LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE BENEFITS OF SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANAYLSIS FOR EXPOSTORY PREACHING

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

THE BENEFITS OF SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS
FOR EXPOSITORY PREACHING

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Over the past twenty years, the field of Biblical studies has witnessed a marked increase in the interest devoted to the subject of socio-rhetorical analysis. Much of the work done one this subject reveals that it has great potential for shedding new light on the Biblical text. However, in order for this type of analysis to reach its maximum value for the church it must be integrated with the field of homiletics. Surprisingly, a review of the literature reveals that little attention has been given to showing how this type of analysis can be incorporated into the ministry expository preaching. The purpose of this project, therefore, is to propose a model for integrating socio-rhetorical analysis into the process of preparing expository sermons and demonstrating its effectiveness through a series of messages preached through the Pauline Prison Epistles at the First Baptist Church, Metropolis, IL.

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VITA

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DEDICATION

To my wife Grace and my two children Matthew and Sara, you have patiently waited for me for two years while I wrote this project. You have sacrificed hundreds of days when you wanted me to be a husband and a father so that I could finish this endeavor. You have encouraged me to read and write when I did not feel like it. You have been there throughout the whole time and I could not have done it without you.

To my Dad, it has been six years since you left and I miss you every single day. You were the first to encourage me to go to seminary and the first year I started at Liberty was the year you passed away. Thank you for being a Christian father and a faithful example to me. Most of all thank you for being my friend. I only hope that I can be as good a father to my children as you were to me.

To the members of First Baptist Metropolis, your love and encouragement has helped me throughout this project. I thank you for participating in the surveys and for constantly giving me feedback. Most of all thank you for allowing me to serve as your Pastor.

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CHAPTER 1

THE NEED FOR A SOCIO-RHETORICAL MODEL OF PREACHING

During the past thirty years the field of Biblical studies has witnessed a dramatic increase in the energy and attention devoted to the areas of social scientific and rhetorical criticism. These two areas of Biblical studies, now referred to under the combined banner of socio-rhetorical criticism, have helped bring new insights to many Biblical texts. Until now work in this area has almost exclusively been devoted to the defining of terms, defending methodology and writing commentaries. However, if socio-rhetorical criticism is ever to reach its potential benefit for the church it must be fused with the field homiletics. Grant Osborne is right when he writes that, "the final goal of hermeneutics is not systematic theology but the sermon. The actual purpose of Scripture is not explanation but exposition, not description but proclamation."[1] In order, therefore, for socio-rhetorical criticism to be of value to the church it must move from the academy to the pulpit. In order for this to happen there must be a fusion between the hermeneutical method of socio-rhetorical analysis and the ministry of preaching. Sadly, almost nothing has been done to bring about such a fusion. The

[1] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 12.

purpose of this project, therefore, is to set-forth a model for incorporating socio-rhetorical analysis in expository preaching and to demonstrate through actual practice its effectiveness in increasing a congregation's ability to recognize the relationship between the text of Scripture and the application points of a sermon. The desire to carry out such a project stems from the unique advantages socio-rhetorical analysis offers to expository preaching.

The Advantages of Socio-Rhetorical Analysis

The goal of expository preaching is to convey faithfully and accurately the message of a Biblical text to a modern audience. Therefore, two primary tasks are involved in expository preaching: first, the expositor must determine, as accurately as possible, the authorial intent of the original Biblical author and second, he must communicate this intent to a modern audience in a culturally relevant manner. Since the days of the Protestant Reformation the prevailing model of hermeneutics among evangelical preachers has been the grammatical-historical method. In fact, Haddon Robinson, one of the most influential voices in expository preaching, even includes the grammatical-historical method in his definition of expository preaching. He writes, "At its best, expository preaching is the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation."[2] The value of the traditional historical-grammatical approach to expository preaching has been well established among evangelicals but it does suffer from several weaknesses that can be remedied, at least in part, by the addition of socio-rhetorical analysis.

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[2] Haddon W. Robinson, "What Is Expository Preaching?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131 (January–March 1974)

First, socio-rhetorical analysis helps to protect the preacher from the problem of vertical transference. This problem occurs when an expositor fails to recognize how his own social and cultural context influences his interpretation of the text. The result of vertical transference is that he ends up reading his own cultural context and values back into the biblical text, ultimately leading to a failure in understanding the original meaning of the text and its misapplication in the sermon. Socio-rhetorical analysis helps to avoid this mistake by allowing the preacher, "to gain a richer and fuller understanding of the historical context of the NT texts, informed by the awareness that ideas, decisions, commitments rituals, and group affiliations all take place within, and derive their meaning from a complex web of cultural information and social interaction."[3] Preachers who incorporate socio-rhetorical analysis in their sermon preparations will discover various contrasts between their own social context and that of the original author. In addition, such analysis will provide a rich source of illustrative and applicative material for the sermon.

Second, socio-rhetorical analysis corrects the way that language and word-studies are handled. The traditional grammatico-historical method tends to "focus on the linguistic history but be reluctant to give due recognition to the cultural or historical conditioning of the perspective of the author of the text."[4] In other words, the traditional method tends to focus on the lexical meaning of words and their use in Scripture without understanding how the cultural and social framework of the original author affects the meaning of words. Vernon

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[3] David A. DeSilva's, "Embodying the Word," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. McKnight Scot and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 119.

[4] Daniel R. Sanchez, "Contextualization in the Hermeneutical Process," in *Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman), 377

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Robbins asserts that socio-rhetorical criticism avoids this mistake by challenging interpreters:

> …to explore the text in a systematic, plentiful environment of interpretation and dialogue. Underlying the method is a presupposition that words themselves work in complex ways to communicate meanings that we only partially understand. It also presupposes that meanings themselves have their meaning by their relation to other meanings. In other words, all of our attempts to name truth are limited insights into small aspects of the relation of things and meanings to one another. Interpreters and investigators have acquired amazing abilities, however, to describe the relation of things and meanings in complex but structured ways that are informative about life and the world in which we live. Socio-rhetorical criticism challenges interpreters to use a wide spectrum of these amazing human abilities when they investigate and interpret biblical texts.[5]

Word studies incorporating socio-rhetorical analysis will be wider in scope than traditional word studies. They will focus on trying to discover how language worked in the whole socio-rhetorical context of the original audience. Specifically, words studies in this model will focus on the rhetorical functions that words and phrases play within the text. In other words, preachers will be challenged to think about not only what the word means but why the original author chose that particular word and how it fits into the overall rhetorical strategy of the text.

Third, the socio-rhetorical method corrects the tendency of the traditional method to ignore how structure and form affect the meaning of the text. Specifically, it reveals how the original author used various rhetorical structures and devices in the text to communicate his message. Ben Witherington notes that when most people hear the word rhetoric it usually, "connotes…words without substance or mere eloquence." However, "in the New Testament times, rhetoric did not mean just speaking nicely. It meant speaking effectively. Rhetoric

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[5] Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*, 4.

was the art of persuasion."[6] In his groundbreaking book *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism,* George Kennedy observes that:

> Rhetoric is the quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purpose. Choices and arrangement of words are one of the techniques employed, but what is known in rhetorical theory as "invention"- the treatment of the subject matter, the use of evidence, the argumentation, and the control of emotion- is often of greater importance and is central to the rhetorical theory as understood by the Greeks and Romans.[7]

The tools of socio-rhetorical analysis allow a preacher to go deeper into the structure of a text than merely identifying its genre. It allows him to see how the author structured the text and the intended affect that such a structure would have on the original audience. Not only can this information reveal the intent and meaning of the Biblical text but it will also provide valuable clues as to how the sermon should be structured.

These advantages should make it clear that socio-rhetorical analysis, if carefully and faithfully applied, offers significant advantages to expository preaching. The problem is that up to this point only one work has been published with an aim of providing preachers with a practical model for applying this type of analysis to preaching. The models of rhetorical and social scientific analysis that have been proposed so far are too cumbersome and technical for the average Pastor to effectively use in the course of his preaching ministry. This project, therefore, will attempt to accomplish two primary goals. First, it will attempt to set forth a practical model for incorporating socio-rhetorical analysis in expository preaching that the average Pastor can effectively use in his week-to-week ministry. Second, it will seek to demonstrate quantitatively the benefits that such a model offers for increasing audience

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[6] Ben Witherington, "Rhetorical Writing," *Biblical Archaeology* 18, no. 6 (2002): 14.

[7] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3.

understanding and their ability to connect the authorial intent of the passage with modern application.

Review of the Literature

As already stated, a review of the literature reveals that to date there has been only one attempt to combine socio-rhetorical analysis with expository preaching. The term socio-rhetorical recognizes the combination of two approaches to the Biblical text that until recently have been pursued independently of one another. Rhetorical criticism focuses primarily on seeing how the form of a text relates to the content of its message. It seeks to discover how the author shaped the text in order to persuade his audience most effectively. Social-scientific criticism, on the other hand, seeks to understand the social and cultural issues that form the background of the text. It recognizes the vast difference between Christians living in the 1st century Greco-Roman world and 21st century Christians living in the West. A brief review of how these two fields developed and were combined under the heading of socio-rhetorical criticism will provide a helpful background to this project.

The Development of Rhetorical Criticism

Approaching New Testament texts from a rhetorical standpoint may be traced as far back as the early church fathers. Augustine, for instance, applied rhetorical analysis to the book of Galatians and argued that every Christian preacher should receive training in the art of persuasion.[8] But the modern era of rhetorical analysis must be traced back to James

[8] Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, translated by D. W. Robertson (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 07/04/19 1958), 4.4.6; Augustine, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Muilenberg's 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature.[9] In that address Muilenberg argued that so much attention was being given to form criticism that the actual content of the Bible was being neglected. His contended that form and content are inextricably related and called for Biblical scholars to give greater attention to what he termed "Rhetorical analysis." He defined his purpose as follows:

> What I am interested in, above all, is understanding the nature of Hebrew literary composition, exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole. Such an enterprise I should describe as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism."[10]

While Muilenberg and his students concentrated mostly on the Old Testament, Amos Wilder began lecturing on early Christian rhetoric in the New Testament. As interest in rhetorical analysis grew it became necessary to establish specific methods for applying such analysis. George Kennedy wrote two of the most influential works on defining rhetorical analysis, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* and *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Traditions*.[11] Both of these works remain important contributions to the field of study and every preacher will find them to be excellent introductions to the subject. Another very influential writer in the field of rhetorical analysis has been Burton Mack, who published *Rhetoric and the New Testament* in 1989. This work provides a

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[9] James Muilenberg, "From Criticism and Beyond," in *The Bible in Its Literary Milieu: Contemporary Essays*, ed. Vincent L. Tollers and John R. Maier (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 1-18.

[10] Ibid

[11] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

thorough survey of classical rhetoric but is too detailed for the average pastor to wade through.

A landmark in both rhetorical and Pauline studies occurred in 1979 with the publication of Han Dieter Betz's commentary on the book of Galatians.[12] In this work Betz argued that Galatians was an example of classical Greco-Roman forensic rhetoric and analyzed the book as if it were an ancient speech. Betz's theory came under immediate and intense scrutiny. Today most scholars would reject his conclusions but agree that his commentary represents a seminal work in the field.[13] After Betz a plethora of scholars followed in his footsteps and Galatians became a virtual hotbed of debate concerning rhetorical analysis. A good survey of the Galatians debate, as well as an excellent primer in rhetorical criticism, can be found in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* edited by Mark Nanos.[14] This work surveys the wide ranging and heated debate that was spurred by Betz's commentary. More recent commentaries on Galatians written by Richard Longenecker and Ben Witherington have

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[12] Hans D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul' Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

[13] Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 27; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. Ralph Martin and Lynn Allan Losie, vol. 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), cii-cxix; Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, 144-45; Lorin L. Cranford, "Modern New Testament Interpretation," in *Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 07/04/19 2002), 158.

[14] Mark Nanos, *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002).

approached Galatians either as mixed or deliberative rhetoric.[15]

The Development of Social-Scientific Criticism

Social-scientific criticism began taking shape roughly at the same time as the interest in rhetorical analysis was growing. In 1979 John Elliot presented a paper to the Catholic Biblical Association of America surveying the growing scholarly interest in social-scientific interpretation of the Bible.[16] He noted in particular, the recent work of Gerd Theissen entitled *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*.[17] After surveying the literature up to that point Elliott proposed a method he termed "sociological exegesis." He demonstrated this methodology in his 1981 publication of *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter*.[18] This work has been followed by a virtual tidal wave of works seeking to interpret the Bible from a social-scientific model. The most prolific writers in this new movement have been Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey and John Pilch.

For a Pastor wanting to utilize social scientific analysis in sermon preparation several good books are available. Two that might aid the him in gaining a basic understanding of the social issues of the New Testament era are Bruce Malina's *The New Testament World:*

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[15] Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005); Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians*.

[16] John H. Elliott, "Social -Scientific Criticism of the New Testament: More on Methods and Models," *Semeia* 35, no. 1986 (1986): 3.

[17] Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, 1977, translated by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

[18] John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Analysis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 07/04/30 1991). Misspelled word.

Insights from Cultural Anthropology[19] and David deSilva's *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture*.[20] Both of these works contain extensive Scripture indexes so that a Pastor preparing a sermon on a particular text can very quickly locate the information relevant to his text. Malina has collaborated with John Pilch to produce the *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, which is an easy to use reference guide to the various social topics in the Bible. The simple arrangement and easy to read articles will make this an especially helpful resource for someone seeking to utilize the model laid out in this project. A word of caution is warranted concerning the works of Malina, Neyrey, and Pilch. Much of their research in this field has involved observing current Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures and then concluding that the social setting of the New Testament would have been identical. While certainly these current cultures are closer to that of the New Testament than Western American culture, it would be a gross overstatement to say that they are exactly the same. This is one reason why deSilva's book is superior. He is very careful to base his conclusions on actual first century sources.

Another helpful resource is James Jeffers' book entitled *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament*.[21] Jeffers gives attention to both the historical and the social/cultural issues that establish the New Testament background. It is well documented and contains a Scripture index making it an accessible resource for sermon preparation. The classic work by Adolf Diessmann entitled *Light from the Ancient East* deserves special mention due to the

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[19] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[20] David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

[21] James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999)

fact that it has enjoyed a revival of interest over the last decade because of renewed interest in the Roman Imperial Cult.[22] The Imperial Cult is especially important from a socio-rhetorical standpoint in the letter to the Colossians, where Paul attributes the very language reserved for the Emperor to Jesus (see Colossians 1:13-18). The recent work by John Dominic Crossan and Johnathan Reed entitled *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* makes extensive use of Diessmann's earlier work. [23] Crossan is certainly not an evangelical—rejecting the majority of Paul's letters as inauthentic and portraying a strong feminist theology—however, this recent work does provide an introductory glimpse into the complicated and foreign social order of ancient Rome.

The Development of Socio-Rhetorical Criticism

The combination of rhetorical criticism and social scientific criticism under the banner socio-rhetorical criticism traces its roots to a 1975 article by Vernon K. Robbins entitled *The We-Passages in Acts and Ancient Sea Voyages.*[24] In this article Robbins argued that the "we-passages" in Acts reflected a well-known cultural phenomenon in Mediterranean literature. Furthermore, he argued that this phenomenon represented a cultural intertexture of sea voyages that dates back to Homer's *Odyssey*. He followed this with an article with a subsequent book applying socio-rhetorical analysis to the Gospel of

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[22] Adolf Diessmann, *Light from the Anicent East* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978).

[23] John Dominick Crossan and Johnathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004).

[24] Vernon K. Robbins, "The We-Passages in Acts and Ancient Sea Voyages," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C.H. Talbert (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1978), 215-42.

Mark.[25] In 1996 Robbins outlined a method of socio-rhetorical analysis entitled *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*, a work which remains the standard introduction to the field but that will more than likely prove too complicated for the average Pastor.[26]

Over the last several years, Ben Witherington has produced a series of five socio-rhetorical commentaries concentrating on the Pauline epistles and the book of Acts.[27] Witherington is very readable and comes at the text from a consistently evangelical point-of-view; therefore, these commentaries will be of great value to the purposes of this project. Each of his commentaries includes solid introductory material to the book being dealt with and adequate explanation of how the socio-rhetorical model is being applied. Witherington does include a more detailed discussion of his method in *Conflict and Community in Corinth*.[28] He also devotes several chapters in his book *The Paul Quest: the Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* to the social background of Pauline Christianity as well as a good introduction to the Apostle Paul as a rhetor. This project will make extensive use of all of Witherington's works, especially, as will be seen later, his commentaries on the Pauline

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[25] Vernon K. Robbins, "Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-Step Progression," *Novum Testamentum* 23 (1981): 97-114; Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992).

[26] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996).

[27] Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians*; Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Ben Witherington, *The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge: Trintity Press International, 1994); Witherington, *The Letter of Paul to the Philippians*; Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

[28] Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

Prison epistles. Other commentaries utilized in this study will be listed in the Bibliography.

Several books provide helpful introductions to Pauline studies. The first is *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* by F.F. Bruce.[29] This book is a classic on the life of Paul and will provide the reader with a solid introduction to the Apostle's life and times. The only criticism of the book is that it is somewhat dry in places and Bruce assumes too great an understanding of classical and inter-testamental history on the part of the reader in the early chapters. The second is a work by John Polhill entitled *Paul and His Letters* published by Broadman & Holman.[30] Pohill provides a very good introduction to Paul's background and upbringing as well as help in placing his writings in chronological order. The third work is entitled *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* by Ben Witherington.[31] This book is relevant to this project because it approaches the introduction of Paul from a socio-rhetorical point-of-view. A fourth work, also by Witherington, entitled *Paul's Narrative Thought World* provides an excellent window into the thought life of the Apostle helping the preacher to identify the various narratives that Paul weaves throughout his writing. This is especially helpful in understanding the issue of intertexture in the Pauline epistles, specifically why does Paul make certain references to Old Testament events in his letters.

As mentioned previously, only one major work has been done to date integrating socio-rhetorical analysis and homiletics. Published in 2007 *Preaching Matthew:*

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[29] Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of a Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977).

[30] John Pohill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

[31] Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998).

Interpretation and Proclamation attempts to demonstrate how socio-rhetorical analysis can be applied to preaching from the gospels.[32] This work provides little help to the pastor looking for an introduction into the subject and provides no explanation of the rationale for using socio-rhetorical analysis. Furthermore, the work tends to focus too much on the issue of social justice to the exclusion of other interests. Several works have mentioned the need to use this kind of analysis in homiletics. Sidney Greidanus, for instance, does include a brief evaluation of rhetorical criticism and its potential benefits for preaching in his book *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*.[33] In addition, this book serves as an excellent primer for any preacher who takes the task of exposition seriously. Wayne McDill, incorporates a consideration of rhetorical function in the second edition of his *12 Essential Skills of Great Preaching*.[34] While not a full blown treatment of rhetorical analysis, McDill does acknowledge that the Biblical text contains a persuasive element and encourages the expositor to consider this in his analysis of the passage. In the August 1996 edition of *The Covenant Quarterly*, Dr. Paul E. Koptak published a paper entitled *Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Resource for Preaching* in which he provided a brief review of the literature on rhetorical analysis up to that point and showed the benefit of this tool to the preaching of Genesis 29.[35] Recently, Walter Brueggemann included a chapter entitled "*The Social Nature*

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[32] Mike Graves and David M. May, *Preaching Matthew: Interpretation and Proclamation* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2007).

[33] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[34] Wayne McDill, *Twelve Essential Skills of Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006)

[35] Paul E. Koptak, "Rhetorical Criticism of the Bible: A Resource for Preaching," *The Covenant Quarterly* LIV, no. 3 (August 1996): 26-37.

of the Biblical Text for Preaching" in his book *The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word*.[36] This text focuses less on the social context of the original audience and more on the social theories that form the worldview of the modern audience. However, he does give at least some attention to the fusion between socio-rhetorical criticism and homiletics.

The Scope of this Study

Statement of Limitations

In order to maintain the focus of this project certain limitations are necessary. First, the project will be limited to a discussion of how socio-rhetorical analysis can be employed in the study and preaching of the Pauline prison epistles. The reasons these letters have been chosen will be detailed later. Second, the project will limit itself to those rhetorical devices that can be discovered in the English translations of the Bible. Specifically, this project will use the New American Standard version of the Bible due to the fact that its translators pursued an essentially literal translation of the text and sought to maintain consistency in the way they rendered the same Greek word in a given context. While the oral nature of the Pauline epistles and the importance of aural rhetorical devices is duly noted and provide an interesting area of study, they lie beyond the scope of this project.[37] This project is intended to help to the average Pastor who may not have skills in the original languages and who is hard pressed with the task of preparing two to three sermons per week. Furthermore, since it must remain practical the inclusion of aural devices would simply make it too cumbersome to

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[36] Walter Brueggemann, *The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2008).

[37] John D. Harvey, *Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998).

be useful in the course of ministry. Third, while there is a great deal of debate concerning the authorship of Ephesians and Colossians and the unity of Philippians, each of these issues falls outside the scope of this project. The Pauline authorship of all the prison epistles will be assumed as well as the canonical form in which they now exist. Finally, this project will be written and conducted from a thoroughly evangelical perspective. It is assumed throughout that the Bible is inspired by God, inerrant in all that it teaches, absolutely sufficient for the life of the church, and normative for the Christian today.

Theoretical Basis

The purpose of this project is to provide Pastors with the knowledge needed to effectively incorporate socio-rhetorical analysis in the preparation of expository sermons. The contention is that this will produce three primary results. First, it will allow the expositor to better identify the authorial intent of a passage by giving him insight into the social, cultural and rhetorical issues present in the text. Second, it will allow him to better contextualize the message by comparing and contrasting the social/cultural context of his modern audience with that of the original audience. Third, it will increase the congregation's ability to recognize and connect the application points of the sermon with the Biblical text.

These three desired results reflect three underlying presuppositions of the project. First, it assumes that locus of meaning is in the text of the Bible and that the preacher's task is to diligently discover that meaning. For socio-rhetorical analysis to be effective, therefore, the must diligently seek to identify and isolate his own social/cultural biases. Second, it assumes that all texts are socially and culturally constructed. This does not mean that truth is culturally negotiated, as postmodernism would argue, but rather that every text reflects the cultural and social background of the author and that every reader reads the text from a

specific social placement that affects the way that he hears it. Third, it assumes that the intent of the original author must be contextualized for a modern audience. In other words, the intent of the original author must be translated into the social/cultural context of the modern audience in the form of the sermon.

Methodology of this Study

This project will focus on four primary issues. First, it will provide the necessary knowledge for being able to do socio-rhetorical analysis. In the interest of keeping it practical, only the essential issues will be dealt with in this project. Second, it will attempt to establish a step-by-step model for using this type of analysis in sermon preparation. Third, it will demonstrate how this model can be used through the preparation of actual sermons from the Prison epistles (the reason for choosing the prison epistles will be detailed below). Finally, the effectiveness of this model will be demonstrated by reviewing the results of a survey intended to measure a congregation's ability to recognize and connect the application points of the message with the Biblical text. These issues will be examined in the five chapters that make up this project.

This first chapter has established the need for this project by demonstrating the potential advantages socio-rhetorical analysis offers expository preaching. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that while a vast body of literature has been written on the subject from a Biblical studies perspective few have been dedicated to incorporating this type of analysis in the preparation of sermons. Finally, it has defined both the scope and methodology used in conducting this project.

