

LESSON 5

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE SERMON

In preparing a sermon the preacher should first of all lay a foundation for his message. This includes the choice of a text from the Scriptures and of a subject for the sermon and then the development of a title, a proposition, and an objective for the sermon. The messages in the New Testament reveal that they had a foundation based on the revelation of God through the Scriptures, through Christ Himself, or through the apostles. The messages had subjects based on Christ and His work, and they had objectives as indicated in their appeals and the responses to the appeals. No titles or propositions are recorded in the Scriptures, but the messages could be given titles and could be summarized in a sentence.

The Text

The text of the sermon is a passage of Scripture that provides the foundation for the sermon. The preacher should prayerfully seek a passage from the Bible upon which to build his sermon. By asking divine guidance and by seeking a text as the basis of his message, he will help assure that the message is from the Lord and not from his own feelings or ideas or from the theories of other men. As he searches the Scriptures, he will feel drawn to a specific passage, or a text will grip his heart. The Lord will guide him to the passage of Scripture and will give assurance to the preacher in His own way.

The text may be one verse of Scripture (Micah 6:8), a part of a verse (Eph. 2:5b), several consecutive verses of Scripture (Luke 24:44-49), a whole chapter of a book of the Bible (Psalm 23), or several verses of Scripture from two or more sections of the Bible (Gen. 5:21-24; Heb. 11:5-6). As the Apostle Paul, the preacher should preach the whole counsel of God over a period of time (Acts 20:27) and thus should preach from both the Old and New Testaments and from every book of the Bible. The emphasis on particular portions of the Bible depends on the condition and need of the people and on their interest and ability to comprehend. But the preacher should strive to maintain balance and guard against monotony. He should avoid passages that do not appear in the best translations and verses which are difficult to interpret or which have little relevance for the people. On the other hand, he should choose verses that reveal the great

<p><i>What is the text of the sermon? _____</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>(a passage of Scripture that provides the foundation for the sermon)</i></p>
<p><i>IS THIS STATEMENT TRUE OR FALSE?</i></p> <p><i>The text should be only one verse of Scripture. _____</i></p> <p><i>(false)</i></p>



and is stated in the introduction of the sermon and at other times during the message (See Appendix A).

### The Title

The title of the sermon is the name given to the message. It is simply a label given to the sermon to attract attention or create interest in the message. It may be identical to the subject, but generally it is not, since it does not usually reveal the specific theme of the message. The title is usually a brief phrase, but may also be a brief sentence, a question, or an exclamation.

In the above examples of subjects and texts, the following titles might be used:

1. Blueprint for Revival      2 Chron. 7:12-22
2. What Does the Lord Require? Micah 6:8
3. Christ the Answer!      John 14:6
4. Saved from What?      Eph. 2:5b
5. Summons to Testify      Luke 24:44-49
6. A Matter of Life and Death      Rom. 6.23

The title is written at the top of the sermon notes or manuscript and is often quoted at the beginning of the message. It should be listed after the subject in a sermon outline (See Appendix A).

### The Proposition

The proposition of a sermon is the summary or gist of the message in one sentence. It is a statement of what the preacher plans to do with the subject. If the subject is what the sermon is about, the proposition is what the sermon actually is. The subject of a sermon may be likened to the subject of a sentence, and the proposition of a sermon may be likened to the subject of a sentence plus the predicate. It should complete the thought of the subject in one simple, clear, and concise sentence. The completion of the thought, the predicate, should include the ideas or the major points of the sermon.

In the above examples, the following would be appropriate propositions for the sermons:

1. Four necessities for revival are that Christians should humble themselves, pray, seek the Lord's presence, and turn from their wicked ways.      2 Chron. 7:12-22

The name given to the message is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the sermon.

(title)

What is the proposition of a sermon?

The (subject, proposition) of a sermon may  
CHOOSE ONE  
be likened to the subject of a sentence,  
and the (subject, proposition) of a sermon  
CHOOSE ONE  
may be likened to the subject of a sentence  
plus the predicate.

