

UNDERSTANDING THE WORD TO PREACH TO PEOPLE'S INTELLECT, WILL,
AND EMOTIONS

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

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MEQUON, WISCONSIN
MARCH 2016

Abstract

God has given us a precious gift. He has given us his Word. The Holy Spirit works through this Word to give the Word its power to change a sinner's heart. At the same time, this Word also comes to us in the form of any other human communication and touches our intellect, will, and emotions, which is perfectly suited to how God created human beings to process information. This paper will look at how the Word of God works so that one can utilize communication techniques in order to preach to people's intellect, will, and emotions.

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Introduction

What do Lutheran preachers value the most? Is it the vast library that sits upon our shelves? No. Is it his ability to preach? No, we all can point to a time where our sermons did not go the way we wanted and we could say, “I thank God for good hymns.” Do we value the gifts God has given to us above everything else? What about one of the gifts God has given us, such as the abilities to teach, to touch someone’s hearts with our words or to persuade someone to action? The answer is again a resounding, “No.” All of these things focus on something that we do. If we were to value these things above everything else then we would be left in despair time and time again as we fall short. So then what do Lutheran preachers value the most? Lutheran preachers value God’s Word above everything else.

The Word of God is no ordinary word. It was not written to help bring people to faith. It gives faith. St. Paul said to the Romans, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”¹ The Word of God is powerful. The Word of God is effective. The preacher is simply a caretaker of the Word. He simply proclaims the law and the gospel from the pulpit and lets the Holy Spirit work through the Word. The preacher takes great comfort in the words of Isaiah,

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.²

What a comfort it is to know that despite the preacher’s failings and shortcomings, the proclaimed Word always accomplishes what the Lord desires.

However, Satan knows where and how to tempt the Lutheran preacher. He recognizes that if he cannot diminish the importance of the Word in the life of the preacher, then he can use the doctrine of the Word as a temptation for laziness. The sinful nature tempts us and says, “If the Word is always effective, then it does not matter the way by which the Word is presented.” Far be it for a pastor to use the efficacy of the

¹ Romans 1:16

² Isaiah 55:10,11

Word as an excuse for laziness, lack of preparation, or lack of desire to grow in his ability to communicate and apply the truths of God's Word. Far be it for a pastor to say, "God's Word is always effective, so the way I proclaim it does not matter." This overstatement denies the way God has created human beings. He created us in his image. He created mankind with a soul. He created mankind with intellect, will, and emotions. God, in his infinite wisdom, gave us his Word, which appeals to the way he created us. He gave us his Word, which can be understood intellectually, but if the preacher sermon is unorganized, how can someone understand it? If the preacher presents the Word quietly and no one can hear it, how can one rejoice in it? Or if the preacher does not encourage one to turn from their sin, how can they repent?

Another very real temptation that a minister of God's Word has to guard against is the other extreme. He may be tempted to think, "If I preach God's Word in a certain way, or use a certain method, God's Word will be more effective." This extreme takes the emphasis off the Spirit and places it on the minister and his method. The Lutheran preacher has to be careful to avoid both extremes, using the Word as an excuse for laziness, or placing too much emphasis on presentation of the Word. Luther describes the unique efficacy of the Word saying,

You must always have the Word of God in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. Where the heart is idle and the Word does not ring out, the devil breaks in and has done damage before we are aware of it. On the other hand, such is the power of the Word if it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used that it is never without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devotion and purifies the heart and thoughts. For these are not inert or dead but active and living words.³

Luther shows the unique efficacy of the Word. He understands that the Word always bears fruit but at the same time the Word has to be understood and heard. The Lord gives the preacher a unique opportunity. He gives him the opportunity to teach and proclaim the Word, and is therefore an instrument of God. The preacher does not make God's Word more effective. Instead the preacher strives to present the Word in a way that it can be heard and understood to the best of his ability.

³ Ewald Plass, ed., *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), Paragraph 4742, p. 1467.

The goal of this paper is to examine how the Word appeals to people's intellect, emotions, and will, so that we can see how the Word accomplishes that in our preaching. This paper will seek to take the narrow Lutheran middle road as it traverses the study of God's Word. The first part of this paper will examine God's creation of man, to show how God chooses to communicate his Word with his creatures. The second part of the paper will focus on what we need to understand about God's Word to see how it works psychologically (a term that will be defined later in the paper) on the intellect, emotions, and will of human beings. The third part will talk about the dangers of overemphasizing or underemphasizing what will be called the supernatural and psychological working of the Word. The last part will offer some practical advice on how to best preach to man's intellect, will, and emotions.

Part I: Created in the Image of God

God has given mankind his Word. He crafted this Word to appeal to the way he created them. In order to understand how the Word works that the preacher proclaims, it is helpful to consider how God created the human beings to whom the Word appeals.

God made man unique from the rest of his creation. When God created the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon and stars, the plants, and animals, he had mankind in mind. God finished his creation and everything was perfect, just as God intended. He created a perfect place for man to live.

God not only created everything with man in mind, but he also created man in a unique way. God's words, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,"⁴ show his love for his new creation. God created mankind in a special way which set them apart from the rest of creation. He took great care and formed man like a potter fashions his masterpiece. Genesis 2:7 shows God's artistry when he created man and says, "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man become a living being." God gave everything to the crown of creation, to the ones who were created in his own image. He told the man to populate the earth, and he gave authority to rule over what he had created, "fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."⁵ This dominion

⁴ Genesis 1:26

⁵ Genesis 1:28

and authority over the rest of creation shows the huge gap between mankind and the rest of the creatures.

So can one identify the ability to govern and rule with the concept of the image of God? The answer is no because the ability to govern and rule is a result of the concept of the image. What does it mean that God made us in his image? It is not something external. It is not as if Adam could have taken a mirror, looked at himself, and seen the image of God. This is because God is a spirit without a physical body. JP Meyer said, “Since God is absolute spirit, however, the image of God is not to be sought in something physical. Certainly the human body reflects the image that man bears, but itself cannot be the actual image.”⁶

Since the image of God is not our actual, physical image, one has to look for it in the inner part of man, which is his soul. Scripture attributes our rational ability, our emotions, and our will to the soul. The Bible talks about how the soul gives humans their rational ability. Psalm 77:6 shows the rational ability of the soul and says, “I remembered my songs in the night. My heart *mused* and my spirit *inquired*” (emphasis added). The soul also enables humans to feel emotions. One can see this in the psalmist’s question, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?”⁷ Lastly the human soul has a will. The will is seen in passages that talk about a longing to do something, for example in Paul’s prayer at the beginning of Romans, he says, “I pray that now at last by God’s will the way be opened for me to come to you.”⁸ Paul’s will was to go to Rome, and he was praying that God would allow that.

When God created Adam and Eve, he created them with a perfect will, which was not only the desire, but also the ability to do what God wanted them to do. We know that God created Adam and Eve with a perfect will because after he finished his act of creation in Genesis it says, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.”⁹ In Ephesians 4:24, Paul describes the image of God by exhorting Christians, “to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Therefore being made in the image of God

⁶ Meyer 1991, 180.

