


Session 3.1
Text-Driven
Preaching In Various
Biblical Genres

Acts 20:26-27

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. **For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.**


Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- What are the minimum requirements for preaching the “whole counsel of God?”
- It may not require preaching every word from Genesis 1 – Revelation 20 (although, that would count!).
- Paul did not have that completed revelation when he addressed the Ephesian elders.




Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- It seems reasonable that the “whole counsel of God” includes, at minimum:
 - The origin of the world, the fall of mankind and a worldview that shapes our understanding.
 - God’s revealed purpose for the redemption of sinners.
 - God’s requirements for living holy lives.
 - God’s promises for us in this life and in eternal life to follow.




Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Even following that brief description, there is no Biblical genre left out of the “whole counsel of God.”
 - Genesis account of creation and the Fall.
 - Redemption of Israel from Egypt.
 - The law given by Moses.
 - The history of God’s people.
 - The revelation of God’s wisdom and love.
 - Promises of the Messiah by the prophets.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Even following that brief description, there is no Biblical genre left out of the “whole counsel of God.”
 - The Gospel message of Jesus Christ and narrative of His ministry.
 - The spread of the Gospel by His churches.
 - The apostolic letters teaching the new converts what to believe and how to behave.
 - The promise of God for the future.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Keep in mind, the nature of divine inspiration is what brought us the many genres we have in the Bible.
 - He called prophets and gave them prophetic words.
 - He made poets and filled their heart (and lives) with poetry.
 - He ordained scribes who would pen the history of His nation and His people.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Epistles are often the easiest to preach.
 - they are intended as instruction.
 - the audience is the closest to ours in time, culture and circumstances.
 - epistles often have a straightforward flow of doctrine (what to believe) leading to practice (how to behave).
 - relatively small units of Scripture pack lots of preaching material.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- **Preaching the Gospels**
 - These accounts most clearly show us Jesus' character in His interaction with others.
 - It is often these well-known stories that require the most studious work in preparation. (We have to be willing to escape our preconceived notions of oft-heard accounts.)



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- The Books of the Law
 - These are not just legal records to be referenced like a codebook or compiled state statutes.
 - Some portions of the law have clear mandates on modern Christians and others do not.
 - We were free to eat some bacon this morning! (Leviticus 11:7-8)
 - We are not free to murder. (Exodus 20:13)



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Historical narratives (Joshua – 2nd Chronicles, et al)
 - It is not always obvious how the story applies to our modern lives.
 - Church members have differing levels of knowledge and understanding of some of these accounts.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Poetry/Wisdom
 - The straightforward statements of Proverbs or the comforting verses of Psalms are helpful in personal trials.
 - Yet sometimes the imagery is alien to us.
 - The form of Hebrew poetry is unfamiliar.
 - We are challenged with relating the appropriate emotion of the message as well as doctrinal content.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Prophetic books
 - Each message was written by someone, to someone and for some purpose ... and those points are vital to the message.
 - We are challenged with entering the historical context of the prophet (in the past) as well as the time of fulfillment (in the future).

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- Complicating matters ... each genre overlaps so that poetry appears in history books and narrative appears in the Law and prophecy can be anywhere!

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- **Preaching the Books of the Law**
 - Much of Moses' books are narrative, so those principles will apply.
 - The preaching of the actual Law of Moses is more difficult as some seem to apply to us today (Stealing; Exodus 20:15) and some do not (no boiling a baby goat in its mother's milk; Exodus 23:19; 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21).

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- **Preaching the Books of the Law**
 - Prayerfully give some thought to the idea of Principlism. This focuses not only on what the law says, but why it says it.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- **Preaching the Books of the Law**
 - Principlism follows these steps:
 - Identify what the law required of the original audience.
 - Determine the differences between that audience and your audience.
 - Determine the universal principle in the law.
 - So how/if that principle correlates with New Testament teaching.
 - Apply the principle to the lives of the church.
 - Let's use an example of Deuteronomy 25:4

Deuteronomy 25:4

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

And he that sows and he that threshes shall have their hire together. 24 What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, receive them, and ye shall have them. 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against them: that your Father in heaven may forgive your trespasses, even as he hath forgiven us. 26 And ye shall be as men that are waiting for their Lord, who will come at the end of the week: and he will reward every man according to his work. 27 And he will reward the righteous, and he will give unto them double portion, because they have loved his commandments. 28 And he will reward the unrighteous, and he will give unto them double portion, because they have hated his commandments. 29 And he will reward the just, and he will give unto them double portion, because they have loved his commandments. 30 And he will reward the unrighteous, and he will give unto them double portion, because they have hated his commandments. 31 And he will reward the just, and he will give unto 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Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- 1) What did the law mean for the original audience? **Clearly, and simply, not to muzzle the ox as it's working in the corn.**
- 2) What is the difference between that audience and ours? **None of our members use an ox or tread corn.**
- 3) What is the principle of the text? **Likely, that it is cruel to have an ox working in the corn all day but not letting it eat.**

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- 4) Correlate the principle with New Testament teaching. **Paul quotes this in 1st Timothy 5:18 to argue for financial support for ministers.**
- 5) Apply the principle to lives of the church. **God has designed the world so that an individual should benefit from the work they're doing. Application could range from paying preachers to being fair with employees.**

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- However we interpret and preach the Old Testament Law, we should remember its purpose and its ultimate goal.