Chapters two through four present a model for incorporating socio-rhetorical analysis in expository preaching. Chapter two examines rhetorical analysis at the macro level of the

text demonstrating the insights that can be gained by getting the bird's eye view of the rhetorical setting and structure of the text. Chapter three moves into the micro level of the text exploring the structure of individual rhetorical units, their persuasive functions and a method of utilizing word study to identify intertexture. Chapter four focuses on Social scientific analysis of the text, presenting three basic building blocks for understanding the social world of the New Testament and how they apply to the interpretation of the prison epistles. Each of these chapters is tied to an appendix containing a demonstration of the principles outlined in that particular section.

The final chapter of the project is dedicated to demonstrating the effectiveness of this method of preaching. Prior to beginning the project a survey was taken at First Baptist Church, Metropolis, IL to establish a baseline for how well the church was able to identify the main theme of the sermon and connect it with the Biblical text. During the course of the project the survey was repeated in order to measure the effect of the socio-rhetorical model. The results of these surveys along with analysis will be reported in this final chapter.

The Prison Epistles have intentionally been selected as test cases for this project for the following reasons. First, they represent two of the three of major branches of Greco-Roman rhetoric— deliberative (Philippians, Philemon and Colossians) and epideictic (Ephesians). Second, they demonstrate how Paul dealt with a variety of social and cultural topics. Third, they demonstrate how Paul contextualized his message for different audiences. His contextualization includes both the rhetorical forms that he uses as well as the ways in which he addresses moral and social issues to different audiences. As test cases, therefore, they will prove very informative to the modern preacher faced with the need to contextualize the message of the Bible in a modern setting.

The desire is for this project to be the beginning of a conversation about how to apply this important area of Biblical studies to the preparation of expository sermons. The author's desire is to see other preachers and homileticians critique, improve, and build upon this work. Expository preaching demands that the very best tools be applied to the preparation of sermons. This project will assert that socio-rhetorical analysis should be one of the main tools used in the preparation of expository sermons. With that said, it is now time to turn examine the first step in socio-rhetorical preaching, which is macro-level rhetorical analysis.

CHAPTER 2
MACRO LEVEL RHETORICAL ANAYLISIS

Rhetorical analysis grew out of a desire in Biblical studies to give more attention to the Biblical text as it appears in its canonical form. Rhetorical analysis recognizes the important link between form and content. James Muilenberger, the father of modern rhetorical analysis, wrote:

> Rhetorical criticism looks on the biblical text as a work of art and therefore emphasizes the unity of form and content. Thus the interpreter cannot lay hold of the specific content of a text without paying close attention to the form into which the artist/author (redactor) has cast his message in that particular instance.[38]

In other words, rhetorical analysis begins with the presupposition that the original author deliberately shaped the text in a particular way to assist in the communication of his message. Paying close attention to the structure and form of the text is, therefore, invaluable to a preacher who desires to understand the original intent of the author and to communicate that intent to a modern audience.

This chapter will demonstrate how this method of analysis may be applied to the

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[38] James Muilenberger, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 1 (1969): 58.

macro level of the text. Vernon Robbins calls this phase of the process inner-textural analysis. He writes, "Inner textual analysis focuses on words as tools for communication. This is a stage of analysis prior to analysis of 'meanings' that is, prior to 'real interpretation' of the text. Sometimes it helps for the interpreter to 'remove all meanings' from the words and simply look at and listen to 'the words themselves' to perform this analysis."[39] Robbins statement that this phase takes place "prior to analysis of meanings" must not be taken too far. He is simply pointing out that before the preacher tries to determine the meaning of the text he must be careful to "look and listen to the words themselves" in order to recognize the shape and form of the text. It is only after the shape of the text is discovered that he can begin to recognize how the words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs join together to form the meaning of the text. Therefore, observation and close reading of the text are of the utmost importance in this phase of analysis. Before looking at the specifics of applying this kind of analysis to the Prison epistles, however, it is important to have a basic understanding of the Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions with which the Apostle Paul would have been familiar.

The Importance of Rhetoric in Paul's World

The Apostle Paul lived in a period known as the Second Sophistic. George Kennedy notes that during this period rhetoric played a powerful and pervasive role in the everyday life of the average person living in the Roman Empire.[40] Harry Gamble and William Harris

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[39] Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapesty of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

[40] George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 37-38.

both argue that only about one fifth of the people living in the empire during this time were able to read or write, therefore, oral/aural communication was of the utmost importance.[41] Litfin says that rhetoric, "was a commodity of which the vast majority of the population were either producers or much more likely consumers, and not seldom avid consumers."[42] Daily in the courtrooms, marketplaces, and assemblies of the empire, rhetoric would have been on display. This, in part, was a result of the process of Hellenization that had been going on in the Near East for over three hundred years. It would virtually have been impossible for someone like Paul to avoid the influences of Greco-Roman rhetoric.

George Kennedy says that in Paul's day, "Rhetoric was a systematic academic discipline universally taught throughout the Roman Empire. It represented approximately the level of high school education today and was, indeed, the exclusive subject of secondary education."[43] This brings up the important issue of Paul's education. Specifically, what kind of education would he have received? In Acts 22:3 Luke provides an important piece of information concerning Paul's background and education. He implies that Paul received his education in Jerusalem rather than in Tarsus—"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers,

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[41] Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 7; William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), 130-45.

[42] Duane Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation, 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 132.

[43] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 9.

being zealous for God just as you all are today."[44] Ben Witherington asserts that, "this means Paul learned to read and write, not just in Greek but also in the sacred language Hebrew and likely also Aramaic."[45] But would this have included rhetoric? Witherington concludes that there is ample evidence that Paul received training in the methods of debate:

> Paul would surely have learned methods of debating or persuading, such as arguing from current experience to scriptural proof in *midrashic* fashion (see 1 Cor 9:7-14), or using what could be called *pesher* or even allegory to make a point (Gal 4:21-31). Such creative handling of the Hebrew Scriptures should not all be put down to the inventiveness or idiosyncrasies of Paul himself. At least a good measure of it came from his education.[46]

It is not hard, therefore, to see that Paul had received training in Hebrew rhetorical devices. But, is it also plausible that a Jew receiving rabbinic training in Jerusalem would have been trained in Greco-Roman rhetoric?

George Kennedy observes that Palestine and Syria were not "rhetorical backwaters." In fact, several of the most famous rhetoricians of the first and second centuries hailed from these regions. For instance, Caecilius of Calacte, the most famous rhetorician during the reign of Augustus was a Sicilian Jew. Hermogenes, the most famous rhetor of the second century was from Tarsus and Theodorus, a native of Gadara, later moved to Rome and taught rhetoric to the Emperor Tiberius.[47] Furthermore, Nicolaus of Damascus instructed Herod in rhetoric and Josephus says that he himself received an education in rhetoric and knew that

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[44] All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New American Standard Version of the Bible.

[45] Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 95.

[46] Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 97.

[47] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, 9.

Herod Agrippa I and his descendants had also received such training.[48] Stanley Porter and Andrews Pitts have examined writing of Strabo, the first-century author who was describing Tarsus at the time that Paul lived there. They have made several observations from this study. First, Strabo asserts that in the first century Tarsus had surpassed Athens and Alexandria in the area of education. Second, Tarsus differed from other cities in that the initial stages of one's education would occur in the city then they would travel abroad to complete their education. Third, these descriptions match well with the Biblical descriptions of Paul's education (see Acts 9:11, 30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3; Gal 1:21).[49] Given that Paul appears to have received more than an average education it would seem difficult to conclude that he did not receive a least some training in rhetoric.

But even if Paul's education did not include formal training in the art of persuasion it is difficult to imagine that he would not have tried to learn it on his own. Various handbooks on the subject were available to him and, as Jerome Murphy-O'Connor points out, "Oratorical skills were the key to advancement in an essentially verbal culture."[50] There was, according to Ben Witherington a "considerable impetus for Saul to become conversant and literate in Greek, including rhetoric, and to gain some knowledge of Greek literature and philosophy so that he could communicate well with Diaspora Jews coming to Jerusalem."[51] If this were not enough, surely his call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles would provide

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[48] Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 98.

[49] Stanley Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "Paul's Bible, His Education and His Access to the Scripture of Israel," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaim* 5 (2008): 11-12

[50] Jerome Murphy O'Conner, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 47.

[51] Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 97.

adequate motivation for him to learn the skills needed to be a good orator. The greatest evidence of Paul's knowledge of rhetoric, however, is contained in his letters themselves.

Paul wrote his letters with the intent of persuading his audience to act or respond in certain ways, and the prison epistles are no exception to this rule. For instance, in Philemon he attempts to secure the emancipation of the run-away slave Onesimus by persuading Philemon to set him free. Even a casual reading of this, the shortest of Paul's letters, shows his expertise in the art of persuasion. In Colossians, he tries to persuade the believers in Colossae to reject heresy and continue in the faith. In addition to their persuasive elements, however, Paul's letters also reflect the strong connection that existed between letters and speeches in the first century. David Aune writes, "By the first century B.C. rhetoric had come to exert a strong influence on the composition of letters, particularly among the educated. Their letters functioned not only as means of communication but also as sophisticated instruments of persuasion and media for displaying literary skill."[52] Aune goes on to say that both Herodotus and Thucydides use the word *epistle* in reference to oral communication sent by messengers. His conclusion is that:

> The overlap between letter and speech suggests two important dimensions for understanding the former. First, oratory was very important in the Greco-Roman world and rhetoric occupied a central role in ancient education. Though primarily connected with oral delivery, rhetoric had profound effect on all genres of literature including letters. A knowledge of ancient rhetorical theory, therefore, can contribute to understanding letters written by ancients (like Paul and Ignatius) who had more basic education. Second, throughout the ancient world there was a high degree of social stratification. Consequently, systems of etiquette prescribed socially appropriate modes of behavior and speech for relating to persons of higher, equal, or lower social status in various situations. In letters, where the sender communicates with a person or group, the social status and relationship of sender and receiver will

[52] David Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 160.

inevitably influence both what is aid and how it is said.[53]

The above discussion bears heavily on how one should analyze Paul's writings. Aune notes that Paul wrote his letters with the intention that they be read aloud to his audience (see Col. 4:6) with the effect that the letters could act as Paul's surrogate.[54] In other words, Paul wrote his letters as if they were speeches. Therefore, in attempting to understand their shape and meaning the expositor must employ a method of rhetorical analysis that takes into consideration the construction of a Greco-Roman speech. At this level the preacher is attempting to understand the structure of the text at the macro level.

The Elements of Persuasion

When most people hear the word rhetoric today they think of empty speeches or mere flattery (e.g. a political speech). But in Paul's day rhetoric referred to the art of persuasion.[55] Aristotle wrote:

> Rhetoric then may be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever. This is the function of no other of the arts, each of which is able to instruct and persuade in its own special subject; thus, medicine deals with health and sickness, geometry with the properties of magnitudes, arithmetic with number, and similarly with all the other arts and sciences. But Rhetoric, so to say, appears to be able to discover the means of persuasion in reference to any given subject. That is why we say that as an art its rules are not applied to any particular definite class of things.[56]

Witherington observes that, "The art of persuasion involved more than just eloquence; it

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[53] Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 158.

[54] Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 93.

[55] Ben Witherington, "Rhetorical Writing," *Biblical Archaeology* 18, no. 6 (2002): 14.

[56] Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, in *Penguin Classics*, trans. H.C. Lawson-Tancred (New York: Penguin, 2004), 1.2.2-3.

involved the whole impact of a speaker on his audience. It was not uncommon for a rhetor to use a variety of kinds of rhetoric to persuade in a given speech.[57] Aristotle argued that there are three essential elements of persuasion in every speech: Logos, Pathos, and Ethos.

Logos

Logos refers to the element of persuasion involving logic. Aristotle said that the *logos* of a speech developed by means of what he called enthymemes. In simple terms, this refers to informal reasoning. Even a cursory reading of Paul's letters reveals that he is a master at this element of persuasion. His letters are virtual masterpieces of logical argument. The classic examples of this kind of argumentation would be Romans or Galatians; however, the prison epistles also exhibit a high degree of logical argument. For instance, in Philippians he bases his appeal for the unity of the church on the example set by Christ (Phil 2:11). Likewise in Colossian his appeal for perseverance is based on a detailed examination of the preeminence of Christ and His reconciliation of the saints (Col 1:15-23). Paul's logic is simple, since Christ is preeminent and has reconciled all things to Himself, believers must persevere in the faith. Even in Philemon, he urges the emancipation of Onesimus by an appeal to the fact that since he has become a Christian he is now Philemon's brother. The logic is simple; one brother should not own another brother.

Pathos

Aristotle's second element of persuasion is pathos or the appeal to emotion. He says that, "Proofs from the disposition of the audience are produced whenever they are induced by the speech into an emotional state. We do not give judgment in the same way when

[57] Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 118.

aggrieved and when pleased, in sympathy and in revulsion."[58] Aristotle recognizes here what every good preacher knows: that logic alone rarely moves people to action, people must feel and idea in order to be moved by it. Aristotle notes that this kind of proof is especially important in "questions where precision is impossible and two different views can logically be maintained." [59] Paul utilizes emotion as an element of persuasion throughout his prison epistles. There is little doubt that the high and lofty language of Ephesians was intended to stir the emotions of the listeners and persuade them to continue in their love and devotion to Christ. An even better example is found in the letter to Philemon, where Paul pulls on the heart strings of Philemon with almost relentless persistence as he attempts to obtain the freedom of his dear Onesimus (see Philemon 9,10,17,19). Even two thousand years later, one can feel the emotion of Paul as he writes these words. One must wonder how Philemon could even thought of saying no to Paul, especially if this letter was read to him in the presence of other members of the church meeting in his home.

Ethos

Aristotle's third element of persuasion is ethos: the appeal to character. He admits that this approach is the most effective of the three elements writing that:

> Proofs from character are produced, whenever the speech is given in such a way as to render the speaker worthy of credence—we more readily and sooner believe reasonable men on all matters in general and absolutely on questions where precision is impossible and two views can be maintained. But this effect too must come about in the course of the speech, not through the speaker's being believed in advance to be of a certain character. Unlike some experts, we do not exclude the speaker's reasonable image from the art as contributing nothing to persuasiveness. On the

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[58] Aristotle 1.2.

[59] Ibid.

contrary, character contains almost the strongest proof of all, so to speak.[60]

In every one of his letters, Paul is careful to establish his ethos. In most cases, he starts at the very outset of the letter by the careful crafting of his greeting. For instance, Paul starts the letter to the Philippians by saying:

> Paul and Timothy, bond servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Phil 1:1-5)

It is obvious here that Paul is attempting increase his ethos with the Philippians or at least to remind them of it by referring to his continual prayer on their behalf, their past partnership with him in the gospel and his confidence in God's continuing work in their lives. Paul's repeated reference to his imprisonment throughout the Prison Epistles is also intended to establish his ethos with the various audiences (see Eph 6:20; Phil 1:7, 13, 14,17; Col 4:3; Philemon 10, 13). This should not be taken to mean that Paul was merely trying to garner sympathy or pity from his readers. Rather the references to his chains established his ethos by demonstrating his dedication to the gospel.

As one reads the prison epistles, it is important to see how Paul weaves these three elements of persuasion together in order to persuade his audience towards his desired goals. But understanding the elements of persuasion is just the first step in rhetorical analysis. As will be demonstrated below these elements form the building blocks of rhetorical arrangement and are invaluable in understanding the intent of the original author. Before one can examine the arrangement of a letter or speech, they must first determine what branch of

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[60] Aristotle, 1.2

rhetoric or type of speech they are dealing with. Fortunately, all Greco-Roman speeches fall into just three basic branches of rhetoric.

The Three Branches of Rhetoric

Aristotle writes that the three branches of rhetoric correspond to the three kinds of hearers. He argues that the hearer "must necessarily be either a mere spectator or a judge, and a judge of either things past or things to come."[61] As will be seen, there are two kinds of rhetoric that require the hearer to be a judge- Forensic and Deliberative. The primary difference between the two is time. In a forensic speech, the judge/audience is being asked to render a verdict on events of the past. In deliberative, the judgment concerns future action. With that in mind it should be easy to see that forensic rhetoric was most at home in the court-room where the judge was being asked to render a verdict on action that occurred in the past. Deliberative rhetoric, however, was most at home in the *ecclesia* or assembly where the speaker was trying to persuade his colleagues towards future action . The third branch of rhetoric is called epideictic and was most often found in funeral oratory or in speeches meant to praise a public official. In epideictic speeches, the audience is spectator and not be called upon to render a verdict. Being able to recognize these three branches of rhetoric is essential for applying rhetorical analysis to a New Testament text; therefore, it is necessary to provide a more detailed examination of each of these three branches.

[61] Aristotle, 1.3.

Forensic

Aristotle said that there are two kinds of deliberative speeches—prosecution or defense.[62] Therefore, whenever the need arose to accuse or defend someone, the rhetor would employ the rules of forensic speeches. Obviously, the most common place for this type of speech was the court of law. In his groundbreaking commentary on Galatians, Hans Dieter Betz argued that this letter is an example of forensic rhetoric, seeing it primarily as a defense of Paul's apostleship.[63] However, both George Kennedy and Ben Witherington have demonstrated that Galatians is best understood as deliberative rhetoric rather than forensic.[64] None of the prison epistles show evidence that they were intended as forensic rhetoric.

Deliberative

Deliberative rhetoric "was the rhetoric of advice and consent, and its focus was the future."[65] According to Witherington, "the main venues for deliberative rhetoric in Paul's day were the royal court (among ambassadors, those interceding with a patron and those seeking votes) and voluntary religious associations, where people had to be persuaded to join and then to believe and behave in a specific fashion."[66] It should be no surprise, therefore, that

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[62] Aristotle, 1.3.

[63] Hans D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul' Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermenia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Hans Dieter Betz, *The Galatians Debate*, 1975, edited by Mark Nanos (Pabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 3-38.

[64] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, 144-45; Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 27.

[65] Witherington, *The Paul Quest,* 117.

[66] Ibid. 116.

most of the New Testament letters represent this branch of rhetoric. Aune notes that, "With few exceptions, early Christian letters were either written with a basically deliberative purpose, and included major deliberative elements."[67] It should be even less of a surprise to discover that the majority of Paul's letters would clearly fit within this branch. All of the prison epistles, with the exception of Ephesians, fall into this branch.

Epideictic

Aristotle says that epideictic rhetoric "has for its subject praise or blame."[68] Kennedy writes, "Epideictic is perhaps best regarded as including any discourse, oral or written that does not aim at a specific action or decision but seeks to enhance knowledge, understanding, or belief, often through praise or blame… "[69] This kind of rhetoric was primarily used in funerals and speeches praising or blaming political figures and is usually easy to recognize by its lofty and grand speech. It is important to note that while epideictic rhetoric is primarily about "testimony and appreciation" rather than "argumentation and proofs" this does not mean that there is not a persuasive element involved. By reminding the audience of things that are true, i.e., "things that they already know or ought to know," the author is encouraging the audience to embrace these truths or virtues.[70] There are many short passages in Paul's writings that reflect epideictic rhetoric but Witherington argues that the entire letter

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[67] Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Enviroment*, 199.

[68] Aristotle, 1.3.1.

[69] George A. Kennedy, "The Genres of Rhetoric," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C.-A.D.400*, ed. S.E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 43.

[70] Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 7.

to the Ephesians represents this kind rhetoric.[71]

Every Greco-Roman speech will fall into one of these three branches. It is important for the preacher to give careful attention to identifying what branch of rhetoric that Paul is utilizing in each of his letters. An exact method for doing this will be given later in the chapter but at this point, it is necessary to reiterate the importance of this step. Identifying the branch of rhetoric gives the preacher an important clue to understanding the intent of the author. Forensic speeches, for instance, are intended to convince a judge or audience about the rightness or wrongness of a past action. In a deliberative speech, on the other hand, the author is trying to convince the audience to take an action in the future. The intent of both of these speeches is to convince but obviously the way the author will develop his argument will be different. Being aware of this can be a major help as one approaches the text. With that in mind, it is now necessary to consider arrangement.

Arrangement of a Greco-Romans Speech

Arrangement refers to the placement of various parts of speech. Aristotle writes, "The next task is to speak of style (arrangement). For it is not sufficient to have a grasp of what one should say, but one must also say things in the way that one should, and this makes a great contribution to the character that the speech projects."[72] Aristotle recognized the important connection between form and content in communication. The arrangement of a Greco-Roman speech was carefully crafted in order to produce the strongest persuasive appeal. Each branch of rhetoric had its own unique preferences concerning arrangement; essentially, however, a speech in Paul's day consisted of six basic parts. Aristotle arranges

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[71]Ibid, 7-10.

[72] Aristotle, 3.1.

these six parts under two headings: statement and demonstration. He writes:

> It is necessary both to state the subject-matter and to demonstrate it. Consequently, it is impossible without having stated the matter to prove it or having stated it not to prove it; for one who proves proves something, and one who describes describes for the sake of proof.[73]

As will be shown later, an outline of each of the prison epistles may be made by identifying these six parts of speech. Furthermore, because each part has a specific function within a speech, identifying the parts immediately allows the preacher to gain insight into the authorial intent or purpose of the section. With that in mind, it is now necessary to outline the six parts of a Greco-Roman speech and provide some examples from the prison epistles.

Introduction- Exordium

Aristotle writes, "The introduction, then, is the beginning of the speech, which in poetry is the prologue and in flute music the prelude; for all these things are initiatory and, as it were, prepare the way for what is to follow."[74] Every preacher knows the importance of the introduction in gaining the audience's attention and preparing them for what they are about to hear. Ancient speechmakers were also well aware of this fact and devoted considerable attention to this initial part of a speech—the exordium. All of the major handbooks agree that the three goals of an exordium are to gain the audience's attention, receptivity, and goodwill.[75] Quintilian, for instance, says that, "In giving an exordium at all, there is no other

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[73] Ibid, 3.13.

[74] Ibid, 3:14.

[75] Aristotle, 3.14.14; Cicero, *De Inventione*, ed. Trans. C.D. Yonge. 2006, http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/cicero. (accessed, March, 25, 2008); Quintilian, ed. Lee Honeycutt, ed. Trans. John Shelby Watson. 2006, http://honeyl.public.iastate.edu/quintilian. (accessed, March 25, 2008).

object but to prepare the hearer to listen to us more readily in the subsequent parts of our pleading. This object, as is agreed among most authors, is principally effected by three means: by securing his good will and his attention, and by rendering him desirous of further information."[76] The exordium in Paul's letter to the Philippians is found in 1:3-26. Duane Watson correctly states that in this passage:

> Paul gains attention by making it clear that the subject at hand pertains to the welfare of all, the audience itself, and the worship of God. Also, his own ethos and respectability as founder of the congregation and church leader is central to gaining attention. Receptivity follows naturally from gaining audience attention.[77]

As Watson demonstrates, all three elements of a good exordium are present in this passage. Watson goes further saying that Paul continues establishing goodwill by, "concentrating on the facts of the case and the persons involved, including the rhetor, the audience, and the opposition."[78] Paul's emphasis on himself and the establishing of his own ethos with the congregation is perfectly expected in deliberative rhetoric and is due to the fact that "a rhetor believed to be a good person was considered the strongest influence" in such a case.[79]

Statement of facts- Narratio

The next part of a Greco-Roman speech is the *narratio* or more simply the statement of facts. At this point in the speech, the speaker presents a simple account of what has happened up to this point or a general explanation of the nature of the case. According to

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[76] Quintilian, 4.1.

[77] Duane Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *Novum Testamentum* 30, no. 01 (1988): 62.

[78] Ibid

[79] Ibid.

Cicero the primary characteristics of a good *narratio* are that it is brief, clear, and plausible.[80] Forensic speeches always require a narratio due to their past orientation but in deliberative speeches they will only be included if the contents are of value in helping the audience make a decision about the future.[81] Paul's utilizes a narratio in Philippians 1:27-30:

> Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in no way alarmed by your opponents— which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear is in me.