⁷ Psalm 42:5

⁸ Romans 1:10b

⁹ Genesis 1:31

meant that Adam and Eve were without sin. J.P. Meyer said, “Sinlessness is, of course, the core of the concept of image. Everything else, all pure knowledge, pure striving, pure joy, is only a fruit of sinlessness, to be viewed as granted with sinlessness.”¹⁰ So when people often refer to the soul or intellectual part of man, they often refer it as consisting of intellect, will, and emotion. Lyle Lange describes what it meant to be created in the image of God and says,

It consisted in the right use and disposition of Adam and Eve’s intellect, so they had a perfect knowledge of God as their loving Creator. They also had a perfect knowledge of God’s will. Thus, they were holy. Their will was in perfect conformity with God’s will. They were also righteous, capable of carrying out God’s will perfectly. They were totally upright and uncorrupted in their entire being.¹¹

Lange rightly explains that being made in the image of God meant that Adam and Eve were able to obey God perfectly and had a perfect knowledge of God’s will and the ability to carry it out.

Before the fall, man’s intellect or knowledge ran parallel to the thoughts of God. Our knowledge is a copy of God’s knowledge in the sense that it was in complete conformity with God’s desire. JP Meyer says, “The ethical principles according to which human thinking came to fruition were in complete harmony with God’s principles.”¹² Meyer is saying that the actions, which resulted from man’s knowledge, were in complete harmony with God’s principles. Adam’s ability to name all the animals when the Lord brought them before him is evidence of his knowledge. Genesis 1:19 says, “Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.”

Adam’s sinlessness not only revealed itself in his knowledge or intellect but also his will and emotion. Adam’s will did not contradict God’s will before the fall. This is simply seen from the fact that God entrusted dominion over the entire world to man without limitation. Genesis 1:28 shows and says, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the

¹⁰ Meyer 1991, 187.

¹¹ Lyle Lange, *God So Loved the World A Study of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 189.

¹² Meyer 1991, 181.

sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Adam’s and Eve’s emotions were in perfect harmony with God. Genesis 2:25 shows that they did not feel shame and says, “The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

However, this perfect image, which showed itself in man’s intellect, will, and emotions, was lost after the fall. One can see this in what Adam and Eve did after the fall. They felt the emotion of fear as they heard the Lord walking in the garden.¹³ They reasoned that they should hide from God.¹⁴ Their will was not to confess their sin, but to blame each other for their sin. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent.¹⁵ Man lost God’s image and lost the holiness and the purity that went along with it. Mankind can use their intellect to harness the atom, but at the same time use it to make a bomb. In fact, the wisdom of God is now foolishness to the unbelieving world.¹⁶ Man still has emotions after the fall but instead of using it for God’s glory, man lets it control them. We see that when Adam and Eve felt shame that they were naked and hid from God.¹⁷

Since the fall into sin, sinful man is totally corrupt. Man’s will is completely opposite of God’s will. Romans 3:23 demonstrates the depravity of man and says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The image of God was destroyed through sin, but God declared it restored through the sacrifice of his own Son. This is justification. Romans 3:24 says, “and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” In justification, the image has been given back to us. Our identity as holy children of God is restored perfectly in Christ. However, in sanctification the image is being put on day after day as we die to sin and live for Christ. Paul encourages Christians to put aside the former way of life “and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”¹⁸ This distinction is incredibly important as we look at why God has given his Word. God’s Word not only tells us that

¹³ Genesis 3:10

¹⁴ Genesis 3:8

¹⁵ Genesis 3:12,13

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 1:18a

¹⁷ Genesis 3:7,10

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:23,24

the image of God is restored in Christ, but that he also gave us his Word to daily renew our intellect, will, and emotions.

What is the difference in a Christian to make Paul encourage them to put off the old self, and to encourage them to be more like God in righteousness and holiness? The difference in a Christian is faith. Their faith radically distinguishes them from their former self. J.P Meyer says,

This position of their heart is the standard for all of their feeling, willing, and thinking. It guides and rules all their actions toward God, their brothers, and the entire world. But the faith of Christians has first a very definite object. It looks to Christ with his work of redemption as he is offered and sealed in the means of grace. Mediated through this special faith, the entire relationship of Christians to God has now become one of faith.¹⁹

Because of Adam, sin entered the world and mankind was no longer in the perfect image of God, but instead in the sinful image of Adam. However, when Christ came he restored the image of God. Paul says in Romans 5:18, “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.” A Christian receives the benefit of what Christ has done for them through faith. This marks a drastic change in the life of a Christian. Paul first reminds them of who they once were by listing the sins that had previously controlled and defined them. But as Christians, that is no longer the case for these Corinthians. Paul confidently proclaims, “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.”²⁰ This change affects the Christian’s intellect, will, and emotions. No longer is the message of the cross foolishness, “but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.”²¹ The Christian rejoices in the forgiveness of sins like when the woman who was washing Jesus feet with her tears.²² A Christian strives to do the will of God by fighting his old sinful nature like Paul describes his own personal struggle between the old Adam and the new man in Romans 7:19 saying, “For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.”

¹⁹ Meyer 1991, 182.

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:11

²¹ 1 Corinthians 1:18b

²² Luke 7:36-50

Why is studying how God created man in his own image important to our preaching? It is important for two reasons. The first is that it key in remembering the people to whom we are preaching. The perfect image of God was seen in Adam and Eve before the fall into sin. That image was perfect, righteous, and without sin. It showed itself in Adam's intellect, will, and emotions. However, Adam lost that image when he sinned against God, and it affected mankind's intellect, will, and emotions. The image is restored in Christ. As preachers of God's Word, we have to always remember the people to whom we are preaching. They are both saint and sinner. They have the old Adam who is constantly at war against the new man. This is why we need to preach both law and gospel. We need the law to show us our sins and we need the gospel to show us our Savior.

The second reason why the creation of man is so important to the preacher's study is that God chooses to restore the image through the proclamation of the Word. God crafted his Word in such a way as to touch our intellect, emotions, and will. He saves us through the proclamation of the Word in a way that touches our inner being. This will become very important later in the paper when we look for preaching strategies which specifically target our intellect, emotions, and will.

Part II: The Word of God

Before one looks at the how the Word touches the intellect, will and, emotions, they have to ask, "What is the Word?" and "What is the purpose of the Word?"

The Word of God in the narrow sense refers to the Bible, God's written revelation which focuses on Jesus our Savior. What is the essence of God's Word? What makes the Word of God the Word of God? Adolf Hoenecke quotes the Lutheran theologian Andreas Quenstedt, who describes it by saying, "The essence of Scripture is the revealed divine meaning; the matter of Scripture is the letters, words, and writing."²³ The *meaning* of the letters, words, and writings make the Scriptures the divine Word. The fact that Scripture is God-breathed²⁴ distinguishes it from any other writing. God revealed to us the divine mystery of salvation. He has revealed himself through his Son through the

²³ Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics Vol. IV* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing, 1999), 5.

²⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16

Word. This is the internal essence of Scripture. The outward form of Scripture refers to the characters of speech, the styles that author used, and the idioms that are expressed.

