

SW018 - ZACH MABRY

**ERRORS TO AVOID IN
PREACHING**

AN ENCOURAGEMENT SANDWICH

- ▶ Preaching and teaching God's Word is an unbelievably huge privilege and responsibility.
- ▶ We have the opportunity to communicate, explain, and apply God's communication to the world.
- ▶ However, we all make mistakes in this communication so we need to always be trying to do a better job communicating the timeless message of God's Word to an every changing culture.

QUOTES ON PREACHING – JUST FOR FUN

- ▶ Martin Luther: "I preach as though Christ was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is coming back tomorrow."
- ▶ Richard Baxter: "If we can but teach Christ to our people, we teach them all."
- ▶ John Owen "A man only preaches a sermon well to others if he has first preached it to himself. If he does not thrive on the 'food' he prepares, he will not be skilled at making it appetizing for others. If the Word does not dwell in power in us, it will not pass in power from us."

DIFFERENT KINDS OF ERRORS

- ▶ Errors in Preparation
- ▶ Errors in Execution

ERRORS IN PREPARATION

- ▶ Word Studies (we're going to get super nerdy for a bit)
 - ▶ The Root Fallacy: The presupposition that the meaning of a given word is bound up in its shape, components, or etymology.
 - ▶ Example: μονογενής - "only begotten" could better be translated "unique" or "only one of its kind" Hebrews 11:17 obviously doesn't mean that Isaac was the only son of Abraham since he had Ismael with Hagar and Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah with Keturah.

SEMANTIC ANACHRONISM

- ▶ Fallacy where a late definition of a word is read back into earlier literature
- ▶ Example: 2 Corinthians 9:7 God loves a cheerful giver. The word for cheerful is the Greek *ιλαρον*, where we get hilarious.

SEMANTIC OBSOLESCENCE

- ▶ Fallacy where the interpreter applies an obsolete meaning of a word.
- ▶ Words change over time
- ▶ Example 1: The use of the word κεφαλή in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 has been taken to mean "source" or "origin" based on standard classical lexicon definitions. However, by the time of the Biblical writing, this use of κεφαλή was obsolete; instead, the word would have been taken to mean "head" in the New Testament time period.
- ▶ Example 2: "Prevent" used to mean to go before but now it means to "preclude, stop, or hinder" KJV **1Th. 4:15** For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not **prevent** them which are asleep.

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TECHNICAL MEANINGS

- ▶ Assuming that a word always or almost always carries a technical meaning wherever used, disregarding the possibility that words can have more than one meaning (including a technical one) and can be used in more than one way.
- ▶ Example 1: “sanctification” this is the process by which God makes us progressively more holy, yet it’s commonplace to for people to say that it is God’s initial setting the believer aside at conversion. It doesn’t always have to have the same meaning
- ▶ Example 2: Matt 28:18-20 “all nations” “τα εθνη” normally denotes Gentiles (not Israel) but here really means “all nations”

PROBLEMS SURROUNDING SYNONYMS

- ▶ Sometimes synonyms mean the same thing, sometimes they don't
- ▶ John 21:15-17
- ▶ Jesus asks 3 times "Do you love me?" (first 2 times αγαπαω it's the third time it's φιλεω)
- ▶ Peter answers 3 times with φιλεω

LOVE AND LOVE

- ▶ First we need to understand that by the 4th Century BC αγαπαω was becoming the standard verb used for “love” because φιλεω was becoming a common word for “kiss
- ▶ Second: just because the “total range” of a set of synonyms is different, it doesn’t mean that they’re not synonymous at all. Otherwise, again, there would never be any synonyms.
- ▶ And we need to be consistent like we make a big deal about the difference about the 2 words for love, but no distinctions between the 2 verbs (feed and shepherd) and the 2 objects (sheep and lambs)
- ▶ 3 sets of synonyms but we make a huge deal about just one of the sets
- ▶ It could be that Jesus asked him to reaffirm his commitment 3 times because he denied him 3 times

GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

- ▶ Tense and Mood
- ▶ Verbal Aspect
- ▶ Context is King!

Why Are Fire Engines Red?

They have four wheels and eight men;
four plus eight is twelve;
twelve inches make a ruler;
a ruler is Queen Elizabeth;
Queen Elizabeth sails the seven seas;
the seven seas have fish;
the fish have fins;
the Finns hate the Russians;
the Russians are red;
fire engines are always rushin';
so they're red.