Here is an example of the relationship between the ethos developed in the exordium and the issue presented in the narratio. Watson notes that, "To persuade his audience to adopt a pattern of life and faith, Paul's case is aided by a succinct statement of what he conceives this to be. His case is also aided by a very persuasive factor in the narratio, ethos derived from his own manner of life."[82] In other words, Paul is not telling the Philippians to do something that he is not himself doing. His instruction to "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" is backed up by the ethos he established with the Philippians in the exordium.

Division- Propositio/Partitio

The next part of a Greco-Roman speech was the propositio/partitio. The basic goal of the propositio/partitio is to lay out the essential proposition(s) or thesis of the speech. When

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[80] Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.20-21.

[81] Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians ,"65.

[82] Ibid, 66.

the issue is complex and several propositions will be examined they are usually enumerated in a partitio. The modern version of a partitio occurs when the preacher concludes his introduction by briefly outlining the points of the message. Quintilian argued that a partitio is not always required but its inclusion aids in memory.[83]

Two examples from the prison epistles may help to demonstrate how the propositio/partitio works in a speech. The first is from Philippians 1:27-30:

> Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents— which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

This is an example where the proposition of the speech is simple and clearly defined in the narratio, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ…" therefore, Paul does not use a separate partitio. Because it is so simple, there is no need to provide the audience with help in keeping the issues straight. The second example, however, shows how Paul could use the partitio to provide the audience with an outline for the rest of the letter. Colossians 1:21-23 says:

> And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach— if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

Paul outlines here a rather complex argument that has several parts; therefore, a partitio is required. Ben Witherington asserts that Paul outlines three parts of his speech in this partitio

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[83] Quintilian, 4.5.

and that he then deals with them in reverse order through the remainder of the discourse:

The recognition of Paul's role in proclaiming the gospel	1:23	1:24-2:5
The need for the Colossians to continue in the faith	1:23a-b	2:6-3:4
The works of Christ to produce holiness in the believers' lives	1:21-22	3:-4:1[84]

Identifying the propositio/partitio is extremely helpful when preaching through a letter such as Colossians because not only does it provide insight into Paul's main goal (to persuade the Colossians to continue in the faith) but will also sometimes show how the remainder of the text is to be outlined.

Proofs- Probatio

The *probatio* is the section where the main points of the speech are developed. Sometimes this is referred to as *confirmatio* or simply proof.[85] The main element of persuasion involved in this portion of a speech is logos. From Aristotle on most rhetoricians divided proofs under two categories; inartificial and artificial.[86] Inartificial proof refer those proofs adopted by a speaker that are not connected with the art of speaking such as, pre-recognitions, public reports, writings, oaths, and testimonies. According to Qunitilian, these proofs made up the largest portion of a forensic speech.[87] This makes perfect sense seeing that in a court of law the most powerful arguments would be evidence, reports and testimonies. However, Quintilian goes on to say that in his day artificial proofs were too

[84] Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians*, 137.

[85] Aristotle, 3.17; Cicero , 3.52-201; Quintilian, 5.1-12.

[86] Aristotle, 3.17; Quintilian, 5.1.

[87] Ibid

often neglected and that they offered great value in certain situations.[88] Artificial proofs are those which the speaker extracts from or produces from his cause or subject. According to the handbooks the most common types proof are arguments or enthymemes and examples. The difference between these two types of proof are that enthymemes always involve deduction, drawing conclusions from general principles, whereas examples are based upon inductive reasoning, drawing conclusions from observation etc...

Due to their importance in rhetoric and their frequent use in the prison epistles, it is necessary to deal more fully with the main form of informal logic called enthymeme. It is common for rhetoricians today refer to enthymemes as truncated or informal syllogisms. This refers to the fact that most enthymemes have an unstated assumption that must be true in order for the premises to support the conclusion.[89] This view is generally based upon the definition of an enthymeme given in Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*:

> Thus both enthymeme and example must concern things that can for the most part be otherwise, example being inductive and enthymeme deductive, and arise from few facts, often fewer than with the first syllogism; for if any of them were well known, there would be no need to mention them.[90]

An example of this type of enthymeme is, "The engine is running so it must have gas." The unstated underlying assumption is that engines must have gas in order to be able to run. David Aune, however, points out that the term "enthymeme" is used with such variety by different authors and handbooks that no fixed definition can be attached to the word.[91] In

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[88] Quintilian, 5.7.1-3.

[89] Quintilian, 5.10.1; Aristotle, 1.1.

[90] Aristotle, 1.2.13.

[91] David Aune, "The Use and Abuse of the Enthymeme in New Testament Scholarship," *New Testament Studies* 49, no. 3 (2003): 299-306.

fact, Quintilian gave five different meanings of the word: (1) a thought, (2) a maxim supported by reason, (3) an inference from consequents, (4) a rhetorical syllogism, (5) an incomplete syllogism.[92] After examining all of the major handbooks of rhetoric Paul Holloway offered this conclusion:

> …we may describe the figure of enthymeme as it took shape in the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods as a brief and pointed argument drawn from contraries. Ideally, it was not longer than a single sentence. By the late Republic it had come to be viewed primarily as a figure of speech and was almost always expressed in the form of a question. For further effect, enthymemes were sometimes employed in a series.[93]

Using the above definition Holloway identifies several enthymemes in Paul's writings (Gal 2:14; 3:3; 4:16; 1 Cor 6:1-3; Rom 6:1; 14:15, 20).[94]

The busy Pastor, however, need not worry himself about the technicalities of precisely identifying and categorizing enthymemes. All that is needed is that he be able to identify those places where Paul is making use of deductive reasoning and how these arguments were intended to persuade the original audience. For instance, Paul makes a very subtle but very persuasive use of argumentation in the letter to Philemon. His goal, of course, is to secure the manumission of Onesimus but he must be very careful in how he broaches this subject. Paul's basic argument in v.10-16 is that Philemon should manumit Onesimus because it is inconceivable that one brother in Christ should own another brother in Christ. This is an example of an informal syllogism, if it were expanded into a full blown

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[92] Aune, 300; Qunitilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, translated by John Shelby Watson, edited by Lee Honeycutt (2006), 5.14.

[93] Paul Holloway, "The Enthymeme as an Element of Style in Paul," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 2 (2001): 335.

[94] Holloway, 335-39.

syllogism it would be as follows:

> M- One brother should not own another brother as a slave (unstated premise)
> m- Onesimus is now your brother in Christ.
> C- Therefore, you should set him free.

Another example would be in Philemon 17, where Paul says, "If then you regard me as a partner, accept him as you would me." The unstated premise here is that anyone who is one of Paul's partners should accept Onesimus as they would Paul. A final example of enthymeme is Philippians 1:6, "*For I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." The unstated premise here is that God always finishes the work that He begins; therefore, since He began a good work in the Philippians, He will certainly finish it.

When studying a passage, therefore, the preacher must be on alert to see how Paul utilizes informal argument to make his points and persuade his audience. By carefully thinking through Paul's arguments and filling in the unstated premises the preacher is often able to gain a fuller or more complete understanding of Paul's view. In order to do this the preacher must slow down as he reads through the text and be alert for argument. A very helpful exercise would be to sit down with one of the prison epistles and slowly reading through them, looking for and marking each instance of informal argumentation. Then on a piece of paper complete the syllogism by writing out the unstated premise. Such an exercise will be very enlightening as the preacher seeks to understand how Paul unfolds his arguments in these books.

The second type of proof or demonstration in a Greco-Roman speech is example. Aristotle says that example is more at home in deliberative speeches because they deal with the future, therefore allowing the speaker to draw out past facts or events conclusions about

the future.[95] An example of this type of reasoning is Philippians 3:1-11 where Paul warns his readers to beware of false teachers, probably Judaizers, who extolled the value of circumcision. His argument is that if anyone has reason to have confidence in the flesh he has more (v.4-6) but instead he counts all of these apparent advantages as loss so that he may be found having the righteousness of Christ (v.7-11). In this argument Paul draws on his own past in order to draw a conclusion. He does a similar thing in Ephesians 2:1-10 where he reflects on the past conduct of Ephesians before they were saved and the fact that they have been raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies. Because Ephesians is epideictic rhetoric Paul employs the language of praise here but his point is brought out in v. 10 where he says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Simply put, Paul uses both the past conduct and the present spiritual reality of the Ephesians to draw the conclusion that God has saved them for the purpose of doing good works.

Part of rhetorical analysis must focus on understanding how the author makes his arguments. As already stated, it will not be important for a busy preacher to worry about the technical issues involved in identifying enthymemes and examples; however, it will be crucial for them to consider how the argument is made. This is based on the presupposition that form and content are vitally linked and that the author, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chose deliberately to present his argument in a specific way. Discovering what that purpose may have been by using rhetorical analysis can be very enlightening.

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[95] Aristotle, 3:17.

Conclusion- Peroratio

The conclusion of a Greco-Roman speech and that of a typical modern-day sermon have virtually the same goals. According to Aristotle, the conclusion accomplishes three goals: amplification, moving the emotions of the listener, and recapitulation of the main points of the speech.[96] Quintilian argues that this is the place in the speech most conducive to artistry and eloquence. He writes:

> But in the peroration, if anywhere, we may call forth all the resources of eloquence, for if we have treated the other parts successfully, we are secure of the attention of the judges at the conclusion, where, having passed the rocks and shallows on our voyage, we may expand our sails in safety, and as amplification forms the greatest part of a peroration, we may use language and thoughts of the greatest magnificence and elegance. It is then that we may shake the theater, when we come to that with which the old tragedies and comedies were concluded, *Plaudite*, "Give us your applause."[97]

Obviously, pathos is the primary element of persuasion employed in the peroratio of the speech, a fact clearly demonstrated in Paul's conclusions in the prison epistles. In the peroratio of his letter to the Philippians (4:1-20), for instance, Paul demonstrates all of the qualities of a good conclusion. First, he recapitulates the main themes of the speech (4:1), amplifies them through pointed application (4:2-7), and moves his audience to emotion with impassioned speech (4:8-20). His return to the theme of partnership in the gospel (c.p 1:3-5 and 4:10-20) ties the entire letter together in a neat rhetorical package.

Ben Witherington notes that according to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* another common goal of the peroratio was the proposal of a policy.[98] This would be something similar to the modern technique that preachers use in drawing out specific applications of the

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[96] Aristotle, 3.19.

[97] Quintilian, 6.1.51-52.

[98] Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians*, 197.

sermon during the conclusion. In other words, it is a call for action issued in the closing moments of a speech. Colossians 4:2-6 offers an example of this use of the peroratio:

> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.

One is immediately aware that Paul is calling for specific actions that the Colossians need to take in light of this letter. Witherington writes:

> The focus then in the peroratio is on getting the Colossians back on track with normal acts of devotion (as opposed to the ascetic suggestion of the errorists) and appropriate wisdom regarding behavior in relationship to outsiders. While praxis seems to be to the fore here, as 4:6 suggests, Paul also cares about witness, and so the Colossians understanding of the gospel so that they can answer all comers. What binds the requests for prayer for Paul and the discussion of deeds and speech together is the concern for spreading the gospel among outsiders.[99]

This is a powerfully persuasive and practical way for Paul to conclude this letter.

This simple introduction to the construction of a Greco-roman speech should accomplish two things for the preacher reading this chapter. First, it should provide him with some basic understanding of how Paul utilized the canons of rhetoric to construct his letters. Second, it should motivate him to do further study and research into this enlightening area of Biblical research. As interesting as this subject is, however, the goal of all hermeneutical methods and Biblical studies is the sermon. Therefore, attention now must be given to how this analysis of the macro level of the text can be applied to sermon preparation.

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[99] Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians*, 198.

Applying Macro Level Analysis to Sermon Preparation

The goal of macro-level rhetorical analysis is to understand of how Paul structured the text to make his argument. In other words, the preacher, at this point, is simply trying to gain a birds-eye view of the epistle. The benefits of such analysis will be threefold: 1.) the division of the letter into rhetorical units that will later form the basis for text selection; 2.) an insight into rhetorical setting of the letter and the authors original intent into writing the text; 3.) an understanding of how the form and the content of the epistle work together to persuade the original audience towards and intended action or result. There are three essential steps in the phase of macro level rhetorical analysis:

1. Establish the Rhetorical Setting

Establishing the rhetorical setting of the epistle is the first step in gaining an understanding of the epistle at the macro level. Grant Osborne says that this step is "akin to determining the purpose (or with form criticism, the *Sitz Leben*) of the passage/book)."[100] In this step the preacher attempts to gain as much insight into the original situation of the original author and audience at the time the letter was written. Osborne says that this is objective in those letters where the situation is specifically described in the text itself and subjective, and therefore debatable, in those instances where it is not.[101] In the case of the prison epistles the preacher is essentially dealing with a subjective setting. Nearly every aspect of the original setting for these letters is open to debate; therefore, the preacher must approach this step with a bit of humility and willingness to have his conclusions challenged.

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[100] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 125.

[101] Osborne, 125-26.

Nevertheless, it is essential to make an effort to determine, as best as is possible, the original setting in which these letters were written. An example of how this could be done for the letter to the Philippians can be found in Appendix 1.

The benefits of understanding the historical background of an epistle for expository preaching have been well documented. Every first year seminary student knows that the three rules of hermeneutics are context, context, and context. It has been said that every heretic has a verse and usually the reason that he does is because he has ripped some passage of Scripture out of context. In other words, he has failed to see how the passage fits into the text around it, or how it fits in with the ancient historical and cultural background of the text. If the expositor fails to understand the grammatical and historical background of the text, he will more than likely miss the meaning of the text. For the expository preacher, therefore, the issue of understanding the background and rhetorical setting of the text is essential and foundational.[102]

Besides offering an expositor a deeper insight into the meaning of the book background study offers another major benefit to preaching, namely in the area of application. Walter Kaiser has observed that a problem in many expository sermons is the failure to "map the route between the actual determination of the authentic meaning and the delivery of that word to modern men and women who ask that the meaning be translated into some king of normative application or significance for their lives."[103] Therefore, "the

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[102] Robertson McQuilkin, *Understandingand Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992); Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1970); Walter C. Jr. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981).

[103]Kaiser, , 88.

expositor must bridge the gap between exegetical studies and the preparation of a message that will be helpful and practical to contemporary listeners."[104] The very best way to begin this process is to have a firm understanding of the biblical, historical, rhetorical, and cultural background of the text that can then be compared and contrasted with the modern context of the preacher to discover possible areas of application. Bryson observes that:

> After reconstructing the historical setting of a book, the expositor can then get involved with the feelings associated with the book. Getting into the feelings of the circumstances, conditions, and environment, and times of the books involves another method of using Bible history. The expositor needs to become a participant in the events in the book… Entering into the feelings of the happenings in a Bible book requires getting into the historical facts, but it also requires the gift of empathetic insight and intuitive feeling to get into the feelings of others. The best expositors get the facts of the story, the portray the events as happening to the ancient people and to people today. Getting into the feelings helps to understand the *Sitz im Leben* as much as gathering historical facts about the book.[105]

The value of studying the rhetorical background of the text is clear but the questions still remains: How does one go about the process of establishing the rhetorical setting of a book? The process of establishing the rhetorical setting of the letter requires the preacher to use resources such as *Introductions, Commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and Encyclopedias* to answer the following questions: Who is the author of the text and what was his situation at the time of writing? Who is the original audience of the text and what is their situation at the time of writing? What specific problems or events precipitated the writing of the text? With regard to the prison epistles there will be considerable debate among various scholars concerning the answers to some of these questions. The preacher must devote considerable

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[104] Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 97.

[105] Harold T. Bryson, *Expository Preaching: The Art of Preaching Through A Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 96-97.

time to reading, understanding, and analyzing the various arguments put forth and after careful reading the text and evaluation draw up his own conclusion by writing a 3-5 pages background paper detailing what he believes to be the rhetorical setting of the book. The value of this process is that it forces the preacher to think through these important issues and provides him with easy accessibility to the background information as he preaches through the letter.[106]

2. Determine the Branch of Rhetoric

The second step in the macro level of rhetorical analysis is to identify the branch of rhetoric that best represents the text. The simplest and easiest way to do this is simply to ask the question, "Is the author dealing with actions that have occurred in the past or is he trying to persuade his audience to take some action in the future?" If the text is trying to persuade the audience to render a verdict about past events then it is forensic. If it is trying to persuade the audience to take some future action then it is deliberative. Finally, if the text seeks to cast praise or blame on a present situation then it is epideictic. As already mentioned the prison epistles provide clear examples of both deliberative and epideictic speech. The letters to the Philippians, Colossians and Philemon are all deliberative because they attempt to persuade the audience towards future action. Ephesians on the other hand is epideictic because it uses praise to persuade the audience to continue in the very things that they have been doing.

By determining the branch of rhetoric employed, the preacher gains valuable insight into what the original author was attempting to accomplish through the text. For instance, identifying Colossians as deliberative speech immediately focuses the preacher's attention on

[106] For examples of these kind of papers see the chapters devoted to the individual prison epistles.

discovering the action that Paul desires for this congregation to take in the future. After this action is discovered, it is possible to look for ways this same action would apply to a modern audience. Furthermore, identifying the branch of rhetoric will immediately clue the preacher into how the author may develop his argument. As will be show later, deliberative speeches employ more argumentation by way of proof than would an epideictic speech. Therefore, when dealing with a piece of deliberative rhetoric such as Philippians or Colossians the preacher will want to give special attention towards identifying the proofs that Paul offers in support of his argument. An epideictic speech like Ephesians, on the other hand, will employ the elements of praise or blame to persuade the audience. Therefore, the preacher will want to pay careful attention to these elements as he studies the text.

3. Develop A Rhetorical Outline

Once satisfied that he has correctly identified the branch of rhetoric represented in the text the preacher may now move on to the third step in macro level rhetorical analysis: producing the rhetorical outline of the letter. This is akin to doing an exegetical outline of the book but will be informed by the arrangement of a Greco-Roman speech. There are two major reasons why it is important to study the arrangement of the text. First, it allows the preacher to gain the big picture of how the author develops his ideas and all of the parts fit together. Second, the rhetorical units identified in this step will eventually be used in determining the boundaries of the preaching text.[107] The contention of this paper is that Paul arranged all of his prison epistles along the standard conventions of a Greco-Roman speech. The earlier discussion in this chapter established the six basic elements of a Greco-Roman

[107] Osborne, 125.

speech. The task of the preacher at this point is to read through the text carefully deliberately trying to identify each of these six elements. Once comfortable that he has identified all six of the elements he should write or type out a detailed outline of the entire book.[108] This outline will help the preacher to see the macro structure of the text and how each part fits together. It will also assist him in selecting individual preaching texts.

4. Formulate an Initial Theme

The fourth and final step of macro level rhetorical analysis is to formulate an initial theme for the book or letter being studied. At this point in the process the preacher should have carefully, slowly, and deliberately read through the book several times. He has written a 3-5 page paper on the rhetorical setting of the book and identified the branch of rhetoric represented by the text. Furthermore, he has gained an understanding of the macro structure of the letter by producing a rhetorical outline. Only now is he prepared to make an initial formulation concerning the theme of this letter. The best place to search for this them will obviously be in the propositio of the text. It will be remembered that it is in this part of the speech that a rhetor seeks to set forth the basic theme or proposition of his speech. Therefore, the preacher should carefully examine this section of the text to discover the theme of the book or letter. This theme may undergo several revisions and restatements throughout the process of working through the text but it is important here to get down on paper an initial statement of the letter's theme.

An example of how the above steps can be applied to the book of Philippians is found in appendix 1 of this project. One should be aware that the goal in this phase of the analysis

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[108] For examples see the individual chapters on the prison epistles.

is to get the overall picture of the book in the preachers mind. Therefore, the desire is to provide a summary of background information for the book rather than a comprehensive analysis. In the process of conducting his research the preacher will certainly discover many issues involving the authorship, date, provenance and audience of the letter. However, not all of these will make their way into this summary report. The purpose of the summary report is threefold. First, it forces the preacher to write down in summary form the conclusions that he has drawn concerning the rhetorical setting of the book. Second, it provides a reference that he can look back on throughout the length of the sermon series. Third, it forces the preacher to think through the entire series before he begins actually preaching through the book. This helps to ensure that the book series will have a unifying theme.

Conclusion

Macro level rhetorical analysis of the text is the first phase in applying socio-rhetorical analysis to expository preaching. The goal in this stage is for the preacher to do a thorough study of the rhetorical setting and structure of the book as a whole, culminating in the writing of a summary report that he will be able to use throughout the length of the series. Having completed this phase the preacher will have a solid bird's eye view of the rhetorical setting and structure of the particular letter. Furthermore, he has now completed the first stage of selecting his preaching text and formulating a theme for the entire letter. In the next chapter, attention will turn from the macro-level of analysis to the micro-level.

CHAPTER 3
MICRO LEVEL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The previous chapter dealt with rhetorical analysis at the macro level of the text. At that level the goals of rhetorical analysis were to understand the rhetorical setting of the letter, develop a rhetorical outline, and to formulate a tentative theme to capture the original intent of the author. Once these goals are accomplished, it is necessary to delve deeper into the micro-level of the text. The micro-level of the text refers to the individual rhetorical units that make up the book. The previous level tentatively identified these units along the lines of arrangement in a Greco-Roman speech. In the present phase these units must be refined further to gain a deeper understanding of the author's original intent by analyzing the rhetorical structures and functions within each unit. This phase requires very close attention to the details of the text. David Allan Black says that, "Rhetorical criticism is a well-watered garden in which a variety of promising seeds have been planted. But to reap any fruit the interpreter must be willing to tarry lovingly in the text; beauty usually eludes the casual observer."[109] Micro-level rhetorical analysis, therefore, requires the preacher to hone his observational skills. He must be willing to "tarry lovingly" over the text until he is able to

[109] David Allan Black, *Using New Testament Greek in Ministry: A Practical Guide for Students and Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 81.

see how form and content combine to become a persuasive argument. The more time and attention spent in observation the more precious the fruit of this analysis will become.

Refining the Rhetorical Units

It bears repeating that rhetorical analysis is a holistic approach to Biblical studies emphasizing the unity between form and content. R. Lansing Hicks says:

> Ultimately, form has to have content; it has to contain something. And conversely content has to take some shape; it has to conform to some recognizable or intelligible pattern. Therefore, to deal with one to the exclusion of the other is to surrender a significant part of the whole.[110]

Recognizing this close relationship requires the text be seen, at least in part, as a work of art. Muilenberg asserts that an expositor must accomplish two important tasks at this. First, he must "define the limits or scope of the literary unit, to recognize precisely where and how it begins and where and how it ends."[111] The task refining the rhetorical units becomes the foundation for choosing the individual preaching texts. Secondly, an expositor must, "recognize the structure of a composition and to discern the configuration of its component parts."[112] This will culminate in the completion of a structural diagram showing the relationship between the component parts of the rhetorical unit.

At the macro-level phase of analysis, the preacher utilized the canons of Greco-Roman rhetoric to make a tentative identification of the rhetorical units the epistle. The first goal of micro-level analysis is to select the preaching text by precisely identifying the

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[110] R. Lansing Hicks, "Form and Content: A Hermeneutical Application," in *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Herbert Gordan May*, ed. Harry Thomas Frank and William L. Reed (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 307.

[111] James Muilenberg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 1 (1969): 8.

