CHAPTER FIVE

THE ACT OF PREACHING

WE TURN NOW TO WHAT IS CALLED th 'delivery of the sermon, or the 'act' of preaching, what may be called preaching itself as distinct from the sermon. This is the second great aspect of our subject.

I would like to make it clear again that at this stage I am only going to deal with this in general. I am trying to give first of all a general picture ofwhat preaching really is, and we shall then go on to more detailed considerations. \_lt is good to have a clear general picture first before we begin to discuss the details.

Now this matter of the delivery, or what is sometimes called preaching is, once more, something very difficult to define. It is certainly not a matter of rules or regulations; and much of the trouble I think arises because people do regard it as a matter of instructions and rules and regulations, of dos and don'ts. It is not that. The difficulty is that Of actually putting our definition into words. Preaching is something that one reco nises when one hears it. So the best we can do is to say certain things about it. We cannot get nearer to it than that. The position is such as the Apostle Paul seems to have felt in 1 Cor• he tried to define love; it baffles description. All you can do is to say a number of things about it, that it is this, and not that. However, certain things are true, and must be present when you get authentic reaching.

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## **THE WHOLE PERSONALITY**

The first is that she whole personality of the preacher must be involved. That is the point, of course, that was brought out in the well-known



definition of preaching by Phillips Brookes, that it is 'truth mediated through personality'. I believe that is right, that in preaching all one's faculties should be engaged, the whole man should be involved. I go so far as to suggest that even the body is involved. I am reminded as I say this of something once said by one of my predecessors at Westminster Chapel in London, Dr. John A. Hutton. In his case the preaching could always be differentiated from the matter of his sermon. His predecessor at Westminster was a well-known preacher in the U.S.A. as well as in Britain, Dr. John Henry Jowett Jowett as rather a quiet, nervous kind of man, and he found the particularly large rostrum in Westminster Chapel very trying. He used to say that when he stood in that rostrum on his own, with the whole of his body visible to the congregation from various angles, that he felt as if he were standing naked in a field. He became so self-conscious about this that he asked for the railings round the rostrum to be draped with a curtain so that at any rate most of his body should be concealed. Well then he, as I say, was succeeded by Dr. John Hutton. I happened to be resent in a service about the third Sunday after the arrival of Dr. utton I noticed, as everyone else noticed, that all the drapery round the rostrum had been removed and that the whole body of the preacher was visible as in former times. Dr. Hutton gave us the explanation of this and told us that the drapery had been removed at his request because he believed that a preacher should preach with the whole of his body— and that this was certainly true of him• He told us that he preached as much with his legs as with his head, and that if we watched him we would discover that this was true. Watching him one found that it was true! I am not sure that that was always to the advantage of the preaching, because he went through all kinds tortions. He would stand on his toes and wind one foot round the Other leg and so on. The point I am making is that there was something in what he said, the whole man was involved, He did not stand like a statue and just utter words through his lips; the entire person was engaged ¯ gestures activity and so on.

I do not want to make too much of this, but you will remember that when Demosthenes was asked what is the first great

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his reply was 'Action'. Then he was asked, 'Well, what is the second greatest desideratum?' He replied again, 'Action'. 'Well', they said, 'what is the third most important point?' Still the reply was, 'Action'. There is no doubt about this; effective speaking involves action;Ä-Äat is why I stress that the whole personality must be involved in preaching.



## A SENSE OF AUTHORITY UNDER AUTHORITY



The second element I would emphasise is a sense of authority and control over the congregation and the proceedings. The preacher should never be apologetic, he should never give the impression that he is speaking by their leave as it were; he should not be tentatively putting forward certain suggestions and ideas. That is not to be his attitude at all. He is a man, who is there to 'declare' certain things; he is a man under commission a@yp4E!\_gy!be\_!\_!!y. He is an ambassador, and he should be aware of his authority. He should always know that he comes to the congregation as a sent messenger. Obviously this is not a matter of self-confidence; that is always deplorable in a preacher. We have the word of the Apostle Paul himself, that when he went to Corinth he went 'in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling'. We also should always be conscious of that. But that does not mean that you are apologetic; it means that you are aware Of the solemnity and the seriousness and the importance ofwhat you are doing. You have no self-confidence, but you are a man under authority, and you have authority; and this should be evident and obvious. I put this LI very high up on the list, and, say that, far from being controlled by the congregation the preacher is in charge and in control of the congregation. I shall take up some of these points in great detail later in this series.