The essence of God's Word is not merely the original languages that God used to write the Bible. Rather, the essence of God's word is the meaning expressed in those languages. This is important to understand because if God's Word was only the original languages, then the translations of Bible would not be considered God's Word. However, the essence of God's Word is the meaning expressed in those languages. As preachers of God's Word, we have the tremendous responsibility to proclaim that Word. It is important to keep in mind that we do not only proclaim God's Word when we read or quote from the Bible. We speak God's Word when we correctly expound and apply God's Word because the essence of God's Word is the meaning that is expressed.

The Word of God is meant to be heard, read, and taught. Paul exclaims, "For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."²⁵ God gave man his Word to save sinners. Paul also said to the Romans, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? How can they hear without someone preaching to them?"²⁶ The Word of God is a powerful tool that saves sinners.

Dogmaticians have differentiated the power of God's Word into three categories, the power to represent (*vis repraesentativa*), to stimulate (*vis excitativa*), and to dispense or convey (*vis collative* or *exhibitiva*).²⁷ Scripture has the power to represent, which is the power to give a clear idea of divine things. Therefore it has the teaching power. Scripture has the power to stimulate. It not only teaches about repentance and faith, but Scripture itself brings forth and affects them. When Scripture shares the gospel, it is the means of grace that gives forgiveness.

Scripture proclaims its power and efficacy as the Word of God. The writer to the Hebrews says, "For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:21

²⁶ Romans 10:14

²⁷ Hoeneke, 7.

thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”²⁸ This power and efficacy is also ascribed to individual parts namely, the law and the gospel. Romans 4:14-15 describes the effects of the law, “For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.” Paul described the gospel as the power of God for salvation in Romans 1:16. The power is in the Word of God. As Hoenecke says, “Both the law and gospel have in themselves the power to bring forth certain affects a change in the spirit and will of man.”²⁹ The power to effect change in man’s spirit and will comes from the Word. This power does not come from the person who proclaims the Word but from the Word itself.

The Word has power apart from its use. The person proclaiming the Word does not make it more powerful, but rather the Word has power within itself. This is evident in John 6:63, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” Jesus equates his words with the Spirit, who gives life. The words that Jesus has spoken are power. One can also see this in James 1:21b, “Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” Hoenecke shows through this passage that the Word has power in itself, and says,

“According to this passage, the Word is planted in them through preaching as a Word which has *δύναμις* to save, a power it did not receive by the planting. It was a *λόγος δυνάμενος* already before the planting (*ante usum*), not first through the planting, the preaching of the Word into their souls. The exhortation to accept this powerful Word shows, of course, that it was powerful before the acceptance and also remains powerful without the acceptance”³⁰

Hoenecke is emphasizing that the Word is power. Its power does not come from the person proclaiming it, and its power is not dependent on the one receiving it. No one can separate this power from the Word. Hoenecke quotes Luther, who discusses this point,

The Word is a divine and eternal power. ... Therefore it is a divine power; indeed, it is God himself. ... Although the Word is unimpressive and counts for nothing while it comes out of the mouth, yet there is such immense strength in it that it makes those who cling to it children of God (Jn 1:12).³¹

²⁸ Hebrews 4:12

²⁹ Hoenecke, 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

Again, Luther's emphasis is on the power of Word and not the one who proclaims it.

The Word of God is always powerful but has no effect apart from its use. The Word always retains its power that is the "constant potential to produce the effect,"³² but it does nothing unless it is preached, or read. That is why Paul says in Romans 10:14, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" The Word does not work physically. Someone cannot simply place a Bible on their lap and make someone become a believer. Scripture produces its effect through its proclamation. As preachers of God's Word, we have the responsibility to proclaim that Word. However, we have to remember that the power is found in the Word and not the minister.

Scripture is a tool, and the power behind the Word is God himself. The Word is the tool or instrument of the Holy Spirit through which the power of God works faith and that is why it is referred to as a means of grace. The Spirit and the Word are bound together and work together in one inseparable act. This is how God has willed to work among us. Hoeneke describes this relationship and says, "Spirit and Scripture are inseparably bound in their working on the basis of the free and gracious will of God."³³ In the Bible, we see how the Scriptures and the Spirit work together. The following passages show how they are both credited for conversion. 1 Corinthians 6:11 reveals how conversion is said to be done by the Spirit of God when it says, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and *by the Spirit of our God.*" Peter credits conversion to the Word of God and says, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring *word* of God."³⁴ It is an amazing privilege for God to use preachers and to give us his Word, which comes to us and appeals to us according to how God made us.

Since it has been established that God's Word is powerful, we now consider how the Word works. Understanding how the Word works is critical to understanding how we

³² Hoenecke, 10.

³³ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴ 1 Peter 1:23

are to share that Word in our preaching. The Word works both supernaturally and psychologically. The supernatural working of the Word refers to the fact that the effects of the Word depend on a supernatural power. That power is nothing other than God himself. In a supernatural way, he touches our intellect, will, and emotions. The psychological working of the Word refers to the fact that the Word comes to us like any other human communication as it appeals to our intellect, emotion, and will. Both the supernatural and psychological working of the Word touch our intellect, will, and emotions. The psychological working refers to *how* that Word comes to us to appeal to the way by which God created us.

Understanding God's involvement in his Word is essential for understanding the supernatural working of the Word. Hoenecke describes the supernatural working of the Word by saying, "The true power on which the effects of the divine Word actually depend is a supernatural power and nothing other than the power of God himself. As such the effects Scripture brings about in a sinner for his salvation are supernatural in the true sense."³⁵ God himself does the work of salvation. He calls the sinner through the gospel as it says in 1 Thessalonians 2:14, "He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The effects that are produced through the Word, particularly rebirth, illumination, sanctification, etc. are attributed to God himself and especially the working of the Holy Spirit. By nature man cannot understand anything about the Spirit of God because they are dead in sin and those things are utterly foolish to them. They cannot understand the spiritual things that are contained in scripture itself, unless God reveals it to them. Hulseman sums up the supernatural working of the Word and says,

The Word of God has a power of its own which goes beyond the most persuasive words of humans, because it persuades the hearers to believe things that do not agree with human senses, nor with the intellect, which gets its knowledge through the senses, nor with the will which measures what is desirable or undesirable by agreement with the senses.³⁶

However, God's Word also works in a psychological way. One cannot simply speak the original Greek and Hebrew and expect God to work magically as if the

³⁵ Hoenecke, 16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Scriptures were some sort of divine spell. Hoenecke says, “In so far as God’s Word is indeed word, or speech, its power works psychologically (moralisch).”³⁷ The point is that the Word is similar to any other word in the sense that it touches one’s intellect, will, and emotions through ordinary human communication. It comes to us using persuasive arguments, artistic language, and encouragements as any other form of communication.

Hoenecke quotes Hulseman on this point,

“The Word of God has this in common with ordinary human words: just as a man’s word is an expression or indication to what is in his mind by means of which he indicates to another man the thoughts of his mind, either to seek those things which he desires or to share those things which he has, so the Word of God is an indication of God’s will, by which God makes known to us what he wants us to believe and do.”³⁸

God uses his Word in such a way as to address the way God made us, creatures with a soul.