[112] Ibid. 9-10.

boundaries of the rhetorical units. George Kennedy states that a rhetorical unit must have "a beginning, a middle, and an end."[113] Osborne clarifies this slightly saying, "A rhetorical unit has an introduction, a developed point, and a conclusion."[114] Since the first phase of analysis has already provided rough hints to where the rhetorical units begin and end, this task is already made simpler. Essentially three questions must be answered: First, how does the author introduce this unit? Second, how does he develop his point? Third, how does he conclude? Once these three questions have been answered, an expositor can be assured that he has correctly identified a rhetorical unit. If any of the elements are missing then it becomes necessary to refine the unit by looking for a new beginning or end then repeating the three questions until a clear beginning, middle, and end is identified.

As an example, one should consider the tentative identification of Philippians 1:3-11 as the exordium of this letter.[115] The last chapter identified the exordium as the introduction of a Greco-Roman speech, whose primary purpose was to capture attention and build good will with the audience. Philippians 1:3-11 appears to meet these criteria but the question still remains, is it a complete rhetorical unit? In other words, does this represent a proper preaching text for a sermon? To answer this question one must apply the three questions listed above. First, how does the author introduce this unit? In v.3-4 Paul introduces the main theme of this unit: a prayer of thanksgiving. A distinct contrast can be seen between

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[113] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 33.

[114] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 125.

[115] Duane Watson identifies Philippians 1:3-26 as the exordium and 1:27-30 as the narratio. See Duane Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *Novum Testamentum* 30.1 (1988), 61-65

v.3 and the end of the epistolary prescript in v.2, thus marking the beginning of a new unit. Therefore, this unit has a clear beginning or introduction. Second, how does the author develop his point? A careful reading shows that Paul develops the theme of this unit in two ways: 1.) by identifying his reason for thanksgiving (v.5-8) and 2.) by enumerating the specific prayers that he is offering for the Philippians (v.9-11). Therefore, this unit has a clear middle or development. Third, how does the author conclude this section? There is a break between the thought of v.11 and v.12, furthermore, the doxology at the end of v.11 clearly ends Paul prayer. The text then has a definite ending or conclusion. Since all three elements of a rhetorical unit are present a preacher can be highly confident in selecting this text as his preaching passage.

Identify the Rhetorical Structures

Once the rhetorical unit has been identified, it is possible to examine it even further by analyzing the rhetorical structures employed by the author. Rhetorical structures carried far greater importance in the predominately oral/aural culture of the first century than they do today. Greidanus writes, "Whereas modern authors can give clues to their intended meaning by emphasizing words and phrases with italics or bold print and deemphasizing items with parentheses or with placement in footnotes or appendices, ancient authors did not have that graphic dimension at their disposal.[116]" The Biblical authors utilized a wide array of rhetorical structures to assist the listener/reader in knowing where the various units of a text began and ended as well as to give clues concerning intended meanings.

One of the best ways to identify where a rhetorical unit begins and ends is to look for

[116] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 60.

the repetition of key words or phrases. Greidanus notes that repetition was, "apparently the basic building block of most ancient structural patterns."[117] Therefore, the text must be examined for the repetition of key words and phrases. Specifically, one must look for where the repetition of certain words or phrases begins and ends. This method, known as the "key word method," provides an excellent indication of where the rhetorical unit begins and ends.[118] From a practical standpoint, it is best to look for repetition in the original language whenever possible.

A common repetitive structure in Greco-roman literature is *inclusio, "*where the opening words are repeated or paraphrased at the close."[119] This structure is commonly referred to as "envelope figure" or "ring composition."[120] An example of *inclusio* occurs in Philippians 1:3-11 through the repetition of the word God in v.3 and v.11. This repetition forms an envelope or ring around the unit, signaling to the listener/reader where the unit begins and ends. An *inclusio* can also be formed by the repetition of ideas. For instance, Paul forms an *inclusio* encompassing nearly the entire letter to Philemon by the repetition of the idea of prayer in 1:4 and 1:23. Rhetorically this would have made a very powerful point. Paul opens the letter saying he is constantly praying for Philemon and ends the letter saying he is sure that Philemon is praying for him. Therefore, the beginning and ending of the letter (and much of what happens in between) was intended to establish Paul's *ethos* and to stir *pathos* in Philemon. Ben Witherington comments:

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[117] Greidanus, 60

[118] Ibid.

[119] Muilenberg, 9.

[120] Greidanus, 63.

> From a rhetorical point of view, however, something more is going on here. As Aristotle says, the attempt to appeal to the deeper emotions such as love and so to create pathos in the hearer is an attempt to put the hearer into a certain receptive frame of mind (Aristotle, *Rhet. 1.2.3)*. The appeal to the emotions may well reach a person at a level that pure logic will not…In short, the appeal to the emotions is especially found at the beginning and end of the speech, which is where one would expect them in a rhetorical discourse, with the appeal to honor and advantage coming in the middle.[121]

The presence of an *inclusio* in this text gives a clear indication of where the preaching text should begin and end.

Another common repetitive rhetorical structure is called chiasm. In simple terms, chiasm occurs when an author introduces two or more elements followed by the presentation of corresponding elements in reverse order. Graphically, the structure is represented as follows:[122]

A	B
B	A

When the elements are connected they resemble the Greek letter *chi (*x), thus the name chiasm. Chiastic structures can be as simple as the example above or they can become very complicated consisting of three or more elements: e.g. ABCCBA.

Randolph Richards argues that in the ancient world people were able to detect chiasm as easily as modern people notice rhymes. Furthermore, he says their primary purpose was to aid in memorization. He emphatically asserts, however, that this does not mean modern exegetes should ignore the content of chiastic structures. He writes, "We do not dismiss the

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[121] Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 58-59.

[122] Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942); George Howard, "Stylistic Inversion and the Synoptic Tradition," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97 (1978).

contents of the sentence just because the writer made them rhyme, nor do we assume the contents were trivial because the writer took the time to rhyme them. Readers in Paul's day viewed chiasm the same way."[123] Ronald Man writes that, "all too often chiastic structures are passed off in the scholarly literature as mere literary niceties, a structural tour de force which serves only aesthetic ends. Too little consideration has been given to the possible exegetical significance of such structures in the interpretation of biblical passages."[124] He goes on to note that chiasm can serve at least 5 purposes in a text: 1.) Comparison and contrast; 2.) Emphasis; 3.) Point of a Passage; 4.) Clarification of Meaning; 5.) Purpose of a Book.[125] A preacher can thus benefit from identifying chiastic structures not only in the process of text selection but also in theme formulation.[126]

Two examples from the prison epistles will help demonstrate how Paul used chiasm in his writing. The first comes Philippians 1:3-8 and is and example of how Paul uses conceptual ideas to form a chiasm. Gordon Fee diagrams this chiasm as follows:

A I thank God at all my remembrance of you (personally)

B I pray with joy because of your fellowship in the gospel
C I am convinced God will keep this going until the end
B I have every right to this confidence because I have you in my heart and because of your fellowship in the gospel.
A God is my witness as to my deep longing for you all.[127]

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[123] E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First Century Letter Writing* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 133-34.

[124] Ronald E. Man, "The Value of Chiasm For New Testament Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* April-June (1984): 147.

[125] Ibid, 148-54.

[126] Greidanus, 62.

[127] Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 76.

In this example one can observe how chiasm helps to bring out the emphasis or point of a passage. The middle of the chiasm is v.6 where Paul expresses his confidence that God will continue His work in the lives of the Philippians. Often this verse is understood to be a reference to the believers' assurance of his or her salvation but the chiastic structure shows that what Paul is talking about here is not salvation but rather the Philippians continued "fellowship in the gospel." Notice particularly how the central element of the chiasm C is sandwiched by the two references to "fellowship in the gospel."[128] When preaching this passage, therefore, the preacher will want to maintain the original intent of the author and not make the message about the assurance of salvation.[129]

Another example of chiasm in the book of Philippians is 1:15-17. Here, however, the emphasis lies not in the central element but rather in the A elements. Gordon Fee represents this text as follows:

A Some preach Christ because of envy and rivalry (v.15)
    B Others because of good will (v.15)
    B. The latter do so out of love because they know my imprisonment is in behalf of the gospel. (v.16)
A. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing they are causing affliction in my bonds (v.17)[130]

Fee writes, "The emphasis of this sentence lies with the A-A clauses, that is, with those who

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[128] This does not mean that a wider application of this text can be made. Robert Mellick notes, "The rule of context always guides the interpreter, but it is conceivable that Paul may have drawn on the wider context of Christian experience as well" see Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Bible Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991), p.58

[130] Fee, 118

are trying to inflict suffering."[131] This text, therefore, is an example of how chiasm can be used to compare or contrast people, events, or concepts.[132] Paul makes a very subtle point recognized only by reflecting on the comparison made in these two verses. The people in Rome who are preaching the gospel out of good intentions are like the Philippians, who are Paul's faithful co-laborers in the gospel. However, the more subtle point comes by thinking about those who are preaching out of false motives. Why would Paul mention these people? Likely, he is making veiled comparison between those false preachers in Rome and the Judaizers, who plague his ministry and for whom he warns the Philippians about later in the letter (3:2-6). Given the obvious love, the Philippians had for Paul this subtle allusion would have gone far in persuading them to resist the Judaizers.[133]

Appendix 2 contains a sermon that demonstrates one way that a preacher can use rhetorical analysis in preaching. There will be an analysis later in this chapter of this sermon and the way rhetorical analysis was used to craft it. At this point, however, attention needs to be given to several cautions about this method.

Cautions

Three cautions need to be mentioned concerning the identification of rhetorical structures. First, there is the danger of forcing rhetorical schemes, especially chiasm, onto

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[131] Ibid. 118-19.

[132] Man, 148.

[133] It should be noted that the text of Philippians does not make it clear whether the Judaizers were actually present in Philippi or if Paul was just issuing a warning. The author believes that most likely this is just a warning from Paul that Philippians should be on guard just in case the Judaizers showed up.

the text. Often well-intentioned preachers will force rhetorical structures onto a text where none exists. This can potentially lead to disastrous consequences. It is best to err on the side of caution when identifying rhetorical structures. Unless a structure is clear or there is plenty of scholarly support for its presence, the preacher should not be too dogmatic about highly complex structural schemes. Second, there is always a concern about the amount time one should spend in looking for rhetorical structures. Frankly, every preacher must remember he is not an academic locked in the ivory tower of the academy. Spending too much time chasing the elusive chiastic "white whale" will have serious consequences on others aspects of pastoral ministry and sermon preparation. Third, the preacher must remember that he is certainly more interested in the rhetorical structures than his audience will be. To carry the sawdust of the exegetical workshop into the pulpit is almost always a mistake, therefore, preachers should use great caution when the urge to tell their audience about the rhetorical structures in the passage comes upon them.

Develop a Structural Diagram

Once the rhetorical structures in the text have been analyzed, it is necessary to develop a structural diagram to provide a visual representation of the structure of the text. Walter Kaiser refers to this diagram as a syntactical display or "block diagram." He says that in such a diagram:

> Each proposition, clause and phrase is written out in the natural order of the text (using Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or English). Each syntactical unit (down to the smallest component part that represents a semantical unit) is isolated on a separate line (this is especially important if it appears in a series or there is another unit that functions in a similar way). The theme proposition is brought out to the left-hand margin (right hand in the case of Hebrew). Syntactical units which directly modify or qualify the theme proposition are slightly indented. Material which modifies or qualifies the syntactical units subordinate to the them proposition is indented one step

further, and so on.[134]

Wayne McDill defines the structural diagram simply as, "a phrase-by-phrase chart of the text in the exact word order of the translation you use. Its purpose is to show in graphic form the relationship of various ideas in the text."[135] The advantage offered by a structural diagram in sermon preparation is that it allows, like nothing else, for the preacher to see how the text fits together and the author deals with the subject.[136] It is helpful, but not necessary, for a structural diagram to be done in the original language. A preacher working solely in English, however, must use a literal translation such as the New American Standard version when producing the diagram. The goal is to show as closely as possible how the original author organized and arranged the text. Once the diagram is complete, the preacher will be able to see the main points of the text as they stand out from the supporting and secondary ideas. In addition, the diagram "will provide vital information about the concepts they support." In other words, the structural diagram shows both the main points of the text and the sub points. This helps to guard against the tendency of turning minor points in the text into major points in the sermon.[137]

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[134] Walter C. Jr. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1981), 99.

[135] Wayne McDill, *Twelve Essential Skills of Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 24.

[136] Kaiser notes two primary advantages that block diagramming offers over line diagramming; "1.) it forces us to focus on the total flow and thread of meaning throughout the whole paragraph rather than on isolated abstractions of individual words or phrases; and 2.) it offers invaluable preparatory assistance for preaching and teaching because we can immediately see what is nuclear in the paragraph (the theme proposition) and what is subordinate." p.100

[137] Ibid. 27-28.

Identify Figures of Speech

The next step in micro-level analysis is to identify any figures of speech used in the text. One of the most important issues in studying the Bible is to distinguish between literal and figurative speech. To take as literal that which is meant to be figurative or that vice versa has lead to a multitude of theological errors throughout the history of the church. Berkeley Mickelson says figurative speech occurs whenever, "the writer has in mind the representation of one concept in terms of another because the nature of the two things compared allows such and analogy to be drawn."[138] More simply, Robertson McQuilken says, "Figurative language refers to any words that are used with a meaning other than their common, literal sense."[139] He gives three guidelines to help to identify when figurative language is being used:

1. If the statement would obviously be irrational, unreasonable, or absurd if taken literally; the presumption is that it is a figure of speech.
2. The context may indicate that language is figurative.
3. If there is a contradiction with clearer more enduring emphases of Scripture, it is legitimate to ask whether or not the passage is to be taken as literal.[140]

Once every figure of speech has been identified and analyzed the preacher can move into the next phase, which is to identify the rhetorical functions used in the text.

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[138] A. Berkeley Mickelson, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 07/04/24 1972), 179.

[139] Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 166.

[140] McQuilkin171.

Identify Rhetorical Functions

Wayne McDill introduces the importance of rhetorical functions in his book *Twelve Skills of Great Preaching.* He reminds the preacher that:

> None of the Biblical writers intended just to pass along information. Each one wanted to influence his readers toward faith in God. To accomplish that purpose, they wrote in persuasive ways designed to have their meaning accepted as valid and relevant. Not only is the overall message persuasive; each word or phrase plays a part in this effort to influence the reader.[141]

There is a slight distinction between the meaning or message of the author and his intent. McDill says, "The meaning of the writer is carried in his words so that you may understand his message. The intention of the writer is carried in his rhetorical choices so that you may be influenced by his words. This is the rhetorical function."[142] Part of the preachers' task is to discover not only what the text meant but also what the original author intended for it to accomplish. Working through the text and identifying the rhetorical function of each phrase will assist in this endeavor.

Rhetorical functions fall into four basic types: Explanatory, Illustrative, Argumentative, and Application. Within these four broad categories, however, there are functions that are more specific. The chart below summarizes the four broad categories and the more specific functions that fall within them.[143] In order to complete this step one must carefully work back through each phrase of the text on the structural diagram using the above chart to identify the rhetorical function it carries. Doing so will lend valuable insight into how the author designed his argument to persuade the audience. Not only will this process

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[141] McDill, 29.

[142] McDill, 30.

[143] Ibid.

give insight into authorial intent but it will also be invaluable as the preacher seeks to discover ways to construct the sermon so that its application coordinates with the original intent of the author.

Explanatory	Illustrative	Argumentative	Applicational
Assertion Event Action Time Sequence Source Agency Circumstances Restatement Sphere Explanation Means Manner List Place	Metaphor Example Analogy Story Parable Description Comparison Relationship	Rhetorical Question Cause Purpose Result Condition Contrast Basis Advantage Disadvantage Credentials Question/Answer Problem/Resolution	Desire Exhortation Warning Promise Entreaty Rebuke Command

Conduct Word Studies

Every preacher is familiar with the concept of word studies. Sadly, however, much of what passes for word study in evangelical circles is little more than looking up words in a dictionary or lexicon, picking the meaning that bests suits the preacher's purpose, and twisting the text to make it fit that meaning. These kinds of word studies are nothing less than an abuse of the Word of God. As already mentioned in Ch. 1, the traditional grammatico-historical method of interpretation fails to take the cultural and historical conditions of the original author and audience of the text into account when doing word studies. The preacher, therefore, must consider these factors when he conducts word studies.

The goal is not just to find all of the lexical meanings of a particular word. Nor is it for the preacher to determine the meaning.[144] Instead, the goal of word study is to discover the one meaning that best fits how the author intended for it to be understood by his original audience.[145]

Words do not exist in a vacuum. They derive meaning from the way they are used, therefore, it is important to give ample attention to the way a word functioned within the cultural and social background of the text. The research used to establish the rhetorical setting of the book will prove very helpful in this step.[146] Special attention must be given to the various idioms and figures of speech that may have been in vogue when the text was written. It also is important to see how a particular word was used in every-day speech. Various word study dictionaries, tools and commentaries will be useful at this point in the study. Some words will reflect social and cultural values very different from those of the modern reader, therefore, it is imperative for the preacher be aware of the five basic building of ancient society detailed in the next chapter.

For example, the word "blessing" in Ephesians 1:3 (*eulogetos)* carriers cultural and social implications not immediately apparent in the English translation.[147] Paul's use of this word in Ephesians reflects a cultural background of patronage unfamiliar to the average American but important for understanding what the Apostle intended and how his original

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[144] Bryson, 164.

[145] McQuilkin, 110.

[146] Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 113.

[147] For a fuller discussion see the section on Patronage in the next chapter.

audience would have understood it. In preaching this text, therefore, the preacher could take a few minutes to explain the concept of patronage and how it effects the meaning of the word blessing in this passage. More importantly he could show how Paul was using the blessings received to motivate the Ephesians to take specific actions in ch. 3-4.

The sample sermon in appendix 3 was developed around this understanding of the word "blessing." It attempts to show how Paul used this word as a motivation for his audience to continue in their fidelity to Jesus. In his sermon, the survey showed that 94% of the congregation was able to identify the central theme of the sermon and 87% were able to identify the authorial intent of the original author. These results will be further analyzed in chapter 5 but they show the potential that the socio-rhetorical model has for increasing audience understanding.

Look for Intertexuality

The use of language often reflects other texts, historical events, social values, and institutions. This is called intertexture. Vernon Robbins defines intertexture as:

> …a text's representation of, reference to, and use of phenomena in the "world" outside of the text being interpreted. In other words, the intertexture of a text is the interaction of the language in the text with "outside" material and physical "objects," historical events, texts, customs, values, institutions and systems.[148]

Duane Watson defines it as "those points of intersection within a text with other textual (oral or scribal), social, cultural, or historical worlds that are not the immediate world that is created by the text itself.... Intertextual analysis tries to determine the way the text configures

[148] Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapesty of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 40.

and reconfigures phenomena from the world outside the text."[149] The most important type of intertexturality occurs between Biblical texts. Other types of intertexuality are interesting but are usually highly speculative and yield little fruit for preaching. Therefore, this project will focus on the intertexturality between Biblical texts.

Stanley Porter has identified five ways in which the Biblical authors make use of other Biblical texts.[150] The first is by formulaic quotation. He writes, "a formulaic quotation is the easiest to discuss since, even if we as modern interpreters do not understand the reason or method of citation, the author wishes to label the words that follow as a quotation."[151] An example of formulaic quotation is Eph 4:8, "Therefore it says, 'When he ascended on high he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.'" All of the reasons Paul had for citing this text cannot be determinedbut it is possible to conclude that he includes the citation formula in order to lend Biblical credence to what he is saying.[152] He uses this same formula in 5:14 to a draw a quotation but this time not from Scripture. Formulaic quotations always demand the preacher's attention and careful consideration should be given to the context of the original quotation to see if it lends any light to its present use. Often this kind of study

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[149] Duane Watson, *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 2.

[150] Stanley E. Porter, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in *The Intertexuality of the Epistles* ed. Thomas Brodie et al. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 107-110

[151] Porter. 107

[152] There is considerable debate over whether Paul is quoting Psalm 68:18 here or a midrash or targum based on that passage. Both the Hebrew and LXX have God receiving gifts rather than giving them. For a fuller discussion of this issue see Ben Witherington, 287-288 and Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 290-291

will provide illustrative or applicational material that can be used in the sermon. For instance, a sermon from Ephesians 4:7-16 could include a brief discussion on the background of Psalm 68 and how it pictures God ascending to the throne to rule over all the nations, and how this relates to both the ascension of Christ and the giving of spirit-filled leaders to the church.

The second way that Biblical authors use other Biblical texts is through direct quotation. Direct quotations lack an introductory formula but contain enough words so as to make it clear that the author is quoting a specific passage. Porter asserts that three words are the minimum number needed to make a connection between two texts.[153] It is often claimed that Phil 1:19 makes a direct quotation from Job 13:16.[154] Fee notes that without the introductory formula this quotation was often overlooked by earlier commentators but, "the language is so precise and the 'settings' so similar, it is nearly impossible for Paul's language to be mere coincidence."[155] When preaching this text one could use this reference to help show how throughout the Bible those who were in distress could trust in God's ultimate salvation. Paul had the same hope as did Job, as do all Christians who are facing trouble. The preacher could explore this even further, showing how Job's trial did not come about as the result of anything that he had done but by the hand of God.

The third way Porter says Biblical authors make use of other Scriptures is through

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[153] Porter, 108

[154] Porter, 108; Gordon Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 130-131; Richard Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) 21-24

[155] Fee, 131

paraphrase. He says, "A paraphrase is typified by the use of words from the same semantic domain, or similar words in differing syntax, as a recognizable passage."[156] He cites Philippians 2:10-11 as a paraphrase of Isaiah 45:23. Fee also sees the relationship between these two texts noting that both "stress that the whole creation shall offer him homage and worship, presumably at his Parousia."[157] What is unclear is whether this text should be categorized as paraphrase or as the fourth type of intertexture, allusion. Part of the reason for this confusion is the failure of scholars to arrive at a clear definition of what constitutes allusion.[158] For the purpose of this project, no distinction between allusion and paraphrase will be made. The busy Pastor has neither the time nor the need to deal with the technical distinctions between a paraphrase and an allusion. He does, however, need to apply the following five guidelines to make sure the allusions in the text are not really illusions.[159]

First, there must be a verbal connection between the two texts. This requires more than just the use of a single word. There needs to be at least a phrase of three or more words to establish a verbal connection. Allusions based on only one or two words are likely illusions. Second, there must be correspondence between the two passages in either context or purpose. In other words, the similarity between the two texts should be clear enough to establish correspondence. The more vague the correspondence the more likely it is that the allusion is actually an illusion. Third, there must be scholarly support to establish the presence of an allusion. In other words, the preacher should look for other commentators

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[156] Porter, 108

[157] Fee, 223

[158] Porter, 109

[159] This phrase was coined by Dr. Leo Percer, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary

who have agreed with him concerning the presence of an allusion. Likewise, he should also test the claims of commentators by the previous two guidelines. If no scholarly support can be discovered it is likely that the allusion is actually an illusion. Fourth, the interpretation of the text cannot be solely based on the allusion. The primary meaning of any Biblical text comes from its immediate context. An allusion can help illuminate the text but it does not provide its primary meaning. If the preacher has based his primary understanding of the text on the presence of an allusion it is likely an illusion. Fifth, there must be a strong reason to believe Paul would have been aware of the text. It is likely that Paul was familiar with the Old Testament Septuagint and that it heavily influenced his thinking. It is far more difficult, however, to establish his relationship with other texts. Therefore, to establish extra-biblical allusions will require sufficient evidence to establish the likelihood that Paul would have been familiar with the text and that it would have influenced his thinking.

The final type of intertexture mentioned by Porter is "echo."[160] Echoes are the most problematic type of intertexture because they are the most subjective. Just because Paul uses the word *redemption (apolotrusis)* in Ephesians 1:7 and the same word is used in Daniel 4:13 does not mean Paul had verse in mind when he wrote Ephesians. Echoes are simply too subjective and prone to be misused to be included in the sermon. Furthermore, they rarely lend any significant insight into the meaning and application of the text, therefore, are not worth investing valuable preparation time.