### FREEDOM AND CONNECTION

The next quality in this general view of the preacher, and of this 'act' Of preaching, is the element of freedom. I attach very great importance to this. Though the sermon has been prepared in the way we have indicated, and prepared carefully, yet the preacher must be free in the act of preaching, in the delivery of the sermon. He must not be too tied to his Preparation and by it. This is a crucial point; this is of the very essence

Of this act of preaching. I am not thinking merely in terms of having a

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manuscript with him in the pulpit, for he can be tied without having a manuscript. All I am saying is that he must be free; free in the sense that he must be open to the inspiration of the moment. Regarding preaching as I do as an activity under the influence and ower of the Holy S irit we have to emp asise this point because the preparation is not finished just when a man has finished his preparation of the sermon. One of the remarkable things about preaching is that often one finds that the best things one says are things that have not been premeditated, and were not even thought of in the preparation of the sermon, but are given while one is actually speaking and preaching.

Another element to which I attach importance is that the preacher while speaking should in a sense be deriving something from his congreg&on. There are those present in the congregation who are spiritually-minded people, and filled with the Spirit, and they make their contribution to the occasion. There is always an element of \_exchange in true preaching. This is another way of showing the vit tinction between an essay and a lecture on the one hand, and a preached sermon on the other hand. The man who reads his essay gets nothing from his audience, he has it all there before him in what he has written; there is nothing new or creative taking place, no exchange. But the

preacher—though he has prepared, and prepared carefully—because of this element of spiritual freedom is still able to receive something from the congregation, and does so. There is an interplay, action and





response, and this often makes a very vital difference.

Any preacher worth his salt can testify to this. Indeed, any man worthy to be called a speaker even on secular matters—politics and so on—knows something about this, and has often experienced that a meeting has been made by the responsiveness of the audience he has been addressing. This should happen much more in the case of the preacher. Thank God, it often occurs that when the preacher, poor fellow, is at his worst for various reasons—perhaps has not had time to prepare as he should have done, or various physical factors and other  things may be operating to militate against the success ofthe occasion— the responsiveness and eagerness of his congregation lifts him up and enlivens him. But the preacher must be open to this; if he is not, he is going to miss one of the most glorious experiences that ever comes to a preacher. So this element of freedom is tremendously important•

That is what I meant in my last remark in the previous lecture that

THE ACT OF PREACHING . 99 though you have prepared your sermon carefully and thoroughly, you never know what is going to happen to it until you get into the pulpit and start preaching it. You may find yourself amazed and astonished at what has happened. New elements may have entered, there may be loose ends, and there may be incomplete sentences. There may well be many such things which the pedants would condemn, and which a literary critic would utterly and rightly censure in an essay; but this is of the very essence of preaching. Because preaching is designed to do something to people. And as long as you keep that in the forefront, and do not attach too much significance to these other elements, you will be able to succeed.

 This element of freedom is all important. Preaching should be always under the Spirit—His power and control— and you do not know what is going to happen. So always be free. It may sound contradictory to say 'prepare, and e are carefull , and yet 'be free'. But there is no contra iction, as there is no contradiction when Paul says, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12—13). You will find that the Spirit Who has helped you in your preparation may now help you, while you are speaking, in an entirely new way, and open things out to you which you had not seen while you were preparing your sermon.

SERIOUS AND

The next element is that of seriousness. The preacher must be a serious man; he must never give the impression that preaching is something light or superficial or trivial. I merely mention this now because I propose to deal with it later at greater length. I simply make the general statement now that a preacher of necessity must give the impression that he is dealing with the most serious matter that men and women can ever consider together.

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What is happening? ening is that he is s eakin to them from God, he is speaking to them about God, he is speaking about their condition, the state of their souls -He is telling then that they are, by nature, under the wrath of God—'the children of wrath even as  Others' —that the character of the life they are living is offensive to God and under the judgment of God, and warning them ofthe dread eternal

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possibility that lies ahead of them. In any case the preacher, of all men, should realise the fleeting nature of life in this world. The men of the world are so immersed in its business and affairs, its pleasures and all its vain show, that the one thing they never stop to consider is the fleeting this means that the preacher should always create and convey the impression of the seriousness of what is happening the moment he even appears in the pulpit. You remember the famous lines of Richard Baxter:

 I preached as never sure to preach again And as a dying man to dying men.