One can clearly see how Scripture works in such a way as to address how God created us. Scripture appeals to one’s intellect. Anytime the Bible makes rational arguments it appeals to our reason. For example, you can find the Bible making a rational appeal to our intellect when it makes arguments of the lesser to the greater. Jesus makes such an appeal in Matthew 10:26-30 to encourage the Twelve (and us) to not be afraid of persecution when proclaiming the Word. Jesus appeals to their intellect by essentially asking them to think about who they should be more afraid of. Should they fear those who can only kill the body and not the soul? Rather they should fear God who can kill both the body and the soul.³⁹ To further emphasize his point Jesus compares us to sparrows. A sparrow seems insignificant. Two are sold for only a penny and they will not fall to the ground apart from the Father’s will. If God cares for the sparrows, then how much more will he care about you? Jesus draws the conclusion, “So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Hoenecke, 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁹ Matthew 10:28, “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

⁴⁰ Matthew 10:31

Scripture also appeals to our emotions and will. In Philippians, Paul makes his appeal to our emotions by saying, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”⁴¹ Paul also appeals to the will in his letter to the Colossians by encouraging them to live their lives for God by saying, “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through him.”⁴² While Scripture appeals to the intellect, emotions, and will, the Spirit is at work. Hoenecke talks about this relationship between the intellect, will, and emotions, and how the Word works on them psychologically:

All the foregoing about the manner of Scripture’s working teaches that man’s mind and thoughts are directed toward Scripture, his spirit is filled with the knowledge of the truths that are presented in it, and in this manner his heart and disposition should be moved by it in many ways.⁴³

One cannot separate the psychological and supernatural working of the Word. They are intertwined in their working. In a similar way to ordinary speech, the Word of God appeals to the psychological nature of human beings. However, without the Spirit’s work, the Bible would just be another ordinary book that could do nothing but give a person something to read. It is only by the Spirit’s power that a person is saved from his sin, and the Spirit does this through the Word. The Holy Spirit fills the Word with divine power. In each of the psychological areas, one can see that the Holy Spirit is working in a supernatural way. One can see the working of the Spirit in us in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his purpose.”

What does all this have to do with the preacher? The preacher must remember the great treasure with which he has been entrusted. His task is to proclaim the Word of God to people. He must remember how God works as he crafts his sermons. It is crucial to remember that he is speaking God’s powerful Word, which is connected inseparably with the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works in a supernatural way to touch people’s intellect, will, and emotions. A person does not want to say that it is the preacher’s eloquence that brings about the working of the Holy Spirit or makes his work more effective.

⁴¹ Philippians 4:4

⁴² Colossians 3:17

⁴³ Hoenecke, 13.

At the same time, the preacher must remember that the Spirit works through the Word in a psychological way. He brings the gospel to us in the form of human language that appeals to us in an outward way that is no different than other forms of human communication. Remembering the psychosocial nature of the Word, the preacher will strive to communicate that Word in a way that can be understood, that makes an appeal to the emotions, and that encourages people to turn their will to the service of God. A minister of God's Word will strive to present that Word in the best possible way he can.

Part III: The Lutheran Middle

Lutheran preachers strive to keep the narrow Lutheran middle in their approach to Scripture. One does not want to overemphasize one doctrine at the expense of another. The preacher is ever careful to avoid the pendulum swing of history, where at one point in history people emphasize one aspect of doctrine and then in order to correct the error people tend to overemphasize the other side. This is also true concerning the doctrine of the Word. Some preachers can lean towards emphasizing the doctrine of the supernatural working of the Word and thus diminish the psychological working of the Word. The opposite can be true as well where someone may emphasize the psychological to the detriment of the supernatural working. The preacher must take the narrow Lutheran middle when considering the supernatural and psychological working of the Word. We will take a look at the narrow Lutheran middle, and then look at the dangers of overemphasizing or underemphasizing either of two elements in the doctrine of the Word.

There is a danger in overemphasizing the psychological working of the Word. The preacher may be tempted to believe that if he speaks in a certain way, if he does the right things, it will make his preaching more effective and give him the impression that he is responsible for changing hearts. This places the emphasis on the preacher instead of the Holy Spirit. The credit then goes to how well the preacher spoke instead on the Word and message. Many preachers who fall along this side of the ditch tend to emphasize emotions in order to get a response. They may then learn how to manipulate other peoples' emotions in order to get a "conversion experience" out of them. The problem with emphasizing the emotions, instead of the unchanging Word, is that emotions tend to change rather quickly.

By overemphasizing the psychological working of the Word, all of the burden falls on the preacher and can lead him either into pride, or despair, or a miserable cycle of the two. When things are going well, the preacher then can be tempted with pride because he is then taking credit for what is happening. When things are not going well for the preacher, Satan can tempt him to fall into despair as he looks and does not see results from his work. How many people have *I* gotten to attend church? Why is *my* church not growing when *I* put so many hours into *my* sermon? The real danger here is that it all depends on the preacher to win hearts for the gospel. The preacher's sinful nature will make this arrogance and overconfidence in human communication skills an ever present danger. His pride will lead him to say that his sermonizing stands or falls by his own efforts. When the focus shifts to oneself it can quickly be followed by despair. Professor Gurgel described this shift from pride to despair by saying, "If it all depends on us and our skill to win and persuade hearts, what must our conclusion be when it all seems to be crumbling down around us as stubborn rejection of or resistance to the gospel rears its ugly head."⁴⁴ Deutschlander reminds the preacher (in context the young preacher) to keep the narrow Lutheran middle, "To put it another way, he [the young preacher] is forgetting that there is only one means of grace—the gospel in Word and sacraments—and there is only one Savior of the world. The pastor is not the means of grace; he is the trumpet, not the tune. It is the sound of the gospel that converts and preserves faith."⁴⁵

Likewise, there is a danger in emphasizing the supernatural working of the Word to the point where one undermines the psychological working of the Word. This response is natural when people begin to emphasize the psychological working too much where the emphasis falls on the preacher instead of the Word. It is right for the preacher to give all credit to the Word and the working of the Holy Spirit through that Word. When one emphasizes the supernatural power of the Word, it takes care of the cycle of pride and despair. However, new temptations will still attack the preacher. He must now deal with the laziness of his sinful nature which would like nothing more than to convince him that

⁴⁴ Richard Gurgel, "Growth in Preaching," in *Heritage and Hope: Essays in Honor of the 150th Anniversary of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, ed. Kenneth Cherney, Jr., (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2013), 490.