An example of where intertexture can be helpful in preaching from the Prison Epistles is Ephesians 4:8 where Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18. In this text one must wrestle with three

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[160] Ibid. 109; see also Richard B. Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

issues. First, why does Paul say "He gave gifts to men," when Psalms 68:18 says, "he received gifts from men."[161] Second, he must decide what purpose this quotation serves in the current text. Third, he must consider how he should approach this quotation when preaching this text. One way to do this is to explain that Paul probably had in mind here a Roman *triumphus*, where not only would the victorious general returning from battle receive gifts but he would also give gifts to the senate and to the people. In Paul's mind the ascension of Christ may have been seen as a victorious procession into heaven but it also was the occasion for the giving of gifts to the church. Specifically, he says that Jesus "gave the apostles, the prophets, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry." By quoting from the Old Testament or a Targum based on the Old Testament passage, Paul adds Scriptural support to his assertion. The preacher may want to say as little as possible about the differences between Ephesians 4:8 and Psalms 68:18 but say a great deal about the Roman background of the passage. For instance, he may paint a picture of a great Roman *triumphus* by using a movie clip such as from the movie *Gladiator* or quoting from one of the descriptions given by the Roman historians. His goal is to help the audience picture what was in Paul's mind when he wrote the text. The preacher can then can take this image and show how it relates to Christ's triumphant entry into heaven.[162] This kind of background information, especially when delivered well and creatively, helps capture the audience's attention and will assist them in remembering the truth.

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[161] For more on this see This footnote is incomplete.

[162] An example of this can be found in the sermon by Jerry Vines entitled, *Our Ascended Lord*.

Benefits of Rhetorical Analysis for Preaching

The question that must be answered now is, "What benefit does rhetorical analysis offer to expository preaching?" In other words, "Why should the preacher go to all of the time and effort to conduct rhetorical analysis on top of his already busy schedule?" The remainder of this chapter will try to demonstrate the value of this process by looking at a sample sermon produced using this type of analysis (see Appendix 2).

Text Selection

Properly selecting a Biblical text for preaching is one of the first and most important tasks facing a preacher as he sits down to prepare the sermon. Bryan Chapell says that, "In the pulpit, we are expositors, not authors. Sermons explain what the Bible says. This means that a preacher's first expository task is to choose a portion of Scripture from which to preach."[163] If great care is not taken in text selection, it is possible to take the text out of its context and miss the intended meaning. Perry Yoder writes:

> In the study of the Bible, we need to begin with the assumption that the Bible writers were attempting to communicate to their audience by writing in organized units. There compositional units or paragraphs are the smallest unit of communication in the text. It is on these units that inductive study needs to focus. To take less than this is to chop up the ideas of the author and perhaps misunderstand them as a result of studying them out of context… To take a larger bite is to include too much for a properly focused study."[164]

Yoder and Kaiser both focus on the paragraph as the smallest unit of communication and

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[163] Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming Th Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 59.

[164] Perry Yoder, *From Word to Life: A Guide to the Art of Bible Study* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1982), 56.

suggest preachers use paragraphs as the basis for their text selection.[165] However, rigidly enforcing this rule misses the fact that rhetorical units in the Bible are often larger or smaller than a single paragraph. Chapell insightfully points out that:

> On the negative side, expository unit terminology may limit a preacher's vision if it simply become synonymous with a "paragraph of thought." A few years ago I preached at the church of a friend who had attended seminary with me. I preached on one of the Gospel narratives that was many paragraphs long. Afterward my friend confided that he rarely preached from such narratives because we had been trained to preach only from expository units. By this he meant that he almost always preached from a paragraph or two at a time. He had missed the nuance of the term. *An expository unit is a large or small portion of Scripture from which a preacher can demonstrate a single spiritual truth with adequate supporting facts or concepts arising within the scope of the text.*[166]

Rhetorical analysis aids the process of text selection by helping discover the rhetorical units in the book. As already stated above, this analysis of the Prison epistles begins with a tentative identification of the rhetorical units by analyzing the letter according to the canons of arrangement in a Greco-Roman speech. The units are then refined further by identifying rhetorical structures, such as chiasm or inclusio, within the text, which help to identify its beginning and end. Once a rhetorical unit has been clearly identified, the preacher may use either the entire text or a portion of it as his preaching text. Generally, the entire rhetorical unit will be used as the text of the sermon; however, there are three reasons why a preacher may not wish to use the entire the unit. First, the unit may simply be too large and require multiple sermons to cover the material. Second, the needs of the congregation may compel the preacher to focus only on the portion of the passage that contains a word fit for the occasion. Third, the Holy Spirit may draw his attention to a

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[165] Kaiser, 95-96.

[166] Chapell, 60-61.

certain portion of the text that needs to be the focus of the message.[167]

As mentioned above, Colossians 1:1-8 serves as a good example of how rhetorical analysis can benefit expository preaching. A macro level rhetorical analysis reveals that Colossians is a piece of deliberative rhetoric, attempting to persuade the audience to, "continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel." (1:22) The letter begins with an epistolary prescript in 1:1-2 followed by an exordium in 1:3-14. While there would be nothing wrong with the preacher taking 1:1-14 as his preaching text, a micro-level rhetorical analysis reveals additional insight. Verses 2 and 7 form an *inclusio* by way of the repetition of the word "faithful." This insight helps to refine the preaching text and center the preachers attention on 1:1-8 as the rhetorical unit. Applying the three tests mentioned earlier, this section has a definite beginning middle and end, all based around the repetition of the word "faithful." Therefore, this section represents a rhetorical unit within the letter.

Understanding How the Parts Relate to the Whole

Another common mistake is to interpret one part of a book or letter without understanding how it fits into the whole. The process of rhetorical analysis outlined above guards against this mistake by forcing the expositor to look at the macro level of the text first before zooming into the micro level. Examining the rhetorical setting of the book constantly makes the preacher think about the author and audience of the letter as well as the occasion

[167] Some will question the validity of this last statement that it is far too subjective a reason for selecting the preaching text, however, it is this author's belief that expository preaching must not devolve into mere academics or dry commentary. In order for it to be truly called preaching, the sermon must be driven and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the preacher must always remain open to the direction of the Holy Spirit throughout the process of preparation, including text selection.

for the writing. Furthermore, by working through the process of producing the rhetorical outline, he must keep the authors overall argument in mind as he examines the individual parts. This will help to keep the sermon series on target so that the individual sermons connect together and impact a modern audience in much the same way as the original argument fit together his argument to impact an ancient audience.

The example of Colossians 1:1-8 demonstrates this principle. As noted above, verses 2 and 7 form an *inclusio* through the repetition of the word "faithful." This is a key word in understanding the letter as a whole because the concept of remaining "faithful" to the gospel is repeated in the *propositio* of the letter 1:21-23. Simply stated, these verses introduce the main theme of the letter and connect the introduction to the rest of the letter. These verses also help to establish a rapport between Paul and the Colossians. By referring to them as "faithful brothers" not only does he commend their past fidelity but he also anticipates their future obedience. By referring to Epaphras as a "faithful minister" not only does he establish a friendship with those who love and admire their Pastor and church planter but he also establishes Epaphras as a model of fidelity. All of this sets the stage for Paul's persuasive argument to reject the false teachers and remain faithful to gospel.

Understanding Authorial Intent

The importance of understanding the authorial intent of a passage of Scripture cannot be overemphasized. Preachers must make sure the intent of their sermons is not in conflict with the original intent of the author. Special care, therefore, must be given to understanding what the original author intended for the text to mean and accomplish. The traditional grammatical-historical method of interpretation is good at determining what the author means but it is limited in its ability to understand what he meant to accomplish by writing the

text. In others words, the traditional grammatico-historical method of interpretation is good at identifying what the other said, but it is weak at determining why he said it. This is where precisely where rhetorical analysis excels. Studying how form and content go together to persuade an audience allows the preacher to gain valuable insight into what the author intended to accomplish.

The example from Colossians 1:1-8 shows how the authorial intent is discovered through form and content. Paul's intent is to attempt to persuade the Colossians to remain faithful in spite of the infiltration of false teachers in the church. This intent is on display from the very first section of the letter. What appears at first glance to be nothing more than a minor rhetorical structure, actually turns out to be a major indicator of Paul's intent or purpose in writing the letter. One of the hallmarks of expository preaching is that the authorial intent of the passage must be carried over into the sermon. In other words, when crafting the sermon the preacher must be very careful to maintain the authorial intent of the passage. Therefore, the goal of a sermon preached from Colossians 1:1-8 should be to encourage a modern audience to continue being faithful to Christ.

Shaping the Sermon

In the same manner that the original author shaped the Biblical text to make his point, so must the preacher give attention to the shape his sermon will take in order to communicate the message to a modern audience. The question that must be dealt with at this point is, does the preacher always have to shape his sermon in the same manner as the Biblical author does? The recent decades have witnessed the rise of what has been termed the "new

homiletic," which argues that sermons need to take on a narrative shape.[168] The major weakness in this approach to preaching is that it often neglects or even ignores the text. Eugene Lowery, for instance, gives almost no attention to understanding the text in his book *The Homiletical Plot*.[169] His position seems to be that the sermon derives solely from the mind of the preacher and that the primary goal of the sermon is to be interesting. His main goal is not to accurately convey the message of the Bible but to capture the attention of the audience, therefore, he proposes the entire sermon be structured in a narrative form he calls the homiletical plot.[170] Lowry argues that preachers need to experience a change in how they perceive themselves. He writes," Rather than perceiving ourselves as engineers or architects, we view preaching as an art form and see ourselves as artists. We may be amateur artists or poor artists— but inescapably artists."[171] In some ways, what Lowry says is true. Preachers are wordsmiths who must carefully, intentionally, and creatively shape their sermons to communicate a message to an audience. But that is not all that preachers do. They are also charged with the responsibility of accurately and faithfully delivering the message which God has given. Therefore, this project proposes that in most cases expository preachers should structure their sermons in a manner consistent with the shape of the text. Grant Lovejoy offers four compelling reasons why this should be so. First, an all-wise god

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[168] See Eugene L. Lowery, *The Homiletical Plot: he Sermon as Narrative Art Form* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); David Shafler, *Surviving the Sermon: A Guide for Those Who have to Listen* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992); Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Enid, Okla: Philipps University Press, 1971)

[169] Lowery, 1-14

[170] Lowry, 15-21

[171] Ibid, 11

sovereignly chose particular literary forms in order to communicate portions of his truth. Second, literary form and theological content are related and cannot be as easily separated as some have thought. Third, following the literary form helps to balance information and experience. Fourth, following literary forms gives variety to preaching.[172]

The sample sermon from Colossian 1:1-8 attempts to draw not only its central theme from the text buts also its structure as well. One will notice first, that in the introduction the theme of "faithfulness" is clearly stated and that the theme's relationship to the structure of the text is explicitly stated. Second, the sermon develops the theme in the same thought sequence as the text. In other words, the development of the sermon follows the same sequence as that of the original author.

The survey results for this particular sermon showed that 94% of the congregation was able to identify the central theme of the message and that 93% were able to identify a specific action the Pastor was calling for in the message. As will be seen in chapter 5, this represents a significant increase over their ability to identify these same features in the baseline sermons. The conclusion can be drawn that the socio-rhetorical model helped the preacher to be more specific and to make a much closer connection between the text and the sermon.

Conclusion

Micro-level rhetorical analysis involves a careful exegetical examination of the details of a passage. By identifying the rhetorical structures of the text the preacher is able to

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[172] Grant Lovejoy, "Shaping Sermons By the Literary Form of the Text," in *Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve W. Lemke and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 399-400.

refine his text selection. He then can develop a structural diagram to see how the various parts of the passage fit together. Working phrase-by-phrase through the structural diagram the preacher identifies the figures of speech and the rhetorical functions of each phrase, these will later aid in the development of the sermon. Finally, he can work through the text looking for intertexuality and conducting word studies. In addition to helping the preacher to refine his text selection, rhetorical analysis will also assist him in understanding how the parts fit together with the whole and what the author original intent was. He will also gain help in understanding how to structure the sermon in order to remain faithful to the text. The next chapter will present three building blocks of Greco-Roman society that every preacher needs to recognize.

CHAPTER 4
SOCIO-SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS

One of the most common errors made in Biblical interpretation is vertical transference. Simply defined, vertical transference takes place when an interpreter reads his own social or cultural values onto text. For instance, it is easy for Americans to read the Bible as if twenty-first century Westerners sharing their same social concerns wrote it. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Anyone who has traveled to a foreign country knows the social vertigo that comes from being in a foreign land, filled with strange languages and customs. In order to function or understand what is going on around him he must learn something of the culture in which he is traveling. He needs a social/cultural roadmap to guide him. This is what the third phase of socio-rhetorical analysis attempts to do— provide a social and cultural roadmap of the Biblical world to help avoid the pitfall of vertical transference.

David Silva notes that, "Modern readers, too, are fully enculturated into a set of values, ways of relating and so forth. Without taking some care to recover the culture of the first-century Greco-Roman writers and addresses, we will simply read the texts from the

perspective of our cultural norms and codes."[173] A recent study conducted by Mark Allan Powell demonstrates the effect social placement has upon the way people read the Bible. In one portion of his study, Powell compared the way American and Russian seminary students read the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. He discovered that 100% of the American students identified the prodigal's problem as squandering his inheritance. Only 34% of the Russian students mentioned this fact but 84% mentioned the famine in the land.[174] Even more startling was that only 6% of the American students mentioned the famine. Why, asked Powell, was there such a difference in the way these two groups of students read the same text. His conclusion was that their social setting affected the way that they read the text. He writes:

> One probably does not need to look too far for a social or psychological explanation for this data. In 1941, the German army laid siege to the city of St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) and subjected its inhabitants to what was in effect a 900-day famine. During this time 670,000 people died of starvation and exposure—about one fourth of the total population. Some of the current inhabitants of the city are survivors of that horror; more are descendants of the survivors.[175]

The American students read the text through a very different social lens. Powell notes, "They think money is very important to them. In a capitalist country, it must be a very bad thing to squander one's inheritance. But in a socialist state, the sin is self sufficiency."[176] Here are two classic cases of vertical transference, both sets of students read the text through the lens of their social placement and fail to see the first century context of the text.

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[173] David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2000), 18

[174] Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 15-17.

[175] Ibid. 15-16.

[176] Ibid. 18.

Powell goes on to show that, in addition to nationality, there are other factors that make up one's social location. He demonstrates in another portion of the study the vast difference between the way clergy and lay people read the Bible. When reading Mark 7:1-8, which deals with the controversy of Jesus' disciples over not washing their hands, four-fifths of the Pastors surveyed by Powell identified with Jesus whereas none of the lay people did. In fact, the majority of the lay people identified with either the disciples or the Pharisees.[177] Powell comments that, "clergy do seem to be more likely than laity to empathize with the character of Jesus when they read or hear Gospel stories. I have found this to be true with other texts besides this one, though the distinction is not usually as dramatic as it was in this instance."[178] In other words, preachers are just as likely to read the text through their social placement as lay people are. Effective preachers recognize this fact and take careful steps to protect themselves from its dangers.

Powell's study demonstrates the real danger of how a preacher's social location can dramatically affect the way he understands a passage. Therefore, it is crucial for every preacher to have an understanding of his own social and cultural location. Vernon Robbins writes:

> The beginning place for ideological analysis and interpretation is with people, and the best place to begin is with you, the reader of this sentence. Only if you have significant insight into the ideological texture of your own presuppositions, dispositions, and values will you be able to analyze the ideological texture both of other people's interpretations of a text and of a text that is the mutual interest of you and another person who has interpreted it.[179]

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[177] Powell. 55.

[178] Ibid, 56.

[179] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996), 96.

In addition to understanding of his own social location, the preacher must also have an awareness of the building blocks of the Greco-Roman social world. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to providing a basic social framework from which to read the Pastoral Epistles. While not claiming to be comprehensive, this chapter will introduce three social models that one must be take into account when reading the New Testament in general and the Prison Epistles in particular.

Three Basic Building Blocks of the Greco-Roman Social World

The selection of the three basic building blocks of Greco-Roman social world detailed below may appear to be rather arbitrary. Why select these three social models to the exclusion of so many others? The first answer to that question is that simplicity and practicality demand the nearly infinite number of subjects be reduced to a minimum.[180] The goal of this project is to make socio-rhetorical analysis accessible to the average pastor who must, in addition to preparing two or three fresh sermons per week, deal with the constant demands of caring for and shepherding his flock. Therefore, the number of social models has been purposefully limited in order to maintain the practicality of this project. Nevertheless, the second answer to that question is perhaps even more important— these three basic building blocks are the core social values from which all others flow. In other words, these are the most important issues to consider in understanding the social order of the Greco-Roman world. The reader, therefore, should always keep these building blocks in mind as he or she reads the New Testament. The preacher should not only look for ways these social models are reflected in the New Testament but also how they compare or contrast with his

[180] *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, ed. John J. Pilch and Malina Bruce J. (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1998).

own social setting.

Honor and Shame

Arguably, the single most important social value in the Greco-Roman world was honor/shame. David DeSilva writes, "The culture of the first-century world was built on the foundational social value of honor and dishonor."[181] Jerome Neyrey notes that even today Mediterranean countries place a great deal of value on honor:

> Visitors to Mediterranean countries are immediately aware of a different social dynamic on the streets in the marketplaces. People there seem very concerned with appearances. Married women typically dress in black, with kerchiefs concealing their hair. Men congregate in the square to smoke, drink, or play cards. In many places, men and women never share the same space at the same time; in fact, the careful observer notices that there are men's places (i.e. the tavern, the animal barn, the wine press) and women's places (i.e. the well, the common ovens). Anthropologists describe these phenomena in terms of a value considered dominant in Mediterranean culture, namely honor.[182]

What looks to most Westerners as chauvinism or male dominance is actually a reflection of a fundamental social value. The modern American has little or no understanding of the importance that honor and shame play in the New Testament, nor in the Middle Eastern world for that matter. Therefore, it is necessary to gain an adequate definition of honor as it relates to the Greco-Roman world.

In his book *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology,* Bruce Malina defines honor as, "a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of

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[181] DeSilva, 22.

[182] Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models of Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 25.

worth."[183] He argues that honor is essentially made up of two basic components: the value of a person in his or her own eyes plus that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group.[184] Therefore, both the individual and the social group to which he belongs determines honor. DeSilva notes that from the individual perspective honor is "self respect," but from perspective of the group, it is "esteem." What is most difficult for Americans to understand is that in the Greco-Roman world the more important of these two components was the honor ascribed by the social group. The difficulty that Americans face in understanding this group dynamic is twofold: first, Americans are largely individualists and second, they have grown up in a culture enamored with self-esteem. Individualism played a lesser role in the Greco-Roman world than it does in America and the group to which one belonged was often far more important than the individual. In such a society, there is enormous pressure to present oneself and to act according to very complex social expectations. To behave in a way that is consistent with group expectations results in "honor" whereas, to violate social norms and expectations results in "shame." Therefore, the person living in the Greco-Roman world was under constant pressure to live up to group expectations.

When an American thinks about social groups he/she inevitability thinks in terms of economic status— rich, poor, middle class. But social groups were far more complicated and rigid in the ancient world. James Jeffers says:

> Imagine a society in which the gulf between the upper class and all others was so wide that their members had virtually nothing in common. Imagine that you were forbidden by law to marry someone of another class, and upward mobility was frowned upon. Imagine a legal system that always favored the upper class. Imagine

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[183] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 30.

[184] Ibid.

> a society in which, with very few exceptions, your status at birth determined the course of your future life.[185]

This is what the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament was like. In such a society honor becomes an important commodity simply because it is the sole means of social mobility. So gaining honor for oneself was of the utmost importance in the ancient world.

According to Neyrey, honor could be either ascribed or acquired.[186] Ascribed honor is that which comes to a person "passively through birth, family connections, or endowment by notable persons of power."[187] The most important of these was one's family connections. Malina writes, "Being born into an honorable family makes one honorable since the family is the repository of the honor of past illustrious ancestors and their accumulated acquired honor."[188] This is one reason why most Greco-Roman funeral eulogies started out by ascribing honor to the deceased by recounting his illustrious ancestors.[189] Rarely did anyone in the Greco-Roman world move beyond the social class that he or she was born into. To be born into one of the Senatorial or Equestrian families automatically placed one at a higher honor ranking than someone born to one of the lower ranks. Plevnik notes, "This inherited honor must be maintained and defended, by the current generation, male and female."[190]

A second manner in which honor could be ascribed was when occasionally a king,

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[185] James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 181.

[186] Neyrey, 27.

[187] Ibid, 27-28.

[188] Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 32.

[189] DeSilva, 28.

[190] Joseph Plevnik, "Honor/Shame," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 107.

governor, or other high-ranking official would ascribe it to a person of lower rank. Paul refers to ascribed honor in Philippians 2:9-11 when he states, "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father." Here Paul says that God has exalted Jesus, in other words, God has ascribed honor to Him. Establishing the honor of Jesus was necessary in light of the fact that in the Greco-Roman world crucifixion was reserved for the worst of the worst criminals. In a predominately-Gentile church, such as Philippi, it would have been of paramount importance to establish the honor of Jesus.

A preacher trying to understand this text needs to be able to see how this ascription of honor fits into Paul's overall rhetorical strategy. Paul is encouraging the Philippian believers to "do nothing out of rivalry or conceit," and to "count others more significant" than themselves (2:3-4). Both these commands are counter to the normal agonistic tendencies of the Greco-Roman culture. Therefore, in order to motivate the reader/listener to obedience Paul needed to provide an incentive. In v.5-11, therefore, he brings forth the supreme example of Jesus, asserting that Jesus was ultimately exalted (ascribed honor) because of his humility and self-sacrificing death on the cross. In other words, Paul is saying that in the Kingdom of God the way to gain honor is through sacrificial service. So when preaching from this text, the preacher should be careful to construct the message in such a way as to capture this point. He does not have to go into great technical detail about the complexities of honor and shame but he should incorporate future, eschatological exaltation as, at least part, of the motivation for obedience.

In addition to being ascribed, honor could also be acquired through virtuous living or

challenge/riposte. Whenever a person lived a particularly virtuous or noteworthy life they had the possibility of gaining honor in the eyes of their social group. For instance, a soldier who proved to be particularly brave or courageous in battle could gain honor. A generous patron or a loyal client stood to gain honor through their virtuous actions.[191] By far, however, the most important way to acquire honor in the first century was through challenge and riposte. Neyrey writes, "In the first century Mediterranean world, every social interaction that takes place outside of one's family or outside one's circle of friends is perceived as a challenge to honor; a mutual attempt to acquire honor from one's social equal."[192] Because of this propensity towards constant competition for honor, anthropologists refer to this as an *agonistic* culture. Nearly every interaction outside of one's own family was viewed as a competition for honor. To make matters even more complicated, honor, like all goods in the first century, was considered a limited commodity. In other words, there was only a limited amount of honor to go around and once it had been used up it was all gone. With limited supply and high demand, honor became one of the most valuable commodities of the ancient world.

The importance of honor in every social interaction combined with the perception that it was in limited supply led to the phenomenon known as the honor challenge. DeSilva says, "The challenge-riposte is essentially an attempt to gain honor at someone else's expense by publicly posing a challenge that cannot be answered."[193] The judges in this contest were the other members of the social group. Malina says the goal in such a contest is to threaten, "to

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[191] DeSilva, 28-29.

[192] Neyrey, *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models of Interpretation*, 29.