I do not think that can be bettered. You remember what was said of the saintly Robert Murray McCheyne of Scotland in the last century. It is said that when he appeared in the pulpit, even before he had uttered a single word, people would begin to weep silently. Why? Because of this very element of seriousness. The very sight of the man gave the impression that he had come from the presence of God and that he was to deliver a message from God to them. That is what had such an effect upon people even before he had opened his mouth. We forget this element at our peril, and at great cost to our listeners.

I put next something which is meant partly to correct, or perhaps not so much to correct, as to safeguard, what I have been saying, from misunderstanding. I refer to the element oQ'.1Åygl@e'. This underlines the fact that seriousness does not mean solemnity, does not mean sadness, does not mean morbidity. These are all very important distinc-



tions. The preacher must be lively; and you can be lively and serious at the same time.

Let me put this in other words. The preacher must ever be dull, he must never be boring; he should never be what is called 'heavy am emphasising these points because of something I am often told and

which worries me a great deal. I belong to the Reformed tradition, and may have had perhaps a little to do in Britain with the restoration Of this emphasis during the last forty years or so. I am disturbed therefore when I am often told by members of churches that many of the younger Reformed men are very good men, who have no doubt read a great deal' and are very learned men, but that they are very dull and boring preachers; and I am told this by people who themselves hold the Reformed



position. This is to me a very serious matter; there is something radically

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wrong with dull and boring preachers. How can a man be dull when he is handling such themes? I would say that a 'dull preacher' is a contradiction in terms; if he is dull he is not 'a preacher. He may stand in a pulpit and talk, but he is certainly not

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| a preacher. With the grand theme |  |
| and message of the Bible dullness is | A 'dull preacher' is |
| impossible. This is the most inter-  | a contradiction in |

esting, the most thrilling, the most

absorbing subject in the universe;terms; if he is dull he



and the idea that this can be pre- is not a preacher. sented in a dull manner makes me seriously doubt whether the men who are guilty of this dullness have ever really understood the doctrine they claim to believe, and which they advocate. We often betray ourselves by our manner.

### ZEAL

But let us go on. We come next to zeal, and a sense of concern. These elements of course are all intimately related. When I say zeal I mean that a preacher must always convey the impression that he himself has been

gripped by what he is saying. Ifhe has not been gripped nobody else will be. So t IS is absolutely essential. He must impress the people by the fact that he is taken up and absorbed by what he is doing. He is full of matter, and he is anxious to impart this. He is so moved and thrilled by it himself that he wants everybody else to share in this. He is concerned about them; that is why he is preaching to them. He is anxious about them; anxious to help them, anxious to tell them the truth of God. So he does it with energy, with zeal, and with this obvious concern for people. In other words a preacher who seems to be detached from the Truth, and who is just saying a number of things which may be very good and true and excellent in themselves, is not a preacher at all.

I came across a notable example of what I am condemning recen y when I was convalescing after an illness. I was staying in a village in a certain part ofEngland and went to the local church just across the road from where I was staying. I found that the preacher was preaching that evening on the prophet Jeremiah. He told us that he was starting a series Of sermons on the prophet. So he was starting with that great text where

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Jeremiah said he could not refrain any longer, but that the Word of God was like a fire in his bones. That was the text he took. What happened? I left the service feeling that I had witnessed something quite extraordinary, for the one big thing that was entirely missing in that service was 'fire'. The good man was talking about fire as if he were sitting on an iceberg. He was actually dealing with the theme of fire in a detached and cold manner; he was a living denial of the very thing that he was saying, or perhaps I should say a dead denial. It was a goodl"rÄfilfrom

#### the standpoint of construction and preparation. He had obviously taken

considerable care over this, and had obviously written it out every word, because he was reading it; but that one thing that was absent was fire. There was no zeal, no enthusiasm, no apparent concern for us as members of the congregation. His whole attitude seemed to be detached and academic and formal. 