⁴⁵ Daniel Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross Reflections on His Cross and Ours* (Milwaukee: Northwester Publishing House, 2008), 203.

he does not need to grow in communication skills, that it does not matter how he preaches because God promises to work through his Word. These temptations deny the way in which God created human beings. This temptation also denies the way God has seen fit to have his Word work. He works in the intellect, will, and emotions through human communication. He works through clear reasoning. He touches peoples' emotions through the fine arts. He encourages people to live for him. Preachers should always strive to communicate God's Word to the best of their abilities, keeping in mind that their hearers are psychological creatures who desire to learn, to delight, and live in a God-pleasing way.⁴⁶ Fred Craddock rightly describes the importance of good communication skills:

However, there may be someone reading this book who is persuaded that sermon crafting is a concession to human sin in that the preacher is trying to lure and tease the listeners' resistant ears, and therefore is an exercise in unbelief in that the preacher is not trusting the power of God. The twin convictions that a message of burning significance will, without art or skill, cut its own path to the hearer's heart, and that the Holy Spirit, without human contrivance, opens the listener's ear, are widely and firmly embraced. And not without reason. There is enough truth in both of them to give pause and correction to any who become enamored with their own artistry. However, there is enough deception in both of them to alert any preacher to the danger of allowing healthy convictions to replace healthy work habits.⁴⁷

How does the preacher stay on that narrow middle road when the ditches on either side are so steep and so easy to fall into? The answer is simple. Continue to delve into the Word. A preacher can find great comfort in looking at how Paul uses good communication skills and at the same time has a sobering view of the role he played in the administering of the Word.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The preacher may, at first glance, take a look at this passage and think that Paul is speaking against using the arts or style or rhetorical skill in preaching. But that conclusion comes from taking this passage out of its context. If one would simply look at

⁴⁶ This would be true only of believers.

⁴⁷ Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 153-154.

the immediate context of the verses, one can clearly see that Paul did make use of rhetorical skill. Look at how the Holy Spirit made use of Paul's rhetorical skill. In chapter one, Paul masterfully makes use of rhetorical questions leading up to this argument. One can simply look at the intricate line of thought that Paul uses to define the word "wisdom" from the way the Corinthians used it and how God defines it. Paul's rhetorical skill and elegant writing style are evident throughout this entire epistle to the Corinthians. In chapter 13, Paul brilliantly employs beautiful language to describe Christ-like love. Paul is not ruling out all use of the beauty in communicating the gospel. Paul is rather warning about over-emphasizing the use of rhetorical skill to wow the audience. Gurgel said regarding 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, "What Paul is arguing against is the type of empty sophistry so popular in Corinth in Paul's day that paraded words merely for the sake of wowing the audience with the skill of the speaker, thus filling the speaker's pocket with coins and his ego with praise."⁴⁸ Paul is guarding against the emphasis of the orator over the Word.

Paul also gives encouragement to the preacher who falls into the cycle of pride and despair. He encourages the preacher to run to the Word and be reminded of the power of the Word. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:5-7,

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Paul reminds the preacher of his role in the proclamation of the gospel. He guards against pride by reminding the preacher that God is the only one who makes the seed grow. It is humbling to remember that God is the real power behind the Word. At the same time, it is also a magnificent comfort to remember that God is the power behind the Word. When the preacher falls into despair, he must take his eyes off himself. Instead, he should focus on the promise that the real power is in the Word because the Spirit is connected to it.

How does one stay in the middle with the constant temptation to fall into either ditch? The preacher must prayerfully plead with God to help him use his God-given gifts to the best of his ability. He must also pray for a humble and contrite spirit. He must

⁴⁸ Gurgel, 485.

place all of his confidence in the power of the Word. As the preacher walks the middle road, he must remember that “we preach with the gospel-worked confidence in the awesome power of the Spirit in the Word—without neglecting to pour out every effort to proclaim it.”⁴⁹

As the preacher walks the middle road, he ought to use rhetoric in proclaiming the gospel truth. John Meyer says, “But the Gospel, being the truth of God’s infinite love and mercy, is of such a nature that it will thrill men’s hearts and stir their emotions.”⁵⁰ A person really cannot separate rhetoric from the gospel. Meyer warns against trying to remove rhetorical use of emotion from the gospel, “It is hardly capable of being presented in the cold fashion becoming a mathematical deduction. Any attempt to eliminate the emotions robs the gospel of its principal characteristic. Be it presented in ever so simple sentences, the language will be radiant with warmth.”⁵¹ Furthermore, he shows the connection between the gospel truth and emotions, “Whenever truth stirs the heart and moves man to present it for the ear or for the eye, art is the result. Thus everything that may rightfully be called art, art in all its aspects, is not incompatible with the Gospel, rather it should be a ready instrument in its promulgation.”⁵² Meyer rightly shows the relationship between rhetoric and the gospel truth. As a minister of the gospel, one must use the art of language as an instrument to proclaim the gospel truth. The gospel appeals to our emotions and by the power of the Spirit that gospel wins our hearts to delight in it. This then leads us to use emotion as we preach the gospel, which works both supernaturally and psychologically to win and charm another heart.

One must be careful not to let rhetoric drive the gospel, but let the gospel drive rhetoric. Rhetoric must always serve the gospel. John Meyer said, “The Gospel must stir the rhetoric, not vice versa.”⁵³ So the preacher “will employ all the resources of his art, all the rhetorical figures of speech, to present the Gospel truth in the strongest and most convincing form of which human language is capable.”⁵⁴ By letting rhetoric serve the

⁴⁹ Gurgel, 492.

⁵⁰ John Meyer, “Rhetoric,” *Kirchengeschichtliche Notizen* (April 1921): 144.

⁵¹ Meyer 1921, 144.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

gospel, the preacher humbly recognizes that he is simply an instrument proclaiming the powerful message. A preacher can maintain a right balance of the psychological and supernatural working of the Word, by remembering this simple point. The preacher cannot do anything to make the gospel more powerful. However, the preacher strives to be a servant of the gospel by using his arsenal of art to proclaim that powerful truth.

Part IV: A Preacher's Responsibility to the Word

The preacher has been given the wonderful privilege but also great responsibility to teach God's Word faithfully. Thus it is crucial that he understands how the Word works and what his role is as the herald of God's message.

Paul raises intriguing questions in Romans 10:14, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they without someone preaching?" The minister is called to proclaim that saving message. He is given a great responsibility. Ezekiel describes the task of the minister as a watchman. If the watchman blows his trumpet and warns the people but no one listens to this warning, then the blood will be on their own heads. But if the watchman fails to warn that the sword is coming, then God will hold him accountable for the people's blood.⁵⁵ The preacher is given a tremendous responsibility that should not be taken lightly.

The preacher or the public ministry is not the means of grace. But ministers are ways for the means of grace to be *dispensed*. Hein spoke of the responsibility of the public minister and the means of grace saying, "We are heralds carrying the king's message. It is not our responsibility to make people like the Word. It is not our responsibility to make people believe the Word. (Only the Spirit can do that.) But it is our responsibility to preach the Word."⁵⁶ Hein also reminds the preacher that he has a great responsibility to preach the Word because it is for the salvation of souls. His job is difficult because the Word works psychologically⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ezekiel 33:4-6

⁵⁶ Jonathan Hein, "Treasure in Jars of Clay: The Synergy Between the Instrumental and Ministerial Causes in God's plan of Salvation," WLS Essay File, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/4166> (Accessed October 30, 2015). 11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

Because the Word works psychologically, the preacher's responsibility to the Word is that he is able to teach it. What does it mean to be able to teach God's Word? Being able to teach, always includes the ability to present the truths of Scripture without any false doctrine. However, it does not only mean that. Hein shows the logical conclusion to which one would be led if he were to take teaching as simply being able to proclaim the truths of Scripture without any false doctrine. "If that were all that is required, then Gospel ministry could be reduced to reading the Word. Do not write a sermon. Why risk that you don't say things as well as the Spirit? Just read enough of God's Word, so that both Law and Gospel are proclaimed."⁵⁸