[193] DeSilva, 29.

usurp the reputation of another, to deprive another of his reputation."[194] Paul's strong words in Philippians 3:5-7 indicate that he may have considered the Judaizers to have issued an honor challenge and he was more than willing to riposte. Malina writes:

> In terms of the rhetorical strategy of a comparison, then, Paul has positioned himself not simply as the equal of those who urge circumcision and other Judean practices ("confidence in the flesh") but as their superior, ("I have more…."). If praise derives from the "the flesh," that is, from a noble birth into an honorable tribe, form a rigorous education, and from a virtuous life, then truly Paul has "more confidence" than they do.[195]

Paul likely intends his strong and derisive words in these verses to attack and discredit the honor of the Judaizers, thus answering their honor challenge and issuing one of his own. The only place where this type of *agonistic* was considered unacceptable was within one's own kinship group, which introduces the second building block of Greco-Roman society.

Kinship

Bruce Malina says, "Kinship refers to patterns of such social norms that regulate human relationships directly based on the experiences of birth and the birth cycle— from the womb, through developmental stages, to death."[196] David DeSilva says, "A person's family of origin is the primary source for his or her status and location in the world and an essential reference point for the person's identity."[197] In other words, a person's identity and lot in life was largely determined by the family into which they were born. As already stated above a

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[194] Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 35.

[195] Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 312.

[196] Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 134.

[197] DeSilva, 158.

person's initial honor ranking was derived largely from his or her ancestors.[198] DeSilva adds, "In the ancient world, people are not just 'taken for their own merits.' Instead, their merits begin with the merits (or debits) of their lineage, the reputation of their ancestral house."[199] The importance of Kinship in the ancient mind, however, did not stop at honor ranking or reputation. Malina says, "At bottom, kinship norms are rooted in the social perception that human relationships can be and actually are established among persons by their being born of certain parents or by the possibility of births resulting from the union of two (or more) human beings."[200] In essence then, one's family of origin largely determined whom a person could marry, how they would relate to other people and what opportunities would be available to them. Furthermore, "Investigation of the language used to describe kinship patterns and family relationships is important not just because it enables a picture to be sketched of who relates to whom and how, but also because the specific language used both reflects and shapes patterns of social relationships."[201]

Both the Old and New Testament bear witness to the importance that kinship played within the ancient world. For instance, the long genealogical tables in the Old Testament and at the beginning of Matthew and Luke are considered boring and irrelevant to a modern

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[198] "The Importance of one's ancestry for one's own honor is amply demonstrated from the fact that rhetorical handbooks all prescribe beginning the encomium (the commemorative funeral speech) with a discussion of the praiseworthy ancestors of the subject of the speech and then the virtues and accomplishments of the immediate progenitors." (DeSilva, 162)

[199] Ibid.

[200] Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 135.

[201] David G. Horrell, "From Adelphoi to the Household of God: Social Transformation in Pauline Christianity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 2 (2001): 294.

audience, but in the ancient world, these would have garnered considerable attention. Tracing the lineage of Jesus, for example, not only demonstrates the fulfillment of OT prophecy but perhaps more importantly, at least in the first century mind, to connect him through kinship lines to notable figures such as David and Abraham.[202] Sometimes, however Jesus' origins are shown to have worked against him. For instance, in Mark 6:3 the crowd says, "'Is this the carpenter, son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?'" And they took offense at Him." DeSilva argues the problem here is that, "The status that Jesus is claiming by means of his actions and words, and the role he has begun to play as teacher, prophet and miracle worker is dissonant with the status ascribed him by birth."[203] One begins to see here the close relationship between kinship and honor.

Kinship issues are important for understanding the prison epistles in several ways. First, throughout these letters Paul refers to the church in terms of a family. [204] In Ephesians 2:18, for instance, he says that both Jewish and Gentile converts to Christ are now united in the "household of God." In Ephesians 2:15, he states that the entire family of believers has

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[202] The tendency among most evangelicals would be to think of this linkage primarily as being theological. In other words, as proof that Jesus indeed met the requirements for being the messiah. The question then becomes how did the original author intend for his readers to understand them. Without discounting the importance of the theological understanding of the genealogies it is likely that the original author/audience would have recognized the need to link Jesus to notable ancestors in order to establish his credibility.

[203] DeSilva, 162.

[204] David Horrell notes that in just the seven undisputed Pauline books the word *adelphoi* is used 112 times; "that is, on average fractionally over once per page of the Nestle-Aland Greek text (26th ed.). The prominence of this kinship description would seem to imply that Paul both assumes and promotes the relationship between himself and his addressees, and among the addressees themselves, as one between equal siblings, who share a sense of affection, mutual responsibility, and solidarity." (Horrell, 299)

received their name from Jesus. In Ephesians 5:1, he urges believers to "be imitators of God as dear children." In each of these verses, Paul applies the language of kinship to describe the relationship between believers. In Philippians 1:2 he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul here seems to be claiming that all believers share the same *paterfamilias*. Every time Paul refers to his readers as "brethren" or "brothers", he is drawing upon the image of the church as the family of God.

Second, kinship issues are reflected in the prison epistles by the inclusion of household codes in Ephesians 5:22-6:4 and Colossians 3:18-4:1.[205] These codes demonstrate that while Paul respected the existing social structures and categories, nevertheless, he raised the ethics of household management to a new level. In keeping with the customs of the day, wives were called upon to respect their husbands but husbands were given the higher task of loving their wives in the same way that Christ loved the church. (Eph 5:22-33). Children are instructed to obey their parents but Paul also warns fathers not to provoke their children to wrath but rather to raise them in the fear and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:1-4) Most radical of all, Paul instructed slaves and masters to demonstrate mutual respect for one another. All of these represent Paul's new understanding of kinship relations in light of Jesus.

Third, Paul's appeal to believers to relate to each other in the unity and solidarity of a family reflect his view that believers are related together as kin in the church. The reference to the church as the "household of God" in Ephesians 2:19 become the basis for the exhortations to

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[205] DeSilva says that according to Aristotle the smallest parts of a family are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. He notes that, "In this description, the terms *master, husband, and father* describe the same individual, who is thus placed at the hub of the family unit, the "head" in relation to whom the other members of the family take their bearings. Most discussions of duties within the household will focus on these relationships (as will the household codes found in the New Testament), although in practice a household frequently consisted of both more and less than Aristotle's formula." (DeSilva, 173)

unity later in the letter (see Eph 4:1-7, 11-16; 5:1-2). There is no better place to see Paul's sensitivity towards honor/shame and his new understanding of kinship than in the letter to Philemon.

Several commentators have observed that honor and shame play a major role in this letter, helping to explain its unique rhetorical strategy.[206] The issue in this letter is not an honor challenge as in Philippians but rather Paul's need to be firm with Philemon without dishonoring or shaming him. The text reveals two important facts about Philemon. First, he was wealthy enough to own at least one slave but it is not hard to imagine he owned more. Second, his home was large enough for the church to meet in it (v.2). These two facts suggest that Philemon occupied a relatively high social status along the honor ranking that would go with it. Thus, it is possible that Paul considered Philemon to be a patron (see more on patronage below). The statement in vv.8-9 evinces such a relationship, "though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do that which is proper, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you."[207] The word "confidence" here is the Greek word *parresia*, which means, "a state of boldness and confidence, courage, confidence, boldness, fearlessness, especially in the presence of persons of high rank." This language would have been perfectly at home in the correspondence between a client and his patron. Furthermore, Paul mentions

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[206] F.F. Church, "Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul's Letter to Philemon," *Harvard Theological Review* 71, no. Jan-Apr (1978): 17-33; Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Bible Commentary, vol. 32 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991); Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[207] There was a very close relationship between the honor/shame and the client/patron relationship. Jeffers notes that, "The Patron was seen as the protector of the client. The patron owed the client legal help and protection from powerful enemies. The client in turned owed the patron respect and deference." (Jeffers, 192)

the past benefits he has received from Philemon (v.2-7), something one would expect to find in a letter reflecting this kind of relationship.[208]

Paul adds a most startling statement, insinuating he could simply order Philemon to do what he wants but for love's sake will appeal to him as a friend. What makes this remarkable is that "Although Paul lacks both property and a place in a community, he nevertheless claims to be able to exercise authority over Philemon on the basis of having brought Philemon the message of salvation, thus on the basis of having given a valuable benefit (v.8,18)."[209] In other words, Paul comes very close to challenging the honor of Philemon without actually using inflammatory language. It is as if Paul is claiming a higher status than Philemon without actually stating it. Ben Witherington asserts that Paul is employing a rhetorical method known as *insinuatio* in this passage, "thus he avoids use of certain potentially inflammatory or offensive language, including direct reference to the fact that Onesimus has run away or that he may have taken money or resources from him."[210]

Even more interesting is the fact that Paul grounds his appeal to Philemon on Christological issues— Paul's confidence is in Christ (v.8), the benefit he has given Philemon in the past is his relationship with Christ (v.19), the motivation for releasing Onesimus is that he is now a brother in Christ (v.16). Furthermore, one notices that Paul is crafty in the way he addresses this issue.[211] He does not issue a frontal assault on Philemon's

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[208] Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*, 231.

[209] DeSilva, 124.

[210] Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians*, 62.

[211] DeSilva writes, "Philemon really does appear to be in a corner in this letter— Paul has left him little room to refuse his request! If he is to keep his reputation for generosity and for acting nobly in his relations of reciprocity (the public reading of the letter creates a court

honor nor does he reflect the agonistic tendencies of his age.[212] Rather Paul shows a remarkable admixture of boldness and reservation. He is bold in his claim to be able to force Philemon to do what he wants, but seeks to preserve his honor and even give him opportunity to acquire more by doing what Paul requests. This demonstrates that Paul and the churches he planted had a distinctively "Christian criteria for what constituted honorable and dishonorable behavior."[213] What would have never been acceptable in the rest of the Greco-Roman world made perfect sense within the church.

The above discussion raises an important question: Why would Paul have risked offending an important patron and supporter of his ministry in order to free Onesimus? Especially in light of the fact that while in prison, Paul would have needed every ally he could muster. So why take such a risk? The issue at stake in the letter must be of such great importance that it would warrant such risky behavior. A modern, Western audience is tempted to see the abolition of slavery as his motivation; however, the evidence will not

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of reputation that will make this evaluation), he can only respond to Paul's request in the affirmative. Only then would his generosity bring him any credit at all in the community. If he refuses and Paul must command what he now asks, Philemon will either have to break with Paul or lose Onesimus anyway without gaining any honor as a benefactor and reliable friend."(DeSilva, 125)

[212]DeSilva says, "Another essential and pervasive aspect of this re-education of the Christian concerns the replacement of the basic competitive model of establishing one's honor with a cooperative model. The believers, as children of God, become what sociologists would call a fictive kinship group, that is a collection of people who are not genealogically related but who, nevertheless consider one another as family, attempting to relate at that higher level of intimacy, belonging and mutual commitment. As sisters and brothers, believers share honor within one household, working together toward the advancement of the honor of all members of this family rather than competing with one another for honor as if between unrelated individuals." (DeSilva, 76)

[213] DeSilva, 78.

support such a conclusion.[214] First, if the institution of slavery were of such fundamental importance to Paul, he would certainly have dealt with it more firmly in this book[215] and in other places such as 1 Cor 7:20ff, Eph 6:5-9 and Col 3:22.[216] Second, Paul gives no evidence in his letters of being a revolutionary. He appears to be more than willing to work within the social and cultural conventions of his day. This does not mean he endorses or approves of the institution of slavery but instead saw it as part of life.[217] In other words, Paul was a realist and took the world as it was and did what he could with the situation as it presented itself. Directing a frontal assault on slavery was a losing proposition in the first century and Paul knew taking such a stand would result in widespread persecution.[218] So he chose not to take such a direct route.

For Paul, however, there was something far more important at stake in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus than slavery— An issue so fundamental that Paul was willing to risk bringing shame to a valued patron in order to deal with it— namely, the family of God. In other words, for Paul the issue was not that slavery was evil and, therefore, Philemon should not own slaves but that Onesimus was now a believer and

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[214] Melick, 344.

[215] Ibid.

[216] These passages from Ephesians and Colossian are very important because they are written at the same time that Paul penned this letter to Philemon.

[217] Jeffers labels the Roman Empire as a slave society. He writes, "A slave society is defined as one in which slaves make up at least 30 percent of the population. Once the slave population reaches that size, it becomes large enough to transform the society's entire economy and even its culture. The other example of a slave society in antiquity is the Athenian Empire of the classical era (more than three centuries prior to New Testament times)." (Jeffers, 221)

[218] Melick, 316

therefore Philemon's brother. This new understanding of kinship was so important to Paul that he was willing to commit a major breach of etiquette in offending one of his patrons. To understand the risk Paul was taking one needs to acquire an understanding of the client/patron relationship, as it existed in Greco-Roman world.

Patronage

Of the three basic building blocks, this may be the most distasteful to an American audience. DeSilva writes:

> People in the United States and northern Europe may be culturally conditioned to find the concept of patronage distasteful at first and not at all a suitable metaphor for talking about God's relationship to us. When we say, "it's not what you know but who you know," it is usually because we sense someone has had an unfair advantage over us or over the friend whom we console with these words. It violates our conviction that everyone should have equal access to employment opportunities (being evaluated on the basis of pertinent skills rather than person connection) or to services offered by private businesses or civic agencies.[219]

No matter how distasteful or foreign the concept of the client/patron relationship is to a modern audience, it was, nevertheless, part of the social fabric of the ancient world and therefore an important background for the interpretation of the New Testament.

In the Greco-Roman world, the market existed for the purchase of one's daily necessities but everything else had to be obtained from someone who either, possessed the goods or who controlled access to them.[220] Those who possessed or controlled access to such goods were known as patrons those who wanted to obtain goods were called clients. In order to obtain such things as property, loans to begin a business venture, food supply after a crop failure, appointment to a civic office, or even advice, the client was expected to perform a

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[219] DeSilva, 95.

[220] Ibid, 96.

favor for the patron. DeSilva writes,

> If the patron granted the petition, the petitioner would become the client of the patron and a potentially long-term relationship would begin. This relationship would be marked by the mutual exchange of desired goods and services, the patron being available for assistance in the future, the client doing everything in his or her power to enhance the fame and fortune of the patron (publicizing the benefit and showing the patron respect), remaining loyal to the patron and providing services whenever the opportunity arose.[221]

This kind of relationship was a way of life in the first century and everyone understood the rules of the game. The most important patron in the Greco-Roman world was the Emperor himself. From the time of Augustus the emperor was regarded as the ultimate patron who gave to Rome the great peace, *pax Romana,* which demanded thanks be given in an equally glorious manner.[222] This relationship, at least in part, explains the incredible popularity of the Roman imperial cult during the first century. Throughout the Roman world but most prominently in its colonial cities various statues, reliefs, and inscriptions were dedicated to the fame and glory of the divine Augustus and his predecessors.[223] All of which, directly reflect the client/patron relationship existing between the Emperor and the residents of the Empire.

It is essential to understand the close relationship between honor/shame and the patron/client relationship. As already mentioned throughout this chapter, honor was a commodity traded almost like currency in the ancient world. The patron in this relationship was motivated almost exclusively by desire to acquire additional honor. In other words, by

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[221] DeSilva, 97.

[222] Ibid, 102.

[223] John Dominick Crossan and Johnathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 187-88.

granting the requests of clients the patron was seeking to acquire additional honor. If the client desired to keep the flow of goods and services coming, he needed to feed his patron's continual desire for honor. Therefore, the goal of the client was to make sure that other people knew how great his patron was so they, in turn, could raise their opinion of him. The primary term used to reflect this reciprocal relationship was grace (*charis).*[224] This word, familiar to everyone who has read the New Testament, was not primarily a religious word in the first century but rather a term for describing reciprocity. Often, the word was used to describe the willingness of a patron to grant a benefit. For instance, many honorary descriptions mention the graces (*charitas)* of the benefactor as the cause for conferring public praise.[225] But it could also be used to describe the gratitude of the patron towards his benefactor. [226] Thus, when a city erected a statue to honor Caesar or some other benefactor it was demonstrating its gratitude or *charis*. It is possible to see, therefore, that "Grace thus has very specific meanings for the authors and readers of the New Testament, meanings derived primarily from the use of the word in the context of the giving of benefits and the requiting of favors."[227]

Paul uses the word *charis* in Philemon v. 7 saying, "For I have come to have much joy (*charis)* and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother." Rhetorically Paul is trying to make Philemon favorably disposed towards taking action by reminding him of the past good deeds that he had performed on

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[224] DeSilva, 104.

[225] Ibid. 105.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Ibid.

behalf of the church.[228] Here one sees the interplay between all of the social building blocks discussed previously. As the patron of the Christian community meeting in his house, Philemon could be motivated by the prospect of increasing his honor ranking and performing an act of kindness for a new brother in Christ. Ben Witherington notes, "Philemon currently has a high honor rating in the Christian community as one who has been a big blessing to various saints. It will certainly be to his advantage in the community if he continues down this track."[229] In modern Western society this may seem like vanity or even arm twisting but in the Greco-Roman world such rhetoric was both acceptable and expected. It would probably not be appropriate for a modern preacher to use the same rhetorical strategy as Paul but being aware of the interplay between building blocks helps to accentuate what the real issue in the book was. While Paul was not trying to be a revolutionary and advocate the abolition of slavery, he was calling for Christians to conduct themselves as a unique sub-culture within the Greco-Roman culture.

Applying Social Scientific Analysis to Preaching

Appendix 4 contains a sample sermon demonstrating how the author used the three building blocks listed above to inform a sermon from the Epistle to Philemon. This letter was chosen as an example because it reflects the importance of these building blocks more clearly than any of the other prison epistles. As already noted above, one risks misunderstanding and misapplying this letter without first obtaining knowledge of the Greco-Roman social structure in which it was written. The preacher must not assume his audience will have this

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[228] Witherington, 59

[229] Witherington, 58

knowledge or that they will take the time to go out and learn it. Therefore, he is charged with the task of constructing the sermon in such a way that it informs the listener about the differences between their modern culture and that of the ancient world. His challenge is that he must do this in a manner that is both interesting and relevant to the audience. There are at least two ways that he can do this.

First, he can simply take time to explain the differences between the ancient and modern social worlds. The assumption is too quickly made that people will not be interested in Biblical background information, however, this conclusion is called into question by a survey conducted at First Baptist Church in Metropolis, IL (see appendix 6). This survey asked congregants if they enjoyed when the Pastor used Biblical background information in his sermons, 92% of the respondents replied in the affirmative.[230] When asked whether they found Biblical backgrounds to be helpful in understanding the text, 86% responded in the affirmative.[231] Even more relevant to this chapter, however, is that 80% said Biblical backgrounds helped them to see how the text applied to modern life.[232] Therefore, the preacher should not immediately reject the explanation of Biblical background information during the sermon. He should be careful, however, to do two things whenever explaining this kind of material. First, he should make sure there is a clear and important reason why he is presenting the background information. Audiences quickly grow weary of material they

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[230] When asked the question "Do you enjoy when the Pastor uses Biblical backgrounds in his sermons? 1 person responded never, 4 said sometimes, 30 said usually, and 30 said all of the time.

[231] When asked "Do you find Biblical backgrounds in the sermon to be: Not helpful at all, somewhat helpful, helpful, very helpful." Out of 65 respondents, 31 said they found Biblical backgrounds to be helpful, 25 said they were very helpful.

[232]When asked, "Do Biblical backgrounds help you to see how the Bible relates to modern life?" 36 out of 65 respondents said "Most of the time" and 16 said "all of the time."

feel is superfluous or not relevant. Thus the preacher should be able to give a clear reason why he is including explanations of background information. Second, he should provide only enough information to make the point and then move on. Too much information will turn the sermon into a lecture on social backgrounds rather than a word from the living God. One will notice that in the sample sermon from Philemon the author, after introducing the sermon, devoted a 3 -5 minute period of the sermon to explaining the differences between what most Americans think about slavery and the reality of the institution in Paul's day. Notice two important aspects about this explanation. First, it is short. While certainly more could be said about the contrast, the material that was covered helped the audience to get in mind the differences. Second, it was purposeful. The audience must be told why this background is important and be able to clearly how it helps them to understand and apply the text.

Second, the preacher can use stories to help explain and illustrate social backgrounds. Calvin Miller notes, "Only a few preachers see themselves as artists and view the work they do as image making. Too bad, too, for all listeners hear with words but store what we hear in pictures. So sermons are remembered only if they contain enough pictures to be stored."[233] Most preachers who have been preaching any length of time know that stories are often what people remember the most when the sermon is over. There is tremendous power in stories to capture interest and draw the pictures needed for long-term retention of the message. Stories are just as powerful for helping the preacher communicate social backgrounds. The sample sermon demonstrates this in the introduction, which attempts to set the background of this letter by means of a story. One will notice that within this brief story the author attempts to

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[233] Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 144

not only explain the occasion for this epistle but also capture the incredible risk Paul was taking in confronting Philemon, his patron. Wrapping the social issues of honor and patronage within a narrative form makes them a much easier and far more interesting pill for the audience to swallow.

It is possible to allow the predominant social issues guide the development of the entire sermon. In his book *Communicating For A Change*, Andy Stanley suggests building the sermon around single and then developing the sermon around five component parts: Me, We, God, You, We.. He states:

> With this approach the communicator introduces a dilemma he or she has faced or is currently facing (Me). From there you find common ground with your audience around the same or a similar dilemma (We). Then you transition to the text to discover what God say about the tension or question you have introduced (God). Then you challenge your audience to act on what they have just heard (You). And finally, you close with several statements about what could happen in your community, your church, or the world, if everybody embraced that particular truth (We).[234]

The socio-rhetorical model could easily be adapted to fit into this model of preaching by simply adding a sixth component to the model- They. The preacher. after introducing the dilemma that both he and the audience is facing (Me and You) could show how the same dilemma was present in the original audience of the Biblical text by devoting just a few minutes of discussion on the sociological background of the text. This would be an effective way to connect the audience to the text.

Evidence that social scientific analysis makes a difference in audience interest and retention can be shown by the fact that when the sample sermon (see Appendix 4) was actually preached it showed remarkable increases over the baseline taken before the method

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[234] Andy Stanley, *Communicating For a Change* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2006), 120

was employed and an increase over the averages produced during the project as a whole. For instance, the baseline showed that prior to employing this method of preaching only 60% of those surveyed at First Baptist Metropolis were able to correctly identify the central theme of the sermon. Over the length of this project that number increased to 86% but the sermon preached on Philemon recorded the highest total of all the sermons with 90% of those surveyed being able to correctly identify the central theme of the sermon. Furthermore, in the baseline surveys only 50% of the congregation was able to identify the social and cultural backgrounds behind the text. During the course of the project, this average increased to 70% but in the Philemon message, it increased to 90%. Perhaps most importantly, during the baseline survey only 31% of the congregation could connect the text and the application of the sermon. During the length of the project, this increased to 88%, but again the Philemon message showed a remarkable increase to 92%. This increase, as will be discussed in ch. 5, could be the result of several factors but since the Philemon message contained more social background information than any other message it is likely that, at least in part, those results were connected. In addition to increasing audience interest and attention, social scientific analysis offers at least three other advantages to preaching.