Let me put it in this way. I remember reading years ago an account by a well-known journalist in Scotland of a meeting which he had attended. He used a phrase which I have never forgotten; it has often u brai e me and often condemned me. He had been listening to two speakers speaking on the same subject. He went on to say that they were both very able and learned men. Then came the devastating phrase, 'The difference between the two speakers was this; the first spoke as an advocate, the second as a itness. That crystallises this point perfect y. preacher is never just an oc.ate. The task, the business of the advocate, the attorney, is to represent somebody in the Court of Law. He is not interested in this person, may not even know him, and has no personal

interest in him; but he has been handed what we call a brief concerning this man's case. The brief has been prepared for him, all the facts and the details, the legal points and the salient matters in this particular case. He is handed his brief and what he does is to speak to his brief. He is not involved personally, he is not really concerned. He is in a position Of detachment handling a matter right outside himself. 

Now that must never be true of the preacher. This is, again, one Of the differences between the preacher and the lecturer. The preacher is involved all along, and that is why there must be this element ofzeal. He is not just 'ha dling' a case. To do just that is one ofthe greatest temptations of many preachers, and especially those

of us who are combative by nature. We have an incomparable case, as we have seen; we have our systematic theology and this knowledge ofthe Truth. What a wonderful

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opportunity for arguing, reasoning, demonstrating and proving the case and refuting all objections and counterarguments. But if the preacher gives the impression t is onl an advocate presenting a case he has failed completely. The reacher is a witness That is the very word used by our Lord Himself, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me'; and this is what the preacher must always be at all times. Nothing is so fatal in a preacher as that he should fail to give the impression of personal involvement.

#### C WARMTH

That leads inevitably to the next element, which is Warmth. To use a term that is common today, the preacher must never be 'clinical'. So often the preacher is. Everything he does is right, is indeed almost perfect; but it is clinical, it is not living; it is cold, it is not moving, because the man has not been moved himself. But that should never be true of the preacher. If he really believes what he is saying he must be moved by it; it is impossible for him not to be. That leads to warmth of necessity. The Apostle Paul tells us himself that he preached 'with tears'. He reminds the Ephesian elders of that in Acts 20. And as he refers to certain false preachers in Philippians 3 he does so with 'weeping'.

Now the Apostle Paul was a giant intellect, one of the master minds of the centuries; but he often wept as he spoke and preached. He was often moved to tears. Where has this notion come from that if you are a great intellect you show no emotion? How ridiculous and fatuous it is! A man who is not moved by these things, I maintain, has never really understood them. A man is not an intellect in a vacuum; he is a whole person. He has a heart as well as a head; and if his head truly understands, his heart will be moved. You remember how the Apostle puts it in Romans 6:17, 'God be thanked,' he says, 'that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have fr m he hear that form of sound doctrine

which was delivered you.' If a mans eart is not engaged I take leave to query and to question whether he has really understood with his head,  because of the very character of thg Truth with which we are dealing. This has been true, of course, of all the great preachers of the ages. Whitefield, it seems, almost invariably as he was preaching would have tears streaming down his face. I feel we are all under condemnation here and need to be rebuked. I confess freely that I need to be rebuked myself. Where is the passion in preaching that has always characterised great 

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preaching in the past? Why are not modern preachers moved and carried away as the great preachers of the past so often were? The Truth has not changed. Do we believe it, have we been gripped and humbled by it, and then exalted until we are 'lost in wonder love and praise'?

The preacher then is a man who for these reasons and in these ways makes contact with the people who are listening to him. Far from being detached, there is rap ort. This comes out in his voice, in his manner, in his whole approach; everything about him shows that there is this intimacy of contact between the preacher and his congregation.