Because God's Word works psychologically, teaching involves more. The lesson of Philip and Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:30,31 reveals Philip's own understanding of being a minister of God's Word. The eunuch was reading God's Word, and he was confused because he was not able to understand it. Philip asked the man "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the eunuch replied "How can I, unless some explains it to me?" The eunuch had God's Word but was unable to understand it. Philip's role was to make God's Word clear to him, but the Holy Spirit was the one who worked faith in the heart of the eunuch to believe the thing that defies reason, that the one who "was led like a sheep to the slaughter" is Jesus his Savior.⁵⁹ Philip demonstrates one aspect of preaching the Word psychologically. He shows us the cognitive element. Philip used the art of reasoning to present the Word so that the eunuch could understand it. This passage does not specifically address the emotional aspect of Philip's message to the eunuch, but I can't help see Philip touching the eunuch's emotions as he explained the reason why Jesus was led like the sheep to the slaughter. What we do know is that the gospel had a positive effect. Philip must have encouraged the eunuch toward repentance because we see the eunuch asking Philip, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?"⁶⁰ We also see the eunuch's emotional response after the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. Acts 8:39b says, "and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing."

⁵⁸ Hein, 12.

⁵⁹ Acts 8:32

⁶⁰ Acts 8:37

This passage shows why the ministry is so vital. It is because the Word works psychologically that one needs to hear it, to have it explained to them, so that they can delight in it. Hein quoted Luther who to point out that listening to good preaching can be more beneficial than simply reading the Bible: “Reading it is not as profitable as hearing it, for the live voice teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the spirit of error. Satan does not care a hoot for the written Word of God, but he flees at the speaking of the Word.”⁶¹

The responsibility of the preacher is not only to proclaim right doctrine but also involves teaching. It involves touching the emotions through beautiful speech. It involves encouraging. Hein summarizes the faithful proclamation of God’s Word saying, “Therefore, our standard for faithful proclamation of God’s Word is not simply that we proclaim right doctrine. That is the beginning of faithful proclamation, but far from the end! But because the Word works psychologically, we want to present the Word in a way that is logical and winsome, touching both the head, and the heart.”⁶²

As a minister of God’s Word, one must remember his own responsibility and at the same time remember the job of the Word. He must not mix or confuse the two. Hein says,

We are very careful that we do not attribute to the minister what is the Word’s responsibility. The minister does not convert. The minister doesn’t strengthen faith. The minister doesn’t grant spiritual life. That is the working of the Word. And so, when discussing such responsibilities, the Word puts man in his proper place. We’re just jars of clay carrying treasure. However, it is equally important that we don’t attribute to the Word that which is the minister’s responsibility. The Word doesn’t carry itself to pagan lands. The Word doesn’t preach itself in our churches’ pulpits. That is work for the minister to do. The Word works...at doing its job. But it does not work at doing our job. Thus, the ministerial cause is vital to God’s plan of salvation.⁶³

The preacher must preach the Word in keeping with the psychological way it works. However he must also remember the Spirit’s involvement in the proclamation of the Word.

⁶¹ Hein, 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

Part V: Preaching to the Intellect, Will, and Emotions

It has been proven that the Word works both supernaturally and psychologically and touches our intellect, will, and emotions. The dangers of over-emphasizing the supernatural or the psychological working of the Word were shown. It was demonstrated that the preacher's responsibility to the Word is to present the Word to the best of his ability. Since the supernatural and psychological working of the Word are happening simultaneously, the preacher is doing what God has entrusted to him and at the same time the Spirit is doing his work powerfully through that Word. The question that now needs to be addressed is, "How can one best carry out that responsibility of preaching to someone's intellect, will, and emotions?" Throughout the rest of this paper, the proper understanding of the Spirit's work, and the role of the minister is assumed. Therefore, what follows is not intended to be advice on how to make the Word more effective. We do not give the Word its power. Rather, it is practical advice which one can strive to implement in his preaching. This will help the preacher to grow in his handling of the psychological nature of the Word. This is done to avoid putting any stumbling blocks or barriers in the Word's way that occur through poor communication.

It is given that the first step to any good preaching is to study the text. Mine the text for all of its precious gems. Uncover all of the facets that this precious gem has. Look at the cultural setting. Discover what the text is teaching. Understand the doctrinal points being made. After one has mined the text for all its worth, then he must examine the text devotionally. Give the Word time to work on your own heart. As you studied the text intellectually, you must also remember that Word can't help but to touch you emotionally and to encourage you will. Hein talks about what the Word does to a person,

For the Word does not simply affront our intellect. It brutalizes our will, speaking of self-denial and cross-bearing. It batters us emotionally telling us that before we had a brain to think a sinful thought or lips to mouth a sinful word, we were under God's wrath simply because of who our parents were. Yes, the Word works psychologically, touching our intellect, will, and emotions. And on all three fronts it rubs us raw!⁶⁴

Let the Word of God "rub you raw." Let the text preach to your heart. Feel the weight and the gravity of the law as it convicts you of sin. Once you have been thoroughly

⁶⁴ Hein, 8.

convicted of your sin, look to the gospel of the text. How does it show you your Savior? See the Word showing you the gospel and teaching you to rejoice in the comfort that it gives. Then ask yourself, “What is this text encouraging me to do?” The Word is appealing to the new will that the Spirit has planted in you! As preachers of God’s Word, seeing what it does in us helps us to know what to do when we preach to others. If you have first experienced the text, then you will be better equipped to guide your listeners on Sunday morning through that emotional rollercoaster by being torn down and built back up.

This author believes that preaching to yourself is one of the most crucial parts of the sermon writing process. The preacher must be fed by God’s Word so that it touches his own heart. Doing this helps to guard against the temptation of pride which tries to tell the preacher he is better than those in the pews. As the Word touches the preacher’s heart, he can use his rhetoric to serve the gospel by mirroring what it has done to him. John Meyer said, “The powerful truth of God is worthy of the most powerful instrument of conveyance. But above all, let us be imbued with the Truth itself that we may experience its thrill in every fiber of our heart. Then our rhetoric will be dignified and sanctified by the cause which it serves.”⁶⁵

The next thing to consider is the congregation to whom one is preaching. Fred Craddock proposes that preachers view their listeners both as an “audience” and as a “congregation.” The difference between the two is that an audience and a congregation are two different ways to view those listening to the sermon. The audience is viewing them as people who you do not know personally. The congregation is viewing them as people who you know personally as their pastor. You know their pains, their sorrows, their struggles, and their joys.

The first thing Craddock suggests is to view your listeners as an audience, regarding them as men, women, youth, and children. The purpose of this is, “to get enough distance to understand and accept the listeners in and of themselves, apart from their relationship to the minister.”⁶⁶ By doing this, the minister relinquishes all prior opinions he may have of his parishioners and simply views them as people he does not

⁶⁵ Meyer 1921, 145.

⁶⁶ Craddock, 87.

know. Viewing the people as an audience is a good strategy to help the minister view them as people without any preconceived notions. Craddock encourages the preacher to take a piece of paper and begin to write down what can be assumed about the audience. Once the minister begins this process, he can see that the audience really is not unknown. He can observe that they are God's creatures, who want their intellect, emotions, and will to be touched.

