



Faith Pulpit

Vital Preaching

We frankly affirm that we are concerned about preaching. As a seminary, we are here to produce expositors, men who can preach the Bible in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are concerned to do this, because we are determined that our products bring the blessing of God on churches.

It appears that preaching has fallen on hard times. It is hard to compete with the superstars of religious video. Even moderately good preaching seems great. The fearless sermons of past generations are gone. In the early decades of this century, the Monday New York Times published resumes of what was preaching in New York's leading pulpits the day before. Those days are gone; little preaching of the last generation made the papers. Somehow the power is not what it was.

We want to see that pattern change. If our men are to preach well, deliverance will come at several points.

1. Prayer over the message

We hope that our graduates will be men of prayer. We expect them to be in the habit of pleading with God for the burdens He would have them preach. We believe that it is possible to prevail in prayer for such a burden, and that this is a prayer that God delights to answer. We believe that prayer empowers a message, especially the daily prayer life of the preacher. The preacher is not a performer; we believe that he is to be a man of God. His prayer life will bear on his message, both in general as he meets God daily, and in particular as he meets God over the sermon he is going to preach. If preaching has fallen on hard times, part of the reason would appear to be a lack of prayer to empower it. We yearn that our whole academic life will encourage a vital fellowship with God, which will then bear on the message preached.

2. Exegesis of the passage

I once heard a pastor argue that if he were to put serious Biblical exegesis into his sermon preparation, his preaching would go right over the heads of his people. Most of us would debate this. Our mandate is to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2), and to preach a casual idea of the Word would seem to be the path of laziness. Men commonly profess their respect for the Bible, such as in the way that they insist at ordinations on plenary verbal inspiration. But if we truly respect the Book, our minds will delight in the intensive study of it.

We believe in faithful Bible study as the basis of sermon preparation. We also believe in making the fruit of that study so self-evident that people grasp it and love it. A few of our people may have access to the tools of serious Bible study, but most of them look trustingly to us to open Scripture for them. We believe that it is possible to clarify the Bible to people without unduly complicating it. Indeed, the great expositors have been noted for the clarity and simplicity of their preaching.

3. Organization with logical coherence

A key factor in clear preaching is that it arranges its ideas in logical, Scriptural order. It seems to be a common notion that the whole art consists in glancing at a passage and imposing three or four words on it. These words form the main heads of the outline.

Good organization may be only part of sermon preparation, but it makes a sermon clear in the mind of the preacher and helps give him a holy zeal to get it across. It helps him to begin with a unifying idea, a proposition that asks a decision. This approach helps him to find heads that clearly develop his proposition, heads that are parallel with one another and that are phrased for clarity and impact. Such a sermon is easier to remember.

Clear organization is demanding because clear thinking is demanding. Done right, it does not call attention to itself. It seems simple, transparent, and self-evident. It is easier to preach, and for the congregation, easier to follow. I will not say that this art is easy to learn, but it can be learned, and the brethren are bound to benefit when the preacher has gone to the trouble to learn it. Like the original languages, it costs us something to get acquainted with these principles, but their values far outweigh the costs.

4. Passion

Another element in real preaching is the honest passion it involves. By definition, preaching is more than mere recitation of divine truth; preaching carries urgency. This urgency, however, is not something we work up or act out. Any true understanding of divine truth must have an emotional impact on a person. Can it be possible to contemplate with clinical detachment the wonders of God? Can any sound mind gaze at injustice without some level of moral revulsion? Can it look closely at human pain without feeling compassion? Can it look at the cross without emotion? It would seem that if a preacher

is unmoved by these things, he is simply not yet ready to preach. He does not yet feel the gravity of his subject, and until he meditates on his message, he is not ready to mount the platform.

Honest platform urgency can express itself in various ways, and this is no plea for either as such. But if a man has never fought back tears, he might well ask himself how much he feels about the destiny of the lost or about the greatness of his message. If he has never angered over sin, he might wonder if he is more tolerant than Jesus was.

We believe that if a preacher strengthens himself at any of these points, he will increase the results of his sermons. If he works at all four of them, we trust that he will indeed be the means of blessing for many years through his public ministry.

Last year a visiting musician here remarked that his music was not a result of talent; it had taken him years of hard work. We believe that this almost applies to preaching. Even so far as preaching can be called a gift of the Spirit, the exercise and improvement of that gift takes work. This work we gladly press upon our students.

Dr. Robert Delnay

Former Professor at [Faith Baptist Bible College](#) | [Other Articles](#)

Dr. Robert Delnay (Th.D., Grace Theological Seminary) was a distinguished theologian, educator, and author whose ministry spanned over seven decades. A graduate of Wheaton College, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Grace Theological Seminary, Dr. Delnay served in numerous leadership and teaching roles, including at Faith Baptist Bible College, where he was a beloved professor known for his commitment to expository preaching and biblical scholarship.

A prolific author, he wrote several books and articles, leaving a lasting legacy of theological insight and pastoral wisdom. Dr. Delnay's deep love for God's Word and his dedication to training the next generation of Christian leaders impacted countless students and ministries worldwide. He went home to be with Christ in 2023.