Advantages of Social Scientific Analysis for Preaching

1. The ability to help color the passage

Understanding the various threads that make up the social tapestry of the first century Greco-Roman culture helps the reader to get behind the text and into the minds of the original audience and author. It is very common to hear people coming back from a mission trip to a foreign country say things like, “I never understood what people in the third world

go through until I saw it with my own eyes," or "I never understood why they did that until I went there and walked in their shoes for a few days." What cross-cultural mission trips offer to the missiologist, socio-rhetorical preaching offers to homileticians— the ability to help people see, feel, and experience a foreign culture. The world of the New Testament is as foreign to the modern American as any place he or she could visit in the world. Recognizing this fact, the wise preacher seeks to take his listener's on a journey into a strange and foreign place. Creatively using the social, historical, and cultural backgrounds, he weaves his explanations, stories, and illustrations to help the audience to not only gain insight but also to gain interest in the text. Another way to think about this advantage is to see social and cultural building blocks as the color commentary in sports broadcast. Most people who have ever watched a football or basketball game on television know the insights they have gained from listening to the color commentator who usually either played or coached in the sport they are broadcasting. Getting insight from an insider and one who has actually played the sport is always interesting for the sports enthusiast. The preacher is to be an expert on the passage he preaches on Sunday morning. His job is to be the insider for the audience and to help them feel and experience the text. The socio-rhetorical model is a powerful tool for accomplishing this task.

2. Identifying Authorial Intent

An old saying goes, "a text without a context is just a pretext for whatever you want it to mean." This chapter began with a discussion about vertical transference and its dangers for expository preaching. Failure to understand the social context of the original author/audience is a sure way to read one's own context back into the text. It is the preacher's job to carefully and faithfully exegete the text in its historical, grammatical,

rhetorical and social contexts so that he can faithfully communicate its meaning to a modern audience. Social scientific analysis is a key to making sure that he properly understands the authorial intent of the passage. Determining the authorial intent of a passage requires more than just an exegesis of the author's words and the rhetorical structures he used to communicate them. Without a consideration of the social backgrounds that formed the author's thoughts and ideas, as well as those of his audience, the modern preacher is sure to misunderstand and misapply the Scriptures. Words derive their meanings from the social and cultural contexts in which they are used; therefore, one cannot truly understand the Bible without studying the social background in which it was written. Likewise, an audience listening to a sermon on a passage of Scripture needs to be given adequate insight into the social backgrounds of the text in order to understand and apply the text to their lives. The preacher's job is to sort out the myriad of issues, which form the tapestry of the text, and decide which ones are crucial for his audience to understand. In the sample sermon from Philemon, the main two main social building blocks dealt with were honor and patronage. Both of these issues are foreign to an American audience and understanding them was considered essential for understanding how they reveal Paul's authorial intent. If the counter-balance of the socio-rhetorical model is not used the natural tendency will be for the audience to gravitate to the more familiar issue of slavery and thus misinterpret the intent of Paul to be the abolition of slavery.

3. Contextualization

Contextualization is a term often used in homiletics to refer to making the message relevant by use of various media, contemporary illustrations and creative use of modern language. However, a larger and more important concern in contextualization is the bridging

of the gap between the "then" of the text and the "now" of the modern audience. Preachers commonly refer to this process as "application." Someone once said, "The sermon begins where the application starts." McDill says, "Application presents the implications of biblical truth for the modern audience. It is a call for action, for putting the principles of Scripture to work in our lives."[235] Greidanus notes that, "Without genuine relevance there is no sermon."[236] The entire purpose of preaching is to take the text of Scripture and communicate it effectively to a modern audience, calling for a proper response to that message. Most preachers recognize quickly that application is what gets the most attention from the audience listening to their sermons. In addition, it is usually one of the things that they remember the longest. Therefore, application must occupy a considerable amount of attention in preparation of the sermon.

Sadly, many attempts at application miss the point of the text entirely. The sermon may contain a considerable amount of application material but still fail because it missed the point of the text. It is just as serious to misapply the text as to not apply it at all. One of the primary reasons preachers misapply the Biblical text is that they read their own social and cultural values back onto the text. This malady was labeled "vertical transference" in chapter 1. Socio-rhetorical analysis helps guard against this tendency but its results must be carried into the actual development of the sermon. In other words, the discoveries and insights gained in the exegetical process must make their way into the sermon. The socio-rhetorical contexts should inform the application of the Biblical text through the sermon.

In his book *The New Testament Word: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Bruce

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[235] McDill, 127.

[236] Greidanus, 157

Malina writes, "Perhaps the first and largest step that a contemporary American can take toward understanding the Bible is to realize that in reading the Bible in English (or even Greek); we are in fact listening to the words of a transplanted group of foreigners."[237] He goes on to argue that to hear what the Bible is saying all one needs to do is read it but, to understand what the Bible means "requires some understanding of the social system embodied in the words".[238] If the sermon is going to communicate the meaning of the text accurately it must take into account the similarities and differences between the original and modern audiences. Specifically, it must take into account the sociological location of each of these audiences. Giving care and attention at this point will help protect the preacher from the malady of vertical transference.

Cautions

Social scientific analysis is a powerful tool in the hands of a skilled preacher and can be extremely helpful when correctly applied. But like any tool, misuse can lead to serious error. Therefore, the preacher must keep the following cautions in mind as he seeks to employ this tool in his preaching arsenal.

1. Overconfidence in Social-scientific models

It is possible to put too much stock in modern Social-scientific models. While the works of Malina, Neyrey, and Pilch are helpful, they do suffer because they place too much emphasis on the observance of modern Mediterranean culture and extrapolating these observations back onto the New Testament era. While the modern Mediterranean world is

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[237] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 2.

[238] Mailna, 2.

certainly closer to the Biblical social setting than modern America, it would be wrong to say they are the same. At other times, it appears that some authors place too much emphasis on speculative social models.

An example of placing too much emphasis on a speculative social model is the confidence many authors place in the so-called dyadic personality. Vernon Robbins defines a dyadic personality as, "one who needs another person continually in order to know who he or she really is. Such persons internalize and make their own what others say, do, and think about them, because they believe it is necessary, for being human, to live out the expectations of others."[239] In other words, a dyadic personality means that a person's primary source of identity comes from other people. Pilch notes that in an honor/shame culture such as the Greco-Roman world of the first century:

> Individual people are not know or valued because of their uniqueness, but in terms of their dyad, that is some other person or thing. Dyadism, therefore, is a means value by which one's honor can be continually checked, affirmed, or challenged. And individual people would describe themselves in this way, as a servant of God, as a priest of God's temple, and as a centurion of the Italian cohort.[240]

Dyadism is in direct opposition to the individualism that dominates the modern western personality. Robbins states that while modern people tend to view themselves as being unique, "a first-century person perceived himself or herself as a distinctive whole set in relation to other such wholes and set within a given social and natural background. Every individual was perceived as embedded in other individuals, in a sequence of

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[239] Robbins, 77.

[240] Jerome Neyrey, "Dyadism," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, ed. John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 53-56

embeddedness."[241]

One mistake that is sometimes made when applying this social model to the study Paul is to see him exclusively in terms of a dyadic personality. It is true that Paul does at some points exhibit a dyadic personality, for instance in Philippians 3:4-6 where he appears to draw his identity from Judaism. However, at other points it is clear that Paul exhibits the characteristics of an individualistic personality. Ben Witherington points out, for instance, that Paul makes little, if any, mention of the Christian community to which he belongs to, only those whom he founded. Nor does he mention any spiritual mentors who invested in his life but only those whom he has mentored. Paul is very clear, in fact, that after his conversion he went off immediately into Arabia not attempting to join any Christian community. Such facts could lead many sociologists to conclude that such individualism is evidence that Paul was not well socialized.[242] In light of these facts, it would be difficult to come to any firm conclusion concerning the influence of Dyadism on Paul's personality. The wise preacher should, therefore, be reluctant to base too much of his understanding of a passage on this highly speculative theory of the first century personality. It is better to focus on those social models that enjoy wider acceptance and are more clearly evinced by actual first-century texts.

2. Insufficient attention to the text itself

It is possible to spend so much time reading about the text that one does not give sufficient attention to the text itself. In other words, the preacher can end up spending so

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[241] Neyrey, 78

[242] Ben Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1998) , 111

much time reading and studying about the social background of the text that he does not study the actual text. The social background is important but it should never trump the actual text of Scripture. Preachers who decide to employ a social-rhetorical method of preparing sermons will have to guard against this tendency. This will be especially important at the onset of using this method because the newness will make the preacher prone to being so enamored with learning about social background that he ignores the text. Even after using it for a while this aspect of Biblical studies could become something of a pet hobby for the preacher. Several steps can be taken in order to make sure this does not happen. First, the preacher should do all of the steps outlined in chapters 2 and 3 before considering the sociological issues within the text. This will ensure that he has done an adequate job of exegeting the text and considering its rhetorical structures before turning to this area of study. Second, the preacher should maintain careful balance in his reading program. There is always a tendency to develop pet projects or obsessions that can dominate the preachers reading. Social Scientific criticism and backgrounds could easily become such a pet project. Furthermore, there is a tendency for a preachers reading material to make its way into the sermon that he preaches. Therefore, if he is not careful there is a tendency to let his pet projects dominate his preaching. Sociology and Biblical background material will be of natural interest to most preachers and if caution is not taken to maintain a balanced reading program these topics can quickly become a preacher's pet project and take up too much of his time. Third, the preacher needs to weigh carefully the importance of the various sociological issues. As seen above, he should be very reluctant to employ any social model that is not well supported by the evidence. However, beyond that he should also carefully think through the value that such models would add to his preaching. He must ask the

questions himself whether the model adds to the understanding of the text or whether it is just something, he finds interesting but will have little meaning to the congregation. Sometimes a social model will throw great light onto a text and at others time it will not. The preacher must prayerfully consider the relative importance of the model in each case.

Conclusion

The social world of the Greco-Roman world of the first century is very different from that of the modern 21st century American. Understanding just a few basic building blocks of the Greco-Roman social world can help preachers to better understand and apply the text to his modern audience. While many social models could be presented the three most important for understanding the prison epistles are: honor, kinship, and patronage. These three concepts can be found in all of the prison epistles but most notably they are weaved throughout the letter to Philemon. A sermon recognizing the interplay between these social models and how they contrast with the modern American mindset can capture the listeners attention and increase their ability to make the application to real life. There are, however, several cautions that the preacher must bear in mind when applying this model to preaching. The use of speculative social models, inattention to the actual text of the Bible, and overdependence on the sociological analysis are all pitfalls the preacher must avoid by maintaining balance in his application of this model.

CHAPTER 5

SURVEY RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The working thesis of this project has been that applying socio-rhetorical analysis to expository preaching would result not only in the preacher having a better understanding of the text but also would increase the ability to the audience to connect the application of the sermon with the text. In order to prove this thesis a survey was developed (see appendix 5) to measure the ability of members of First Baptist Church, Metropolis to recognize the main points of a sermon and relate the application of the sermon to the text. This survey was administered before the socio-rhetorical method was used in order to determine a baseline for comparison. The survey was then repeated at various times during the project to measure the effects of the socio-rhetorical method. This chapter will report those results and provide analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of this model.

Survey Results

The survey for this project sought to measure five factors concerning the audiences ability to recognize specific variables within the sermon. The baseline survey was taken during four sermons preached between June 1 and June 22, 2008. During these four sermons

the author used the same basic exegetical and homiletical approach he always had used. These results establish the baseline for comparing the effects of the socio-rhetorical model. In order to show the effects that the socio-rhetorical method could have on the variables the survey was repeated during nine sermons preached from the prison epistles between October 1, 2008 and February 2, 2009. During the preparation of these sermons, the Pastor used the socio-rhetorical model as detailed in this project. The comparison of this research is as follows.

Question 1: What was the main theme of this sermon?

The first question on the survey sought to measure the ability of the church to recognize the main theme of the Pastor's sermon. The audience was asked "What was the main theme of this sermon?" During the course of the baseline survey an average of 60% of the congregation was able to correctly identify the theme of the sermon. The socio-rhetorical model showed a remarkable increase in the ability of the congregation to identify this variable. On average during the course of the project 81% of those surveyed were able to correctly identify the main theme of the sermon. This is a remarkable increase and reflects, at least in part, the strength of the socio-rhetorical method in forcing the preacher to think through the relationship between theme of the text and that of the sermon. This is not to say that the more traditional method did not focus on this variable but from beginning to end the socio-rhetorical method makes him look at this relationship. This constant emphasis has the effect of driving the theme deep into the mind and heart of the preacher throughout the week and it naturally comes out in the presentation of the sermon.

What was the main theme of this sermon?							
Baseline Survey				Socio-Rhetorical Model			
Correct	%	Incorrect	%	Correct	%	Incorrect	%
31	60	31	40	137	81	19	19

Question 2: What was the original author trying to accomplish?

The second question sought to measure the ability of the church to identify the rhetorical purpose of the original author of the Biblical text. In other words, it tried to determine whether the congregation was able to identify the authorial intent of the passage. During the baseline survey, only 63% of those surveyed were able to identify the authorial intent or purpose of the Biblical passage. In those sermons that employed the socio-rhetorical model this number increased to 76%. This represents a significant increase in the congregation's ability to see how the sermon and text relate to each other. The constant focus of this method on authorial intent forces the preacher to think about what the purpose of the original author was, thus compelling him to be clearer about it in the actual sermon. This is further supported by a follow-up question that asked the congregation to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how clearly the Pastor stated the authorial intent in the sermon. During the baseline survey the congregation gave the Pastor an average rating of 3.58, however during the sermons using the socio-rhetorical model this rating increased to 4.7. It is likely that the additional focus and emphasis on authorial intent during the preparation phase resulted in the Preacher being clearer about it in the sermon.

What was the main theme of this sermon?							
Baseline Survey				Socio-Rhetorical Model			
Correct	%	Incorrect	%	Correct	%	Incorrect	%
33	63	19	37	132	76	24	24

Question 3: What backgrounds from the text were mentioned in the message?

The goal of the third question was to measure how well the congregation was able to recognize various background issues mentioned in the sermons. Background material here would include historical references, cultural issues, and social values. During the baseline surveys only 50% of the people surveyed were able to identify specific backgrounds mentioned in the sermon. This increased dramatically with the socio-rhetorical model with 81% of the people being able to identify the backgrounds. To put this statistic in perspective, however, one must consider the follow-up question. When asked how clearly these issues were stated, the baseline survey showed that on a scale from 1 to 5 the average member indicated a rating of 4.02. Given the large increase in their ability to identify specific backgrounds, one would expect the socio-rhetorical method to show a significant increase in this rating, but in reality the survey showed no significant increase, 4.12. In other words, the congregation showed a dramatic increase in their ability to identify specific backgrounds but reported no significant improvement on the way the Pastor delivered these backgrounds.

What backgrounds were mentioned in the message?							
Baseline Survey				Socio-Rhetorical Model			
Correct	%	Incorrect	%	Correct	%	Incorrect	%
26	50	26	50	122	81	34	19

So, how can the dramatic increase be explained? Likely, the answer lies in the fact that using this method was able to be make the preacher more strategic in the backgrounds he included in the sermons. One of the things discovered during the course of this research was the enormous interest the church has in Biblical backgrounds. As reported in chapter 4, a survey was conducted at First Baptist, Metropolis to measure this interest. This survey asked congregants if they enjoyed when the Pastor used Biblical background information in his sermons, 92% of the respondents replied in the affirmative.[243] When asked whether they found Biblical backgrounds to be helpful in understanding the text, 86% responded in the affirmative.[244] Even more relevant to this chapter, however, it that 80% said that Biblical backgrounds helped them to see how the text applied to modern life.[245] It is this last statistic that reveals why the socio-rhetorical method may have showed such improvement in helping the congregation to identify specific backgrounds. This method helps the preacher to make a

[243] When asked the question "Do you enjoy when the Pastor uses Biblical backgrounds in his sermons? 1 person responded never, 4 said sometimes, 30 said usually, and 30 said all of the time.

[244] When asked "Do you find Biblical backgrounds in the sermon to be: Not helpful at all, somewhat helpful, helpful, very helpful." Out of 65 respondents, 31 said they found Biblical backgrounds to be helpful, 25 said they were very helpful.

[245]When asked, "Do Biblical backgrounds help you to see how the Bible relates to modern life?" 36 out of 65 respondents said "Most of the time" and 16 said "all of the time."

stronger connection between the backgrounds of the text and the modern audience. The stronger this connection is, the more likely it will be for the congregation to remember the specific backgrounds. The goal of preaching, of course, is not to communicate background material but to persuade the congregation towards faith and obedience. With that said, however, there can be an advantage in retention if the preacher can help the congregation to compare and contrast their present situation with that of a Biblical background.

Question 4: Were the main points of the message clearly connected to the Biblical text?

The fourth question, focused on the ability of the sermon to connect its main points to the Biblical text. The question asked congregants to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 how clearly the main points of the sermon were connected to Biblical text. In this area, the socio-rhetorical model showed only slight improvement over the baseline: 4.33 baseline, 4.73 socio-rhetorical. A probable reason for this is that the socio-rhetorical model did not radically change the way the preacher structured his sermon, namely because in both instances he was careful to structure his sermon after the pattern of the text. In other words, it is a core conviction of the author that the structure of the text should inform, if not dictate, the structure of the sermon, therefore, the the socio-rhetorical model did not alter his approach much. The results would perhaps be different for someone else who did not already make such a strong connection.

Question 5: What did the Pastor want you to do as a result of hearing this message?

If the goal of both the Biblical text and the sermon is to persuade people towards action then the fifth question is the most important of the entire survey. This question sought to measure the ability of the congregation to identify what specific actions the sermon was

calling for them to take. In the baseline survey, only 33% of the congregation was able to identify a specific application called for in the sermon. During the course of the sermons using this method an average of 93% of those surveyed were able to identify a specific application of the sermon.

What did the Pastor want you to do as a result of hearing this message?							
Baseline Survey				Socio-Rhetorical Model			
Correct	%	Incorrect	%	Correct	%	Incorrect	%
17	33	35	67	145	93	11	7

At least two factors help explain this significant increase. First, this method helps the preacher to become intentional about the issue of application. At each phase in this process, he is forced for to think about the rhetorical purpose or intent of the original author. More specifically, from the very outset of the process the preacher begins to think about how his sermon is going to reflect the original purpose of the author. Therefore, application, rather than being just tagged onto the end of sermon preparation, is the very heart of the method. Second, the attention given to identifying the social location of both the original and the modern audience helps the preacher become more specific in his application and find newer, more accurate ways of applying the text. An example of this can be seen in sample sermon from Philemon (see Appendix 4). In this message, 96% of the people surveyed were able to identify a specific action the preacher wanted them to take. One of the primary reasons for this statistic is that in this sermon the author was able to show the audience the difference between their social world and that of the original audience. As mentioned above, 80% of

the congregation reported that background material was able to help them apply the text to their lives, therefore, this method tapped into something already proven helpful to the congregation. The contrast between the ancient and the modern world became the springboard from which the congregation could get a different perspective on the Biblical text. This new perspective allowed them to see more clearly not only what Paul wanted Philemon to do in his relationship with Onesimus but what the Pastor wanted them to do in their own relationships.

Analysis

Having briefly presented the statistical results of the project it is necessary to provide a more detailed analysis. Such an analysis must wrestle with the following questions: Was this method effective? Is this method useful for the average Pastor? What are the weaknesses of this method? What are the strengths of this method? Finally, what needs to be done to develop this method in the future?

Was this method effective?

From a statistical standpoint, the method was effective in producing the results predicted in the thesis. The audience showed a marked increase in their ability to recall the main theme and application of the sermon along with a corresponding ability to identify specific background issues necessary to understand the Biblical passage. A casual glance at the statistics reported above would indicate a high degree of success in producing these results; however, they need to be put in some perspective in order to make an accurate conclusion.

First, it is likely that some of the statistical increase is due to the fact that the church members had a vested interest in helping their Pastor earn the Doctor of Ministry degree and therefore paid closer attention than usual when being surveyed. The fact that the previous Pastor of First Baptist Church had also completed a D.Min program and conducted a similar survey of the congregation may have further accentuated this effect. Second, it is likely that over the course of the project those being surveyed became somewhat conditioned to the survey and knew what to listen for. When combined together, these two observations can account for a considerable amount of the statistical increase. However, they do not explain the entire increase. One must remembered that both of these functions were present in the baseline survey as well as the project survey. To some degree, therefore, their effect is to nullified. Even so, it seems prudent to be more modest in proclaiming the success of this model.

Since the ultimate goal of preaching is life-change, only time and eternity will be able to show the effectiveness of the socio-rhetorical model. However, some predictions can be made. In order for a sermon to produce life change at least three factors must be present and the socio-rhetorical model has the potential to touch on each of these three factors. First, the Holy Spirit must do a supernatural work in the life of the listener. The socio-rhetorical model cannot guarantee this result; however, it may be able to help the preacher be more in step with the Holy Spirit by making sure he correctly understands the word. Greg Heisler rightly concludes in his book *Spirit-Led Preaching* that, "The call to preach is a call to study. What the Holy Spirit illumines in the study, he will empower in the pulpit. This means we are preachers must expect the Spirit's help in the preparation of our sermon just as much as

we anticipate the Spirit's help in preaching it."[246] In other words, there is no reason not to expect the Holy Spirit to work in the life of the preacher during the study of the text. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit inspired the text in original life-situation of the author and audience, therefore, any tool that helps to understand that life-situation can potentially be used by the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text for the modern preacher. So, a strong possibility exists that the Holy Spirit will use the socio-rhetorical model to produce life change. In order to be effective, however, the preacher must depend on the sufficiency of the Word rather than on the power of the socio-rhetorical model. This model has no inherent power within it to change lives. Only God can do that. The power to changed lives resides in the God who said, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isa 55:11 NKJV)

A strong word of caution is necessary at this point. It would be easy for any preacher to allow this method to distract him from the work of prayer by either taking up all of the available time in research or by giving him a false sense of security in the power of persuasion. Both of these distractions must be avoided if there is to be the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the sermon. Arturo Azurdia writes, "At the risk of being misunderstood, it must be affirmed that the unaccompanied scriptures are not sufficient for life transformation. The word of God must be attended by the operative power of the Spirit of God if salvation and sanctification are to occur."[247] Every caution must be

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[246] Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 91

[247] Arturo Azurdia, *Spirit Empowered Preaching* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2006), 39

taken, therefore, not to allow the socio-rhetorical model (or any other model for that matter) become a substitute for the power of the Spirit of God in preaching.

The second factor that must be present in order for a sermon to produce life-change is that it must capture and keep the attention of the audience. Any sermon that fails to keep the audience's attention is not likely to produce life-change. So how does the preacher go about capturing his audience's attention? Calvin Miller notes in his book, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Preaching*, that one of the chief complaints leveled against "expository" preaching is that it is boring.[248] In recent years, many expositors have experimented with narrative and dialogical style preaching.[249] Others have attempted to capture the attention of the modern audience via technology or other theatrics. While all of these methods have some merit, the surest and most effective way to capture attention is to preach about something that the audience is actually interested in. Most preachers would acknowledge, however, it is not that simple. According to 2 Timothy 4:1-4 the preacher has a divine mandate not just to preach what people want to hear but to faithfully declare the word of God:

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[248] Miller states, "*Expository preaching* has been the watchword of four hundred years of American evangelicalism. When the term was used in previous decades, it was generally understood to be the basis of sermon that employed linear reasoning, building arguments with highly propositional styles. Because these styles often lacked illustrations and stories there grew up the idea that if a sermon was interesting it was probably not expository. Exposition was hard work for both the preacher and the audience. Preparing it was arduous for the preacher, and listening to it was toil for the laity. But that was the price you paid to have the true Bible preached to you. If preaching didn't defy your ability to care about it, it clearly was not the Word of God. To really be good for you, sermons had to be dull. Exciting sermons were generally seen as heretical or at least non-biblical." Calvin Miller, *Preaching: The Art of Narrative Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006)

[249] Eugene Lowry, *The Homiletical Plot* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Fred Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Enid, Okla: Phipps University Press, 1971); David J. Schafler, *Surviving the Sermon: A Guide for Those Who have to Listen* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1992); Henry H. Mitchell, *Celebration and Experience in Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990).