The people want to be taken seriously. They do not simply want to hear how bad the world is. Instead they want their *intellect* to be spoken to through the minister's instruction. They do not just want to know the facts of the biblical account but they want to understand why it is important in their lives.

The people also want their *emotions* to be touched as they feel the gravity of their own sin and rejoice in the blessings of their Savior. One can assume that "many had the ground pulled from beneath them, not only by circumstances but by broken promises, dashed hopes, and misplaced trust."⁶⁷ When they feel like the world is crashing down around them, they want to feel the security that only Christ can give.

The people also want their *will* to be touched. They want to know how they can live a Christian life in the midst of a sinful world. They want encouragement to battle against sin and temptation that can be found in the gospel. They want help and guidance as they seek to fight against the old, sinful nature.

Craddock then suggests viewing the listeners as a congregation. The preacher does not forget that the things discussed above are true, but now he shepherds the sheep under his care. His knowledge of his parishioners greatly influences his preaching. He sees them not only as individuals but as family units, social groups, etc. The minister must understand the culture of those to whom he is preaching. Every congregation is different from another. Philip Sievert demonstrates that Peter and Paul knew that they had to understand the culture of people to whom they were preaching too.

Each apostle shaped his message from God's Word for the "who, when, and where" of his culture. Both apostles shared a message of law and gospel, sin and grace. Each spoke in a way that could be understood by their hearer without

⁶⁷ Craddock, 88.

compromising the content of the message and goal of their message: to proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior.⁶⁸

Craddock says, “The minister has to relate to the parishioners in a variety of ways: standing beside them, out front leading them, pushing from behind them, squaring off over against them.”⁶⁹ The preacher shares in their struggles and their joys. He knows the sins with which they struggle. The key to any good sermon is understanding where the Word connects to the person in the pew. He takes what he knows about his congregation and uses the text to address that particular situation. Walther emphasizes the importance of applying the text to the hearer and says, “If a preacher proclaims God’s Word, pure and unalloyed, for doctrine, reproof, correction, comfort and instruction in righteousness, he can still not wash his hands in innocence if he does not mete it out according to the individual conditions of his congregation.”⁷⁰ Once the minister finds this point of contact, he must present the truths of Scripture in such a way that this connection is seen.

Once this point of contact is made, then the rest of the sermon flows from that. As the preacher crafts his sermon, he will be able to instinctively touch the listeners’ intellect, emotions, and will. The preacher does this by informing the people so that they can believe, delight, and be moved to action. When the preacher expounds upon the text, he gives insights that engage peoples’ intellect. When he takes the text and applies it to their lives, they not only see the value in what they are hearing, but it also touches their emotions. Their emotions flow from the sorrow they feel over their sins and the extreme joy that comes from hearing what their Savior has done for them. The sermon would be missing a major part if the preacher does not move his people to put aside their life of sin and strive to lead more God pleasing lives.

One cannot simply divide the intellect, emotions, and will into completely separate categories. There is quite a bit of overlap between the three. If one teaches the truth, then he can touch someone’s emotions. If someone’s emotions are touched, it can lead them to be moved to action. For sake of organization, this paper will examine each

⁶⁸ Phillip Sievert, *A Paradigm for 21st Century Lutheran Preachers* WELS Essay File, <http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/3728> (accessed October 20, 2015) 3.

⁶⁹ Craddock, 91.

⁷⁰ C.F.W Walther, *Pastoral Theology* (Kearney: Morris Publishing, 1995), 76.

category separately and discover practical tips to grow in preaching to people's intellect, emotions, and will.

To appeal to one's intellect, the preacher must present the truths of Scripture in a simple and clear way like what Philip did with the Ethiopian eunuch. St. Augustine believed that teaching is the most important part of the sermon. He believed that when the truth is told well, it touches and appeals to the emotions:

Neither is it a necessity to give pleasure; for when, in the course of an address, the truth is clearly pointed out (and this is the true function of teaching) it is not the fact, nor is it the intention, that the style of speech should make the truth pleasing, or that the style should of itself give pleasure: but the truth itself, when exhibited in its naked simplicity, gives pleasure, because it is truth.⁷¹

The preacher must not let anything hinder the truths that he is proclaiming because those truths are fundamental to the other aspects of the sermon. Walther showed the importance of these truths by comparing them to seeds that take root in the heart:

It is precisely the eternal thoughts of God's heart, counsels, and mysteries of faith, which had been kept secret since the world began but have been made known to us through the Scriptures of the Prophets and Apostles (Rom 16:25-26), are the heavenly seed which must be sunk deep into the hearts of the listeners, if the fruit of a true repentance, a sincere faith and an upright, active love is to grow forth in the same.⁷²

Because God's Word works psychologically, the way we present that Word can either hinder, or aid people *hearing* the message. What are some things that hinder the proclamation of the truth? One thing that can possibly hinder the proclamation is lack of variety in preaching styles. Does the listener know what you are going to say before you even say it? Do they know when you will transition to part two because you make the same transitions? Do they know when the sermon is done because you conclude it the same way every time? St. Augustine encourages the variety in style and says, "For when we keep monotonously to one style, we fail to retain the hearer's attention; but when we pass from one style to another, the discourse goes off more gracefully."⁷³ St. Augustine was talking about different styles within the sermon but one can also apply his point to

⁷¹ St. Augustine, "Christian Doctrine" in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), 583.

⁷² Walther, 64.

⁷³ Augustine, 593.

different styles of preaching, whether the sermon takes the form of deductive or inductive. Variety helps the listeners focus on what the preacher is saying because it is not so predictable.

The preacher should not only add variety in his sermons but he must also preach in a clear, organized way. If the preacher proclaims God's Word in an unorganized way, it is as if he is throwing mud against the wall and hoping some of it sticks. By preaching in an unorganized way, he challenges and hinders the intellect of those people sitting in the pews. If they can't intellectually follow where you are going, then they will tune you out and not hear truths of Scripture. Walther addresses this concept of unorganized preaching and says,

If this sermon is nothing but an unorganized, incoherent collection of divine truths; the Holy Spirit may yet bring this or that truth into the heart of this or that listener and make it fruitful. But the preacher himself is hindering his listeners and keeping the sermon from reaching its blessed goal in them.⁷⁴

Walther goes on and discusses the difference between organized and unorganized sermons, "A clear organization furthers the understanding of the divine truth, awakens attention, and help the listeners remember what has been presented. Disorder in the sermon must cause confusion, inattention, and boredom, and keep people from remembering what they have heard."⁷⁵

The preacher must not only craft a sermon that is well organized, but he must also make sure the listeners are able to understand the truths that he is laying before them. If the people can't intellectually understand the truths that the preacher is presenting, then the preacher leaves the people like the Ethiopian eunuch asking, "What does this mean?" When applying God's Word for doctrine the preacher must decide "the what?" and "the how?" according to the level of knowledge of the congregation.⁷⁶ If they are young in faith, they must be given milk but not yet meat. However, if you have many Christians mature in their faith, then receiving only the milk might become boring and not help them grow. Walther quotes Luther and says, "Every doctrine has its measure, time, and age...For as strong wine is death to children, it is a refreshment of life to the aged. So one

⁷⁴ Walther, 83.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

cannot simply present all kinds of doctrine to everyone.”⁷⁷ How does one know if he is to give spiritual milk or meat? The answer is found during the text study, as one contemplates his intended audience. However, in most congregations there is a mixture of spiritually mature and spiritually young Christians. It is good and right to stretch the mind of mature Christians but at the same time present the biblical truths plainly and simply for all.