### URGENCY coil

So I go on to the next point which is Urgency. I have already said this in a sense; but it deserves to be isolated and underlined in and of itself. The preacher must always be 'urgent in season and out of season', says Paul to Timothy; again for the same reason, because of the entire situation. That is what makes preaching such an astonishing act and such a responsible and overwhelming matter. It is not surprising that the Apostle Paul, looking at the ministry, asks 'Who is sufficient for these.



things?' A man who imagines that because he has a head full of knowlÄötFat he is sufficient for these things had better start learning again. 'WVho is sufficient for these things?' What are you doing? You are not simply imparting information, you are dealing with souls, you are dealing with pilgrims on the way to eternity, you are dealing with matters  not only of life and death in this world, but with eternal destiny. Nothing can be so terribly urgent. I am reminded of the words spoken one afternoon by William Chalmers Burns who was greatly used in revivals in Scotland round about 1840, and, incidentally, in the church of Robert Murray McCheyne to whom I have already referred. He one day put his hand on the shoulder of a brother minister and said, 'Brother, we must



hurry.' Ifwe do not know something about this sense of urgency we do not know what true preaching is. You can give a lecture at any time' now, or in a year's time; it will not make much difference. The same is



 true of most other subjects. But the message of the Gospel is something 3 that cannot be postponed, because you do not know whether you or the people will be alive even in a week's time or even in a day's time. 'In the midst of life we are in death.' If the preacher does not suggest this sense



bf urgency, that he is there between God and men, speaking between

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time and eternity he has no business to be in a pulpit. There is no place for calm, cool, scientific detachment in these matters. That may possibly be all right in a philosopher, but it is unthinkable in a preacher because of the whole situation in which he is involved.

## A PERSUASIVE PATHOS AND POWER

For exactly the same reason preaching must always be characterised by ersuasiveness. 'We beseech you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.' Surely the whole object of this act is to persuade people. The preacher does not just say things with the attitude of 'take it or leave it'. He desires to persuade them of the truth of his message; he wants them to see it; he is trying to do something to them, to influence them. He is not giving a learned disquisition on a text, he is not giving a display of his own knowledge; he is dealing with these living souls and he wants to move them, to take them with him, to lead them to the Truth. That is his w o e purpose. o i t is e ement is not present, w atevere se it may be, it is not preaching. All these points bring out the difference between delivering a lecture and preaching, or between an essay and a sermon.

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A special word must be given also, though in a sense we have been covering it, to the element of pathos. If I had to plead guilty of one thing more than any other I would have to confess that this perhaps is what has been most lacking in my own ministry. This should arise partly fro Richard Cecil, an Anglican preacher in London towards the end o the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth said something which should make us all think. 'To love to preach is one thing, to love those to whom we preach quite



another.' The trouble with some of us is that we love preaching, but we are not always careful to make sure that we love the people to whom we are actually preaching. If ou lack this element of compassion for the people you will also lack he athos hich is a very vital element in all true preaching. Our Lord looked out upon the multitude and 'saw them as sheep without a shepherd', and was 'filled with

And if you know nothing of this you should not be in a pulpit, for this is certain to come out in your preaching. We must not be purely intel-





or argumentative, this other element must be there. Not only will your love for the people produce this pathos, the matter itself is bound to do this in and of itself. What can possibly be more moving

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than a realisation of what God in Christ has done for us? Any attempt therefore to consider and to understand it should move us profoundly. Notice what happens to the great Apostle himself. He starts off with an argument designed to convince us of our sinfulness and lost condition and utter dependence on Christ. But the moment he mentions that Name he seems to forget his argument and bursts forth into one of his flights of great eloquence. He is moved to the depths of his being, and he writes some of those glowing passages that should move us also to tears. It is the contemplation of what God has done for us in Christ, and the suffering involved, and the greatness of the love of God toward us.

'God "so" loved the world . . .

This element of pathos was a great characteristic of the preaching of Whitefield, one of the greatest master preachers of all the ages. It was David Garrick, the great actor of the eighteenth century who once said that he wished he could even utter the word 'Mesopotamia'

as Whitefield uttered it! He also said that he would gladly give a hundred guineas if he could but utter the word 'Oh!' with the same pathos as Whitefield did. Modern sophisticated man may laugh at this, but it is only when we begin to know something of this melting quality that we shall be real preachers. Of course a man who tries to produce an effect becomes an actor, and is an abominable impostor. But the love preaching, fact is that when 'the love of God,

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always careful toit was in Whitefield's, pathos is



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 preaching. especially among Reformed people.

We tend to lose our balance and to become over-intellectual, indeed almost to despise the element of feeling and emotion. We are such learned men, we have such a great grasp of the Truth, that we tend to des ise feeling. The common herd, we feel, are emotional and sentimental, but they ave no understanding!