ERRORS IN LOGIC

- ▶ **Worldview Confusion:** Assuming one's personal experiences and interpretation of reality are a proper framework for interpreting the biblical text, in part or in whole.
- ▶ **Confusion of Truth and Accuracy**—Assuming the question of truth is a matter of precision *and* accuracy so that if a statement is not precise, it is not accurate, and therefore not true
 - ▶ My home is not far from my camp.
My home is about three miles from my camp.
My home is 3.2 miles from camp.

MORE ERRORS IN LOGIC

- ▶ **Unwarranted Generalizations and Overspecifications**—Simply using one particular example to extrapolate a generalization that then is applied universally.
 - ▶ We don't treat EVERY person the way Jesus treats the rich young ruler (Mar 10:17-27)
- ▶ **Inadequate Analogy**—Supposing that a particular analogy is relevant to a text or theme when that analogy is actually inadequate or inappropriate. **Use analogies for what they're worth, explain the areas of continuity and discontinuity so that someone doesn't jump to any unwise conclusions based on your example**

EVEN MORE LOGICAL ERRORS

- ▶ **Simplistic Appeals to Authority**—Assuming that appeals to authorities (scholars, pastors, authors, speakers, etc.) constitutes in itself a justifiable reason or sufficient validation for a particular interpretation of the text.
 - ▶ Doubtless we should be open to learning from all “authorities” in biblical and theological studies; but we should judge what they say, not on the basis of who said it, but on the basis of the wise reasons they advance.

ERRORS IN EXECUTION

- ▶ Make sure that you are not making a minor point of your text the main point of your sermon
 - ▶ Our desire in preaching the Bible is to be driven by the text.
 - ▶ The authors (divine and human) are saying something, we need to proclaim that to God's people.
- ▶ Don't try to make the text fit your illustration

ERRORS IN EXECUTION

- ▶ Don't come up with fanciful meanings for details in the text, and build the meaning of your sermon on your own imagination. *Example: Sentimentality. Telling a story about the tree that turned out to be the cross of Calvary*
- ▶ **Don't teach the RIGHT doctrine from the WRONG text. Your message will not only lack power -- the people in your class or congregation will not be learning a METHOD of biblical study. We must model for others how to understand and interpret the Bible**

WHAT TO DO:

- ▶ Read
- ▶ Pray
- ▶ Observe
- ▶ Interpret
- ▶ Apply
- ▶ Start early and meditate on it throughout the week so that God can use your everyday life to give you illustrations

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM ALISTER BEGG (PREACHING FOR GOD'S GLORY)

- ▶ **Think yourself empty**
- ▶ **Read yourself full** (text and commentaries)
- ▶ **Write yourself clear** (write it out to make sure you are clearly communicating yourself)
- ▶ **Pray yourself hot** - "There is no chance of fire in the pews if there is an iceberg in the pulpit; and without personal prayer and communion with God during the preparation stages, the pulpit will be cold."
- ▶ **Be yourself, but don't preach yourself**

WORDS OF WISDOM – KEVIN DEYOUNG (LECTURE AT GORDON-CONWELL SEMINARY)

- ▶ 1. Beware of preaching all your battles from seminary.
- 2. Be careful with offhanded comments.
- 3. Be yourself.
- 4. Remember there are different kinds of people listening.
- 5. Don't let personal conflict creep into your message.
- 6. Make sure your best stuff is from the text.
- 7. Be a pastor for the whole church, not just part of it.
- 8. Don't give them the whole elephant.
- 9. Root for others and don't compare.
- 10. Tell your congregation you love them and are glad to be their pastor.

WORDS OF WISDOM – TOM SCHREINER (EMAIL)

- ▶ Very rarely appeal to Hebrew or Greek in your sermon!
- ▶ Don't be too complicated in explaining the text.
- ▶ Don't forget to apply the text profoundly with the Holy Spirit's help. Explaining the text isn't enough.
- ▶ Don't forget to pray and pray about the impact of your sermon.
- ▶ Don't forget that any good that comes from your sermon is from God and not you.

WORDS OF WISDOM – D.A. CARSON

- ▶ ...we will not go far astray if we approach the Bible with a humble mind and then resolve to focus on central truths. Gradually we will build up our exegetical skills by evenhanded study and a reverent, prayerful determination to become like the workman “who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV).
- ▶ Carson, D. A.. Exegetical Fallacies (p. 142). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

▶Books:

- ▶Getting the Message - Dan Doriani
- ▶Exegetical Fallacies - D. A. Carson
- ▶Interpreting the Pauline Epistles - Tom Schreiner
- ▶40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible - Rob Plummer

▶Computer Applications:

- ▶Accordance
- ▶Logos

▶Websites:

- ▶blueletterbible.org
- ▶biblicaltraining.org