The teaching and instruction is to use God’s Word to give comfort to those who are distressed because of their sins. It also gives hope in the resurrection. By teaching the truth, the people can delight in the comfort given. There is overlap between people’s intellect and emotions. We will now focus in on the emotional component of preaching.

The preacher must not let anything hinder his proclamation of comfort for the people. Because people are emotional creatures, the way one speaks and the way one comes across matters tremendously. The preacher wants to be careful about the way he comes across in the pulpit. He does not want to come across as condescending, showing bitterness in speech and unkindness in attitude. The listener may tune out anything the minister says because the way the minister made them feel. Instead, the preacher should speak in a modest and yet earnest way. This does not mean that he softens the law so that it hurts less. What this means is that he guards the way he presents himself. He must always be careful that he is not being perceived as one who is prideful, lording it over his congregation. Walther quotes Lukas Osiander on this issue,

For rebukes can be earnest and yet without bitterness; untimely toughness is speech recalls a rough, surly, and unkind attitude. But a modest and yet earnest way of speaking overcomes the listener’s heart more quickly. For the listener who is not yet incorrigible then perceives that the preacher is being somewhat strict, not from a personal passion, but rather for the sake of his office, and he notices that one intends indeed only his salvation.⁷⁸

Walther is saying that our emotions are touched more often by *how* something is said than by *what* is said. One could say that emotions are caught as opposed to taught. I am not saying that what we say does not matter, in fact it is very important. What I am getting at is that the way the preacher may say something can get the people to pay

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁸ Walther, 66.

attention. For example when the people hear the minister present the gospel with joy and excitement, they share in the minister's joy and excitement in hearing the gospel. But at the same time we have to be careful that the way in which we present something does not leave the wrong emotional impression.

How does one guard against coming across as prideful and condescending? The answer is in the text study. Preach the text to yourself first and let the law work in your own heart. Then the preacher can preach the text to the congregation not as someone who is above them but as someone who is walking beside them. They will be able to see you walking next to them by the sincerity in your voice.

Another way to guard against coming across as prideful or condescending is to make sure to let the gospel predominate. Walther said, "As for considering the special needs of the congregation in connection with applying God's Word for comfort, it is beyond doubt that, under all circumstances, the comfort-right Gospel must predominate in the sermons of an evangelical preacher."⁷⁹ There is no greater way to touch someone's emotions than by first showing them their sin. Then show them the joy of what their Savior has done for them in the gospel. The duty of the preacher is to make sure in every sermon that he presents the gospel in all of its beauty. The Holy Spirit will work through the gospel to comfort and assure the people that their sins are truly, freely, and fully forgiven.

A sermon would lack something essential if all one did was simply teach the intellectual truths of Scripture. A sermon would still lack something if we only sought to touch people's emotion. In our sermons, we should strive to touch people's will. It should encourage or move someone to action. It ought to encourage the hearers to put aside the old sinful nature and strive to lead a life worthy of the calling they have received. When one looks at touching the will, the preacher must remember that he is seeking to appeal not to the old Adam, but to the new man. Romans 8:7-8, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." We cannot persuade the old Adam because it cannot please God. However, as Christians we also have a new man who lives for God. Our job as preachers is to encourage and urge the Christian in the power of the gospel. We touch the

⁷⁹ Walther, 80.

will as we encourage Christians to live their lives of sanctification. By encouraging the Christian, we also help them to remember the truths taught, because it encourages them to use those truths in a practical way. Walther said,

Even most Christians, since they all still have the flesh to a great extent, are of such a nature that even the most glorious and richest doctrinal sermons will go by them without leaving a trace if the preacher does not connect exhortation with the teaching, not only showing the correct use but also encouraging it in the most moving way.⁸⁰

The preacher must begin his task of encouraging or exhorting by considering the special needs of his congregation as he applies God's Word. He should not force a given situation into a text, but rather the exhortation should flow from the text. Moving someone to live for God should not be done by demand, command, threat or rebuke. Instead, the preacher needs to use the gospel to motivate their people to action. Walther reminds the preacher about the audience to whom he preaches and says, "Preachers have a powerful weapon: Christians don't want to reject God's Word. They want to live for him who died for them. They no longer want to serve sin, the world and the devil."⁸¹ What a comfort it is to know that if one proclaims the gospel it has such an effect that makes the believer want to live for the one who saved them. Therefore the preacher ought to show the listeners how to apply the gospel truths in the way they live their lives.

Careful use of law and gospel is critical when it comes to impacting the intellect, emotion, and will. This is an art form that can only be taught by the Holy Spirit and the preacher should pray for his guidance when he crafts his sermon. Being able to properly distinguish law and gospel, is the key to touching people's intellect. The way in which you proclaim the law and the gospel will affect people's emotions. Rightly proclaiming the gospel is the proper motivation to change a person's will. Through careful instruction, the preacher announces the law and the Holy Spirit convicts the hearers of their sin. Hearing the law preached in its full force affects the listeners emotionally. They feel the gravity of their sins. They hear how they failed and guilt begins to set in. Once this is achieved, the preacher then preaches the sweet comfort of the gospel. The gospel tells the listener that their sins are forgiven. The gospel gives the greatest emotional response, joy

⁸⁰ Walther., 67-68.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

and comfort. The Holy Spirit uses the gospel then to moves the hearer to turn from their sin because of the great things Christ has done for them. The preacher must continually strive to grow in his use of law and gospel because it is the most important aspect of preaching. As he makes use of law and gospel, he must remember to use it to touch the intellect, will, and emotions.

Conclusion.

In 2 Corinthians 4:1-14, Paul reminds the preacher of his responsibility as a minister of the gospel. The preacher is entrusted with a priceless treasure, the Word of God. Paul reminds the preacher of who he really is and says, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”⁸² The power of the Word does not come from a preacher’s ability to preach. It does not come from a sermon’s style or eloquence. The power of the Word comes from God himself. This is the supernatural working of the Word. He shows this power by choosing jars of clay to carry his priceless treasure.

However, the preacher cannot simply neglect the role he plays as a vessel of that priceless treasure. As preachers, we look out and see men and women, old and young, sitting before us, who are created by God in a unique way. These people are so precious to God that he created them with an intellect, will, and emotions. God has entrusted us to care for his precious people and gives us the tool necessary for such a daunting task. He has given us his Word, through which he promises to work. As we look out at the people sitting in the pews, we see people who desire to learn more about their Savior. We see the sorrow on their faces as they feel the affects of sin in their lives. We see eager hearts, who want to know how to battle against sin in their lives. We see people who need to hear God’s Word. We are caretakers of that Word and we must strive to proclaim that Word faithfully. Because the Word works psychologically, we seek to communicate God’s Word to God’s people by engaging their intellect, touching their emotions, and encouraging their will.

⁸² 2 Corinthians 4:7

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