Is not this the danger, is not this the tendency, to despise feeling

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I remember how a few years back when there was a great evangelistic campaign in London, a man who was a leader in religious circles came to me one day and asked, 'Have you been to the campaign?' I said, 'No, not yet.' 'This is marvellous,' tinued, he 'People said, 'marvellous.' are going He forward con- b by the hundred. No emotion you True preaching, after know— marvellous.' He kept on is God acting. repeating this 'No emotion.' What to him was so marvellous was that not just a man all these people who went forward uttering words; it is in response to the appeal showed no God using him. emotion. This was something glorious. No emotion, wonderful! No emotion, marvellous!

What can one say about such an attitude? I content myself by ask{Ling a few questions. Can a man see himself as a damned sinner without emotion? Can a man look into hell without emotion? Can a man listen to the thunderings of the Law and feel nothing? Or conversely, can a man really contemplate the love of God in Christ Jesus and feel no emotion? The whole position is utterly ridiculous. I fear that many people today in their reaction against excesses and emotionalism put themselves into a position in which, in the end, they are virtually denying the Truth. The Gospel ofJesus Christ takes up the whole man, and ifwhat purports to be the Gospel does not do so it is not the Gospel. The Gospel is meant to do that, and it does that. The whole man is involved because the Gospel leads to regeneration; and so I say that this element of pathos and emotion, this element ofbeing moved, should always be very prominent in pr ing.

Lastly have to introduce the word Power. I am not going into this at length now because this is so important that it deserves a whole section to itself, not in the next lecture but some time later. But, if there is no power it is not preaching%rue preaching, after all, is God acting. It is not just a man uttering words; it is God using him. He is being used Of God. He is under the influence of the Holy spirit; it is what Paul calls in 1 Corinthians 2 'preaching in demonstration of the Spirit of power'• as he puts it in 1 Thessalonians 1:5: 'Our gospel came not unto you Orin word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance i' There it is; and

that is an essential element in true oreaching

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THE SERMON AND THE

## PREACHING: NOT IDENTICAL

To sum it up, true preaching, then, consists ofboth these elements combined in their right proportions — thg\_sgrmon, and the %Ct-Qf-pxgaching— This 'act', in addition to the sermon. That is true preaching. Both must be emphasised. The difference between the two I have already hinted at, but I must say a further word about it. If you do not know the difference between the sermon and the act of preaching, as a preacher you will very soon discover it. One of the ways in which you are most likely to discover it is the way I have discovered myself many a time. It happens like this. You are in your own church preaching on a Sunday. You preach a sermon, and for some reason this sermon seems to go easily, smoothly, and with a degree of power. You are moved yourself; you have what is called 'a good service', and the people are as aware of this as you are. Very well; you are due to preach somewhere else, either the next Sunday or on a week-night, and you say to yourself, 'l will preach that sermon which I preached last Sunday. We had a wonderful service with it.' So you go into this other pulpit and you take that same text, and you start preaching. But you suddenly find that you have got virtually nothing; it all seems to collapse in your hands. What is the explanation? One explanation is this. What happened on the previous Sunday when you

were preaching that sermon in your own pulpit was tha the S irit ame upon you, or perhaps upon the people, (it may well have been, as I have 9 previously explained, that it was mainly the people, and you received it from them) and your little sermon was taken up, and you were given this special unction and authority in an unusual manner, and so you had that exceptional service. But you are in different circumstances with a different congregation, and you yourself may be feeling different. So you now have to rely upon your sermon; and you suddenly find that you haven't much of a sermon.

That helps to illustrate the difference between a sermon and the act Of preaching the sermon. This is a great mystery. I hope to deal with it again. But I say this now to emphasis that the two things are different, and that true preaching means the combination of these two things. You must not rely on either the one or the other. You must not rely on Your ,sermon only, you must not rely on the preaching act only; both are essential to true preaching.