(summary or gist of the message in one sentence, subject, proposition)

2. Three requirements of the believer are to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. Micah 6:8
3. Christ is the way to God, the truth from God, and the life of God. John 14:6
4. Two meanings of salvation are deliverance from all evil and preservation for all good. Eph. 2:5b
5. Four aspects of testifying for Christ are to testify by using the Scriptures, by telling the Gospel of Christ, by urging repentance unto forgiveness, and by speaking in the power of the Spirit. Luke 24:44-49
6. Men are either earning death because of sin, or receiving life through Christ. Rom. 6:23

Four of these propositions (No. 1, 2, 4, 5) were stated with the subjects of the sermon the same as the subject of the sentence in order to show the relationship between subject and proposition. The predicates of these sentences contain the ideas of the major points of the outline. The sentence could be arranged in a more polished manner (No. 3, 6) but this is not always wise in sermon building unless the relationship to the subject is clear. The proposition is included in the heading of the sermon notes or manuscript, but is usually not stated in the sermon (See Appendix A).

### The Objective

The objective of the sermon is the specific aim or goal of the message. It reveals the purpose or intent of the preacher in preparing and delivering the message. It may be twofold, having some application to unbelievers and some application to believers. It may include one or more of the general objectives of preaching, such as evangelism, instruction, edification, encouragement, dedication, stewardship, or service. But the objective of the sermon should include some definite commitment on the part of the hearer, a decision of the heart that leads to action.

In the above examples the following objectives would be appropriate:

1. The objective is to lead Christians to understand what is necessary for revival and to accept what God has stated in order to bring revival. 2 Chron. 7:12-22

*The specific aim or goal of the message is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the sermon.*

*Should the objective of the sermon include some definite commitment or a decision by the hearer? \_\_\_\_\_*

*(objective, yes)*

2. The objective is to show believers what is required of them and to urge them to live accordingly. Micah 6:8
3. The objective is to lead the hearers to accept Christ as the true way to God in order to receive eternal life. John 14:6
4. The objective is to show the hearers the benefits of salvation in order that they might receive Christ and salvation. Eph. 2:5b
5. The objective is to show Christians how they should testify to Christ and to lead them to commit themselves to the task. Luke 24:44-49
6. The objective is to warn the hearers of the wages of sin and to show them the gift of life in order that they might trust in Christ for salvation. Rom. 6:23

The preacher should understand that these objectives state decisions or commitments that should be made public where applicable to the hearers, such as a public profession of faith in Christ, a public dedication of the life of a Christian, a public rededication of the life of a backslidden Christian, a public statement of the intention to change church membership, a public decision to serve Christ in some specific way, or a public commitment of service in the ministry.

The objective should be written at the beginning of the sermon notes or manuscript, but is seldom stated in the sermon as such. In the conclusion of the sermon and the invitation, the appeals to the hearers should reflect the objectives. The appeals may include other objectives.

*What are some decisions that should be made public?*

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*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

*IN THIS LESSON, YOU HAVE STUDIED THE FIVE FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF A SERMON. CAN YOU LIST THEM? TRY IT.*

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*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3):

1. What are the five foundational elements of the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the text of the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The text may be what length? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What three things could the text provide? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the subject of the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How is the subject expressed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How should subjects be chosen? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What is the title of the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What is the proposition of the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. If the subject of the sermon is likened to the subject of a sentence, the proposition of the sermon may be likened to the \_\_\_\_\_.
11. What is the objective of the sermon? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. The objective of the sermon should include some definite \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Choose five passages from the Bible of various lengths that could be used as sermon texts, \_\_\_\_\_

14. Give five sermon subjects that could be derived from the above texts.

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15. Give possible titles for the above five sermon subjects. \_\_\_\_\_

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16. Provide the five foundations of a sermon.

Text \_\_\_\_\_

Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Proposition \_\_\_\_\_

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Objective \_\_\_\_\_

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Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3):

Read Chapter II, pages 30-46, of the textbook.

1. What are the sources for the ideas or subjects of sermons?
2. How can the preacher find out the problems and needs of his people?
3. What are the principles and methods of discovering texts for sermons?
4. How do you relate the idea of the sermon to the text, the thesis (proposition), and the objective of the sermon?
5. Plan another sermon providing the five foundational elements using a New Testament text.

Advanced activity (Level 3):

1. How can the preacher know the needs of his people?
2. Explain the derivation and meaning of the term "text".
3. What are the characteristics of a good proposition?
4. Plan an additional sermon providing the five foundational elements using an Old Testament text.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the meaning and importance of the five foundational elements.
2. Let each student present his plan for a sermon with the five foundational elements. Use a chalkboard if available. Allow the students to offer suggestions for improving the foundations of each proposed sermon.
3. Discuss the relationship between the text and the subject. Which should be selected first?