inviting, exhorting, pressing and protesting as unwilling to be refused. This indeed is a fountain-qualification of a preacher, to be travailing in birth till Christ be formed in hearers; and so to preach to them, as hungering and thirsting for their salvation, and not having only before him the proposing of some profitable matter, or, the handling of some point exactly; nay, not only his own exoneration, and the justifying of God, by making the hearers inexcusable; but a single serious desire to have them gathered and espoused to Christ; that the proud may be humbled, the hypocrite convinced, and the word made the savor of life unto life unto them according to their case. This, I say, is a fountain-qualification, from which many other qualifications do flow, it being seldom in any minister, but it puts an edge and weight upon the word in his mouth, as the want of it makes the most part want savor, and in the finest words, often to have but little weight.

18. We may gather here, that a minister should hold forth the authority of the ordinance and word, and of him in whose name he speaks, and ought to take it upon him, not from supposed weight in himself, or addition to it by his gifts; but upon this account, that it is the Lord's message, Thus saith he, etc. being that which gives him confidence and boldness in the delivery thereof, and which ought also to make it have weight upon others. Yea, it follows from this, that whatever a minister be in himself, and whatever his thoughts be of himself, and of his gifts; yet being called to carry the Lord's message, he ought so to carry in it, as

not to lessen the master's authority by his fainting and discouraging apprehensions of his own inability and unworthiness, and by his heartless and languid way of speaking; but to speak it as the oracles of God ought to be spoken, and as having weight in itself, for the vindicating thereof, although he be weightless: and that therefore there ought to be an eye to him for weight thereto, and a thorough clearness that the thing which is spoken in the name of the Lord is his truth and message, without which there can be no great confidence in saying, Thus saith the Lord, and which a minister may boldly and authoritatively speak.

19. As preaching should be undertaken and begun with an eye to God: so both in the carrying on thereof, and in the expecting of fruits thereby, the weight should be still left upon the Lord. And ministers should beware of attributing any efficacy, either to the warmth of their own frame in speaking, or to their liberty in pressing any point, or to the plainness and weightiness in their manner of proposing or pressing the same, as if that had any influence, as from them, to give the word weight and authority upon hearers. But still the efficacy should be acknowledged to be from the Holy Ghost; therefore is that word always at the close, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith, etc. Whereby as at the entry, the instrument is laid by, and the Lord's authority held forth as only to be acknowledged by thus saith the Lord; so in the close the minister, even when in the most affectionate temper and frame, is to leave what is spoken, as weight only upon this account, that it is the Spirit who speaks, and who only can make it effectual; and the more singly this be done, the more weighty will it be; and thus weighty preaching differs from the most powerful rhetoric that can be. See somewhat to this purpose, Revelation 10:4.

20. In the general we may see, that application is the life of preaching; and there is no less study, skill, wisdom, authority and plainness necessary in the applying of a point to the consciences of hearers, and in the pressing of it home, than there is required in the opening of some profound truth: and therefore ministers should study the one as well as the other. Much of these epistles is delivered in the second person, I know thy works, I counsel thee to repent, etc. for this end, that they might know it was them particularly that he meant. It is much for ministers to get the word leveled at hearers, so as to make them know that it is they who are reached; and that it is not only these that at first it was written to, or these to whom Christ and the apostles did immediately preach that this word belongs; but that equally it belongs to them, even to them who now hear it. Hearers are often ready to shift by the most particular words, much more when they are more shortly and generally touched. Hence preaching is called persuading, testifying, beseeching, entreating, requesting, exhorting, etc. All of which import some such dealing in application: which is not only a more particular breaking of the matter; but a directing it to the consciences of the present hearers. And in this especially does the faithfulness, wisdom, and dexterity of the preacher, and the power and efficacy of the gift appear.

This is to fulfill or fully to preach the word of God (a very significant and much used phrase, Rom. 15:17; Col. 1:25; 2 Tim. 4:7; a thing also desiderated [longed for] in Sardis, Rev. 3) or to make a full proof of the ministry, that is, when a minister extends himself to the uttermost in his pains, seriousness and exercise of his gift, as to be at the yondmost [greatest extent] of the people's edification; and, as it is, Acts 14:2 to speak so, *as many may be made to believe*; an excellent example is in Paul, Col. 1:28-29, *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.* And, 1 Thess. 2:10-11 *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe: As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children.*

We conceive therefore, that it would conduce exceedingly to make application weighty upon the consciences of the hearers, if ministers, after the more general part of their doctrine, and at the entry to make application thereof, should pause a little, and by some serious and grave advertisement [notice], put the people in mind, that even this word so applied, or to be applied, is the word and message of God, to them in particular, and as necessarily requisite to the office of a pastor as the former general opening of the truth was: for, hearers are often ready to take more liberty in shifting of application, as if what were even so spoken with warrant, were not equally the Lord's word with the general truth opened up. Thus we find Paul, after his opening up of general truths (Acts 13), when he comes to make application puts his hearers to it by this word (v. 26), *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent*, etc. And as it is the main part of a pastoral gift dexterously to feed by application; so are they the most thriving Christians, who, as new born babes, drink in the word so applied, and take it home to themselves, and their own consciences, as they receive the general truths by their judgments; which shows that both ministers and people have the greater cause to be watchful and solicitous concerning this main mean of edification, viz. particular application.

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## **The Blue Banner**

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