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Let me put this again in the form of a story, an anecdote. There was an old preacher whom I knew very well in Wales. He was a very able old man and a good theologian; but, I am sorry to say, he had a tendency to cynicism. But he was a very acute critic. On one occasion he was present at a synod in the final session of which two men were preaching. Both these men were professors of theology. The first man preached, and when he had finished this old preacher, this old critic turned to his neighbour and said, 'Light without heat.' Then the second professor preached—he was an older man and somewhat emotional. When he had finished the old cynic turned to his neighbour and said, 'Heat without light.' Now he was right in both cases. But the important point were defective. You must have light and heat, sermon plus preachin . Light without heat never affects anybody; heat wit out ight is of no permanent value. It may have a passing temporary effect but it does not really help your people and build them up and really deal with them.

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# OF PREACHING

What is preaching? Logic on fire! Eloquent reason! Are these contradictions? Of course the reason concerning this Truth ought to be mightily eloquent, as you see it in the case of the Apostle Paul and others. It is theology on fire. And a theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology; or at least the man's understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire. A true understanding and experience of the Truth must lead to say again that a man who can speak about these things dispassionately has no right whatsoever to be in a pulpit; and should never be allowed to enter one.

What is the chief end of preaching 1 like to think it is this. It to give men and women a sense of God and His presence. As I have said already, during this last year I have been ill, and so have had the opportunity, and the privilege, of listening to others, instead of preaching myself. As I have listened in physical weakness this is the thing I have looked for and longed for and desired. 1 can forgive a man for a bad sermon, 1 can forgive the preacher almost anything if he gives me a sense of God, if he gives me something for my soul, if he gives me the

sense that, though he is inadequate himself, he is handling something which is very great and very glorious, if he gives me some dim glimpse of the majesty and the glory of God, the love of Christ my Saviour, and the magnificence of the Gospel. If he does that I am his debtor, and I am profoundly grateful to him. Preaching is the most amazing, and the most thrilling activity that one can ever be engaged in, because of all that it holds out for all of us in the present, and because of the glorious endless possibilities in an eternal future.

Let me close with two quotations. There was a very great preacher in the U.S.A. Just over a hundred years ago, James Henry Thornwell. He was, possibly, the greatest theologian the Southern Presbyterian Church has ever produced; but he was also a great preacher and a most eloquent man. There are those who say that next to Samuel Davies he was the most eloquent preacher the American continent has ever produced. This is how his biographer tries to give us some impression of what it was to see and to hear Thornwell preaching. Notice that it confirms and illustrates my definition of true preaching as something to look at as well as to hear because the whole man is involved in the action. This is how he puts it:

What invented symbols could convey that kindling eye, those trembling and varied tones, the expressive attitude, the foreshadowing and typical gesture, the whole quivering frame which made up in him the complement of the finished author! The lightning's flash, the fleecy clouds embroidered on the sky, and the white crest of the ocean wave, surpass the painter's skill. It was indescribable.

That was his impression of the preaching of Thornwell.



Then consider what Thornwell himself said about preaching, and about himself as a preacher.

It is a great matter to understand what it is to be a preacher, and how preaching should be done. Effective sermons are the offsprinæ of study, of discipline, ofprayer, and especially of the unction of the Holy Ghost. They are to combine the characteristic excellencies of every other species of composition intended for delivery, and ought to be pronounced not merely with the earnestness of faith but the

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constraining influence ofHeaven-born charity. They should be seen to come from the heart, and from the heart as filled with the love of Christ and the love of souls. Depend upon it that there is but little preaching in the world, and it is a mystery of grace and of divine  power that God's cause is not ruined in the world when we consider the qualifications of many of its professed ministers to preach it. My own performances in this way €111 me wit dis ust. have never made, much less preached, a sermon in my life, and I am beginning to despair of ever being able to do it. May the Lord give you more knowledge and grace and singleness of purpose.

There is nothing to add to that. Any man who has had some glimpse of what it is to preach will inevitably feel that he has never preached. But he will go on trying, hoping that by the grace of God one day he may truly preach.

 QUESTIONS FOR 

# STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. Lloyd-Jones talks a lot about the passion, pathos, and warmth of a preacher. What room is there for different personalities in the pulpit? Are some personalities just not fit for preaching?

2. How would you explain the difference between being an advocate and being a witness? How should this affect preaching?

1. How do Lloyd-Jones' comments about connection and rapport influence our thinking on new ideas like virtual church and multisite>
2. Do you agree that the chief end of preaching is to give people a sense of the presence of God? What else might be a "chief end"?