Romans 10:4

For Christ
is the end of the law for
righteousness to every one
that believeth.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- **Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books**
 - There is a reason why you can buy a little Bible with only the New Testament and Psalms.
 - Psalms connect with people on an emotional level, not driven by verb tenses and syntax.
 - Psalms are emotionally fulfilling and theologically sound. Preach them!

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

- **Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books**
 - Preach entire Psalms whenever possible.
 - Imagine listening to an English professor lecture for 45 minutes on two lines from a Shakespeare sonnet.
 - Psalms are usually poems/songs on a topic with all the ideas inter-related.
 - Look at Psalm 8 as an example:

Psalm 8:1, 9

1 **O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!** who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

9 **O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!**

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books

- Psalm 1, “The Song of Two Ways”
 - Two Ways of Man – verses 1-2
 - Two Ways for their Future – verses 3-4
 - Two Ways of God’s Judgment – verses 5-6

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books

- Poetry shows up in surprising places.
 - Luke 1-2 has four songs of Christ’s birth.
 - Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20 are songs about Christ’s nature and work.
- Our goal in preaching poetry should be to relate the truth and emotion of the text.
- Psalms reflect “feeling” as well as “knowing.” For this reason, Psalms often connect with the ladies of the church more than the men.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books

- Proverbs are possibly the greatest challenge for expository preaching because verses often stand alone.
- There are exceptions. Some sections of Proverbs are inter-related such as the introduction or the Virtuous Woman of Proverbs 31.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books

- Proverbs can often be taught well using topical sermons to do “character sketches.”
- Look for examples of character statements grouped together like Proverbs 26:13-16.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books

- The Sluggard:
 - His day starts in bed and returns often. (26:14)
 - Only his imagination works hard. (22:13; 26:13)
 - Even eating is hard work. (19:24; 26:15)
 - He is unreliable for work. (10:26)
 - He wants productivity without effort. (13:4)
 - He makes excuses while others work. (20:4)
 - Be wise and learn from the sluggard! (24:30-33)

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching Poetry/Wisdom Books

– Other “character sketches” to consider:

The Simpleton	The Fool
The Greedy	The Drunkard
The Proud	The Mischievous
The Talebearer	The Liar/Flatterer
The Righteous	The Wicked
The Friend	



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Old Testament History/Narratives

- Your church members’ heads are full of stories from television, movies, books, events of the day or even the fish they caught.
- When you preach, you’re preaching to people programmed to think in terms of stories.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Old Testament History/Narratives

- Overcome the “fairy tale” perception that leads us to teach narratives in Sunday School and the “get serious” with Paul’s letters during preaching.
- Endeavor to make a connection with the people in the story. We aren’t meant to understand narratives as dispassionate observers. Connect with the characters and their motives (even the villains!).



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Old Testament History/Narratives

- Each part of the narrative contains:
 - Explanation: set up the narrative by explaining the background and setting. Are there political tensions, personal rivalries, etc?
 - Crisis: this is the conflict that must be resolved. In David and Goliath, for example, the crisis begins when the armies are encamped across from one another and Goliath issues his challenge.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Old Testament History/Narratives

- Each part of the narrative contains:
 - Resolution: How is the crisis resolved? The question for preachers isn’t so much “what happened?” but “why did it happen?”
 - Conclusion: Usually there’s a summary where some outcome is revealed.
 - Esther’s story results in the Feast of Purim. (9:26-28)
 - Ruth’s story results in the birth of David. (4:18-22)
 - Goliath’s death ends with Abner bringing David before King Saul. (1 Samuel 17:55-58)
 - Each gives an important explanation or sets up a future narrative.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Old Testament History/Narratives

- The goal of preaching Biblical narrative is two-fold:
 - Informative – showing how God worked in the history of mankind to bring about His sovereign plan.
 - Instructive – God works in the lives of individuals in these narratives bringing protection and guidance of His people and even judgment on those who oppose Him. He is the same God today and the preacher should bring the full weight of the narrative to bear on the lives of those listening.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Old Testament History/Narratives

EXPOSITOR BEWARE:

- We must remember that Historical Narrative is just that...it's history, not fiction, metaphor or allegory.
- Often the true focus of a Old Testament Historical Narrative can be known by how the New Testament writer viewed and spoke/wrote of it.
- We should not make more of a Historical Narrative than God's Word does: Instruction, Illustration, Examples...but not necessarily typology



Rom 15:4 / 1 Cor 10:11

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

Preaching the Gospels

- These accounts most clearly show us Jesus' character in His interaction with others.



2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching the Gospels

- Over-familiarity can sometimes allow us to miss connections between accounts.
- Each writer records different details of events so that collating them is a significant challenge.
- Use caution when 'harmonizing' The Gospels not to lose the focus of the writer.



Preaching Various Biblical Genres

• Preaching the Prophetic Books

- Context-Context-Context
- Who is writing, Who is he writing to, When did he receive the prophesy and When will it be fulfilled (in the near or far future)
- Just like with Historical Narrative we must remember that prophesy is not allegory or metaphor unless the Holy Spirit or the clear context of the passage informs us that it is
- Prophesy is written by the same God as the rest of the book and should be interpreted in the same way



Rev 19:10

**'for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit
of prophecy'**