> I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

In other words, the preacher cannot just find out what people want to hear and then give it to them. He must faithfully preach the Word. Therefore, he must discover some way of showing the audience how the Biblical text meets a real need in their lives. McDill provides helpful insight on this matter, stating:

> The man in the pew has a different set of concerns from the pastor. This puts the pastor and his preaching outside the circle of personal concerns. As he listens to the sermon, he hears the same appeal for church faithfulness, witnessing, tithing, and the like. It is easy to see why his mind wanders. He has enough to think about without taking on the preacher's concerns as well. Using audiovisual media in the sermon will not compensate for ideas that do not connect for the hearer. Low-tech preaching can have a high impact when the message addresses the needs of the audience.[250]

By helping the preacher to delve more deeply into the social world of the text and understanding the issue important to the original audience, the socio-rhetorical can provide areas of comparison and contrast with the modern audience. These comparisons and contrasts can then be used to capture audience attention and show them the relevance of the text to their actual needs.

Evidence that the socio-rhetorical method is effective in capturing interest can be seen through the survey results reported above. First, there was a modest increase in the ability of the audience to identify the main theme and points of application in the sermons. As already noted, some of this increase can be explained by audience conditioning and the increased

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[250] Wayne McDill, *Twelve Essential Skills of Great Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 208

attention brought about just because they were being surveyed. However, even factoring in the influence of these two factors, the survey showed a modest gain in audience interest. Second, according to the survey 80% of people said that Biblical backgrounds helped them to understand how the text applied to modern life. Given that the majority of the backgrounds shared in these sermons were sociological in nature, it makes sense that these were a major factor in producing the increased interest. As people were able to see themselves and their own interests in the Biblical text they were able to see it as being more relevant to their lives and thus more interesting.

The third factor that must be present in order for a sermon to produce life-change is a specific point of application. Bryan Chapell notes that, "Preachers make a fundamental mistake when they assume that by providing parishioners with biblical information the people will automatically make the connection between scriptural truth and their everyday lives."[251] It is not enough just to inform the audience of what a Biblical text says, they must also be shown how to apply its truth in their lives. Chapell goes on to say that, "Application may be attitudinal as well as behavioral. In fact, the frequent mark of immaturity among preachers is too much (or too early) an emphasis on behavior. Mature preachers do not ignore behavior, but they carefully build an attitudinal foundation for whatever actions they say God requires."[252] The socio-rhetorical model contains a strong element of application throughout the entire process of sermon preparation. From the outset, the preacher is confronted with the problem of how to communicate the original intent of the Biblical author to a modern audience. The sample sermon in appendix three provides a good example of

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[251] Bryan Chapell, *Christ Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 210

[252] Ibid.

how effective this model can be in communicating specific points of application, both attitudinal and behavioral. According to the survey 96% of the audience was able identify a specific point of application from this sermon, the highest percentage recorded by the survey. An examination of the sermon will show that this message contained both attitudinal applications and behavioral applications. A more detailed examination of the surveys from this specific sermon shows that 90% of the church was able to identify both of these types of application within the sermon. Therefore, one can conclude that this method is effective in communicating specific points of application, both attitudinal and behavioral, to the audience.

Only time and experience can determine whether this model could be effective in the long run, but at least in the short term it has shown some positive results. The results of the survey are certainly encouraging and are not easy to dismiss. Furthermore, the model is conducive to the elements that need to be present in a sermon to produce life-change. These were the results desired from the outset of the project, therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that this method was indeed effective.

Is this method useful to the average Pastor?

One of the goals of this project was to develop a socio-rhetorical model of preaching that was useful to the average pastor. The answer to this question is yet to be determined. In its current state, the field of socio-rhetorical analysis is probably inaccessible to most average Pastors. The research required to write this paper took over two years and countless number of hours. The books, papers, and research on this kind of analysis is broad and varied, requiring a high level of dedication to gain even a rudimentary understanding of it. Most Pastors will not have the time or the dedication to do this kind of reading and research.

Therefore, at least from one angle it seems unlikely this model will be useful to the average Pastor. On the other hand, however, the amount of material being written in this field is growing every year. More attention will be given towards applying this method to preaching as evidenced by the recent publication of *Preaching Matthew: Interpretation and Proclamation* in which the authors, Mike Graves and David May, apply a socio-rhetorical approach to preaching from the Gospel of Matthew.[253] As more is written about this method it will become more accessible to the average Pastor and its usefulness will grow. But even as it stands now the model can be useful to average Pastors who will give some time to it.

First, it can be useful simply as a hermeneutical tool. Frankly, this is probably the best use of this method. As a complement to the traditional historical-grammatical approach, the socio-rhetorical model can help the Pastor gain a better understanding of the text. As stated in chapter 1, the traditional method suffers from several weaknesses that might be remedied by socio-rhetorical analysis. The time and effort a preacher would need to spend in gaining an understanding of this type of analysis is well worth the effort. Several good resources can help the Pastor gain a working knowledge of these methods in a short time.[254] Perhaps the best way to use this method as a hermeneutical tool is to work through a book of the Bible using a socio-rhetorical commentary.[255] A preacher could work through such a

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[253] Mike Graves and David M. May, *Preaching Matthew: Interpretation and Proclamation* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2007).

[254] The following works are recommended: Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press, 1996) ; George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) ; David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000); Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[255] Ben Witherington as written a series of socio-rhetorical commentaries that would

commentary during the normal course of his normal preaching ministry. This is perhaps the quickest way to gain a rudimentary understanding and incorporating it into actual preaching.

Second, the method can be effective for the average Pastor as a homiletical guide. One does not need to have a thorough knowledge of socio-rhetorical analysis nor spend two years researching it in order to utilize this method in preaching. Once a Pastor begins to get comfortable with using socio-rhetorical commentaries in his sermon preparation and understands the basic terminology, he can begin using the information gleaned from the study in his sermons. At first, this does not necessarily require any major change to his method of preparation, only the addition of some commentaries from a socio-rhetorical perspective. However, if he wishes to gain more of the benefits offered by this model he can work through the steps detailed in the previous chapters of this project or consult the works of Graves and May.

What are the weaknesses of this method?

Three primary weaknesses in the socio-rhetorical model were discovered during this project. First, it has a tendency to consume too much of the preachers time. During the course of this project sermon preparation nearly doubled. For the last sermon in the project, preached on February 2, 2009 the sermon preparation time totaled 31 hours for just that single message. This is far too much time spent on a single message. If this were the norm this model would be useless to the average Pastor who usually needs to prepare more than one sermon per week and attend to all the other needs of the church. The unfamiliarity and novelty of a new model were likely culprits in causing most of this dramatic increase in

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be very helpful. See the bibliography for a full list.

sermon preparation time. In all probability, the longer this method would be used the less time it would take to prepare individual messages. Still there does exist a real possibility this model could become a major time thief in the pastors life. Often the rhetorical analysis will cause him to spend and inordinate amount of time looking for structures and features that will provide little assistance in understanding the text. Furthermore, the sociological issues can become vast and complex causing him to spend more time reading about them than actually thinking about what the point of the sermon is going to be. Therefore, in order to use this method a preacher will have to constantly focus on being disciplined in the use of his time.

Second, the model has a tendency to bog the sermon down with too much explanation. Once again, the sermon in appendix 4 serves as a vivid example. More time was spent explaining the social backgrounds in this text than in anything else. In this particular sermon, the model still proved to be effective but if this became the norm for sermons using this method it would quickly show diminishing value in capturing the audience's attention and communicating the point of the sermon. It would suffer from what some people call "information overload." Frankly, sermons with too much explanation and too little application or illustration become boring. The primary reason this the model shows such a dramatic increase in explanatory material is that the preacher is adding a completely new layer of information to his research. Most preachers realize that even under normal circumstances it is difficult to decide what items discovered in preparation need to be left out. This problem is only exacerbated when a new source of information is added. Unless he stays disciplined the preacher will tend to load the sermon with far too much information and it will quickly become a lecture rather than a life-changing message from God. To guard

against this the preacher must clearly define the purpose of the sermon and include only what explanation is needed to accomplish that purpose.

Third, the model has a tendency to stifle the preacher's creativity. The sample sermons included in this paper, like the rest of the sermons preached during the span of this project, suffer from a serious lack of creativity. From one angle, it is interesting to note that this lack of creativity did not result in a decline in effectiveness. In fact, these messages all showed a marked improvement over the baseline sermons. It is possible that the newness of the approach created spontaneous interest not only in the preacher but also in the audience thus accounting for this increased effectiveness. In other words, the sermons lacked creativity in the normal sense of the word but made up for it because of the newness of the method. It is unlikely that this method could sustain the level of effectiveness without finding some ways to involve more creativity.

There are two reasons why the model might stifle creativity. One would be that it tends to make the preachers study much more academic. Digging into ancient rhetorical manuals, history and social models will appeal to the more academically minded preachers who enjoy this type of research. Unfortunately, if he is not careful the preacher can begin to approach the sermon as if he is writing a seminary research paper rather than a message to be delivered to God's people. Those preachers who loved Biblical studies in seminary will be especially prone to this mistake. Therefore, the preacher must constantly remind himself of why he is studying. The purpose of the sermon is not just to convey information by to persuade the audience to trust God, repent of sins, and be obedient to the commands of Scripture.

Another reason why creativity may have been stifled with this method was the amount of time that it took to study the text. As mentioned above, the amount of time taken to prepare sermons using this method increased dramatically. A review of how the preparation time was used shows an inordinate amount of time was spent reading commentaries, background information, and articles about the various socio-rhetorical issues within the text. In other words, the preacher simply did not have time to think about how to communicate the text because most of the preparation time was taken in trying to understand the hermeneutic being employed. Every preacher must guard his time and make sure he is investing it in the right things. Socio-rhetorical may be very helpful, as both a hermeneutical and a homiletical tool but it can become an obsession. Therefore, a helpful suggestion would be for the preacher to establish a set amount of time for sermon preparation each week and divide that time equally between the hermeneutical and the homiletical task. The hermeneutical task includes all of the exegesis and interpretation required to understand what the text says and what it means. Socio-rhetorical analysis could be a very helpful part of this task. The homiletical task includes all of the steps necessary to communicate the sermon in an effective way, including finding creative ways to capture the audience's attention. The socio-rhetorical model can assist in this process as well, by helping the preacher to identify clearly the original intent of the author and showing points of contrast between the ancient and modern audiences. By dividing the preparation time equally between these two tasks the preacher can help himself to stay in balance.

What are the strengths of this method?

Three primary strengths stand out in this model of preaching. The first strength of the socio-rhetorical model is that it causes the preacher to spend more time with the text. As

mentioned in ch. 2, socio-rhetorical analysis emphasizes the unity between form and content. James Muilenberger, the father of modern rhetorical analysis, wrote:

> Rhetorical criticism looks on the biblical text as a work of art and therefore emphasizes the unity of form and content. Thus the interpreter cannot lay hold of the specific content of a text without paying close attention to the form into which the artist/author (redactor) has cast his message in that particular instance.[256]

One of the weaknesses mentioned in chapter 1 of the grammatico-historical method was that it often neglected this relationship. The socio-rhetorical model causes the preacher to spend more time examining how the text has been constructed and asking why the original author shaped the message in this manner. During the span of this project the author spent more time looking at the form of the text than at any other point in his ministry. This attention to the text yielded fruit in three ways. First, it helped to reveal how each part of the letter related to the whole thus giving more clarity to the purpose of the original author had in each section. Second, it allowed the Holy Spirit to get the message of the text deep into the life of the preacher. Third, it reveals insights into the meaning of the text the preacher may not have been able to see prior. This renewed attention to the actual text of the Scripture was one of the most refreshing parts of this project.

The second strength of the socio-rhetorical model is that it causes the preacher to think more about the purpose of the author. From beginning to end this model asks the question, "Why did the original author write this text?" At the macro-level of rhetorical analysis the preacher tries to discover what the purpose of the letter as a whole is. At the micro-level of rhetorical analysis, he tries to discover how each part relates to the overall purpose of the letter. During the sociological analysis, he tries to see how the author interacts with various sociological building blocks to accomplish his purposes. Regardless of what

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[256] James Muilenberger, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 1 (1969): 58.

phase of preparation the preacher is in, he is always reminded about the original intent of the author. This emphasis reflects the conviction that a text without a context is just a pretext for whatever the preacher wants to make it say. Sidney Greidanus notes that preachers are very prone to make this mistake because, "they had selected the text to fulfill a particular purpose in next Sunday's service. Hence the danger is very real that the purpose of preachers will overrule the purpose of the text and in effect silence the text."[257] By its constant emphasis on the original purpose of the author, the socio-rhetorical model attempts to allow the text to speak.

The third primary strength of the socio-rhetorical model is that it causes the preacher to consider the social aspects of the text. As noted in chapter 4, the social world in which the New Testament was written is very different from that of the modern world. Any approach to Biblical interpretation and preaching that does not consider this is likely to go astray from the authorial intent of the original author. Furthermore, Mark Powell's research, reported in chapter 4, shows a strong connection between the social location of the reader and his or her interpretation of the text.[258] Once again, preachers that do not recognize and compensate for this effect are likely to communicate their own social values rather than allowing the text to speak. The socio-rhetorical model, tries to deal with this issue in two ways. First, it forces t he preacher to think about the social world of the New Testament. The building blocks listed in chapter 4 are just an introduction into this subject but they are sufficient to show the importance of considering these kinds of issues. Second, the socio-rhetorical model forces

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[257] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 107

[258] Mark Allan Powell, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007).

the preacher to compare and contrast the social values of the original audience with those of his modern audience. This process helps him to sort out his own biases and those of his audience that might cause them to misinterpret or misapply the text. A good example, of this can be found in the sample sermon of appendix 4. This sermon showed the audience that slavery was not the primary concern Paul had in the writing this text. Prior to hearing this sermon, a group of ten members of the congregation were asked to read the letter and write down what they thought it was about. All ten members indicated that after their initial reading they believed Paul wanted Philemon to release Onesimus because he was opposed to slavery and wanted to see it abolished. After hearing the sermon, all ten indicated that they had changed their minds and recognized that Paul's primary dealt with the new relationship that existed between Philemon and Onesimus. These results indicate not only the power of social location to influence how people understand Scripture but also the potential for this model to compensate for these biases so that the text can speak.

What can be done to develop this method in the future?

The results of this project suggest that two important steps need to be taken in order to further develop this model. First, additional work will need to be done to test whether this model is both reproducible and effective in other contexts. If the goal of making this model accessible to the average preacher is to be reached, it must be shown that it can be easily taught and incorporated into ministry. One way to do this would be to design a two or three day seminar in which Pastors could be taught the basic concepts which comprise this paper. They could then return to their churches and use the socio-rhetorical model to preach a series of messages. The results could then be measured using the same survey as in this project and compared to determine the reproducibility and effectiveness of this model in other contexts.

Second, the model will need to be applied to other portions of the New Testament. As already mentioned above, Graves and May have recently published a book showing how they applied a socio-rhetorical model to preaching the Gospel of Matthew. This book is helpful because it shows how socio-rhetorical analysis can effect preaching but they give little assistance for understanding the terms of concepts they are applying. This paper concentrated on the Prison Epistles but other Pauline Epistles could also benefit from this approach. Galatians, for instance, contains many features of a sermon or speech and would likely would yield much fruit through the application of this model.[259] Two other books in the New Testament that could possibly benefit from the application of this method would be Hebrews and Revelation; Hebrews because it may be an actual sermon and Revelation because of its apocalyptic nature. Only through constant application, can this method be refined and made more effective in the future. Furthermore, there needs to be a system set up whereby preachers using this model could share their sermons and discuss ways they are refining the model to make it more useable. Perhaps a network could be established through the seminars mentioned above. As more data, applications, and refinements are made these could be published to share the model with a larger audience.

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[259] Witherington asserts that, "It is fair to say that Galatians is one of the most rhetorical of all Paul's communiqués included in the New Testament. It includes some epistolary elements in 1.1-5 and parts of 6.11-18, but for the most part it is pure speech material. There is no thanksgiving section, no greetings to particular persons, no health wish no mention of present or future travel plans, unlike what we find in most of Paul's other letters. Gal. 1.6-6.10 in the eyes and hands of any good rhetor would be seen as and could be made to be a very effective speech full of arguments and rhetorical devices." Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 26

Conclusion

At the outset of this project it was suggested that socio-rhetorical analysis could be benefit expository preaching. The results of the survey indicate that the socio-rhetorical model was effective in helping the audience to be able to connect specific background issues with the application of the text. Furthermore, the survey reveals a substantial increase in the audience's ability to connect the original intent of the author with the theme of the sermon. In addition, the final sermon from Philemon demonstrated the ability of this model to deal with the effect of social location upon an audiences understanding of the text. Overall, therefore this model can be regarded as a success and has several strengths that commend its use. However, several weaknesses have also been identified that will require the attention of anyone who wishes to utilize this model. In conclusion, this model has great potential that can only be unlocked by further research, application, and development.

APPENDIX 1

MACRO LEVEL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PHILIPPIANS

1. Establish the Rhetorical Setting

The Planting of the Church

Paul planted the church at Philippi during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-29). On this journey Paul took Silas with him due to the conflict with Barnabas concerning John Mark (Acts 16:36-41). During the early portion of this journey, he traveled throughout the areas of Syria and Cilcia, strengthening the churches. Initially, Paul wanted to travel into the province of Asia to preach but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit. He received a vision one night of a man from Macedonia saying to him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Acts 16:12 indicates that Philippi was the first place Paul preached in Macedonia due to the fact it was the foremost city in the region. The first convert in the city was a woman named Lydia. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira and a worshipper of God. After she and her entire household were baptized, she invited Paul to come and to stay with her. Her house perhaps became the meeting place for the church that would be started there.

Paul and Silas were arrested after casting a demon out of a slave girl. The owner of the slave girl accused Paul of teaching customs that were unlawful for Roman citizens. The multitude of people rose up against them and the magistrates had them beaten and thrown into jail. This led to one of the most famous episodes in Acts: the conversion of the Philippian jailer. In the morning, the Magistrates heard of what had happened and ordered Paul and Silas to leave the city. Paul, however, refused to depart secretly and asserted his Roman citizenship. The magistrates encountered a change of heart but still pleaded with them to leave the city. Paul agreed and after encouraging the church in Lydia's house, he departed for Thessalonica.

The church in Philippi largely made up of Gentiles. The city of Phillipi was named after Phillip of Macedon. It was strategically located along the Egnatian Highway between Rome and Asia and served as the starting point for Alexander the Great's attempt to conquer the world. Some scholars believe the word translated prayer in Acts 16:13 may indicate the presence of Jewish synagogue by the river, however, this is not conclusive. No evidence of Jewish synagogue has been found in the city and very few Jewish inscriptions were preserved among the ruins. Archeological evidence shows the city was heavily influenced by paganism with the discovery of eighty reliefs dedicated to the goddess Diana and other Greek and Thracian gods. The cities relationship with Rome is of the utmost importance in understanding the background of this letter. Polhill notes that, "Philippi became closely associated with Rome in 42 B.C., when it was the site of the last great battle of the republican war."[260] After their victory on the plains southwest of the city, Antony and Octavian (who later changed his name to Augustus Caesar) rewarded the city with the status of being a

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[260] John Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 161 Blank space needed between footnotes.

colony, renaming it *Colonia Victrix Philippensium*.[261]

Being a Roman colony meant a great deal of loyalty and devotion to the Emperor existed in the city of Philippi. The Roman practice was to relocate veterans and disbanded soldiers in their colonies, thus guaranteeing fidelity to the Emperor. Philippi enjoyed the distinction of experiencing two such resettlements. Gordon Fee writes:

> Our interest in the history of the city stems particularly from 42 BCE, in which year two major battles were fought nearby in the plain- between Cassius and Brutus (the assassins of Julius Caesar) and the victors, Octavian(later Emperor Augustus) and Mark Antony. Following these victories Octavian honored Philippi by "refounding" it as a Roman military colony, thus endowing its populace with Roman citizenship. Always astute politically, Octavian populated the town and its surrounding agricultural area with discharged veterans from the war. This both alleviated a population problem in Rome and ensured allegiance to the Empire (through its emperor) at this strategic spot along the major highway across Macedonia and northern Greece which connected Rome with Asia Minor and other points east. In an even more astute move Octavian did the same once again after he defeated Antony's army, thus creating loyalty from those who had once fought with him and more recently against him.[262]

Archaeological evidence shows that a shrine to the Emperor occupied a prominent place in the city of Philippi during Paul's day and that "Philippi was one of the few Greek cities in which the ranks of Roman citizens included *Augustales*, an order devoted to the worship of the emperor."[263] Furthermore, there is evidence from the New Testament that Paul came into conflict with the Imperial cult while in Philippi. Acts 16:16 says that Paul encountered a slave girl who had a "spirit of divination." Literally, the Greek text says she had a "spirit of *pythos*." F.F. Bruce argues that this was a reference to the Pythian prophetess at Delphi, who

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[261] Ibid

[262] Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Erdmanns, 1995), 25-26.

[263] Mikael Tellbe, "The Sociological Factors Behind Philippians 3:1-11 and the Conflict at Philippi," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 55, no. 01 (1994): 109.

was regarded to be the mouthpiece for the Apollo.[264] From the time of Augustus a close relationship between the god Apollo and the imperial cult existed. Crossan and Reed note that Augustus referred to himself as the son of Apollo.[265] All of this would help explain Acts 16:40-41:

> But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities, and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, 'These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.'"

Mikael Tellbe concludes that, "the conflict was primarily a conflict between the Christian gospel and Roman law and customs. Although the text does not explicitly tell us the exact reason why the Christian gospel was considered 'unlawful' in this case, the Christian faith— contrary to Judaism— was probably identified as lacking formal recognition in Roman society (a so-called *religio illicita).*"[266]

It has also been suggested that the suffering experienced by the Philippians when Paul writes to them is directly related to a conflict with the Imperial cult. Gordon Fee, for instance, writes:

> By the time of our letter, the primary titles for the emperor were *Kyrios* and *Soter* (Lord and Savior). Not only so , but the cult of the emperor, where the emperor was honored in a way approaching deification, had found its most fertile soil in the Eastern provinces. In a city like Philippi this would have meant that every public event (the assembly, public performances in the theater etc…) and much else within its boundaries would have taken place in the context of giving honor to the emperor, with the acknowledgement that (in this case) Nero was "lord and savior." Which is

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[264] Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 360-61.

[265] Crossan and Reed, 138-39.

[266] Tellbe, 107.

> precisely the place where believers in Christ could no longer join in as "citizens of Rome in Philippi." Their allegiance was to another *Kyrios*, Jesus Christ, before whom every knee would someday bow and every tongue confess, including the citizens of Philippi who are causing their suffering, as well as the emperor himself. The Philippian believers in Christ were thus "citizens" of a greater "dominion" and their allegiance was to another *Soter*, whose coming from heaven they awaited with eager expectation.[267]

Tellbe argues the distinctive terminology and theology of Philippians point to a "conflict with the church and the ideology of the surrounding Roman society."[268] First, "Philippians employs terminology and imagery that reflect Roman society to a greater degree than any other Pauline letter." For instance, Paul uses a word that appears nowhere else in the NT, *politeuomai*, to describe the conduct that he desires from the Philippians. Tellbe notes this word carries, "political connotations that relate to Philippi as Roman colony. Paul affirms that the Philippians are not only citizens but resident aliens in the cities [269]of the world; they also belong to a heavenly commonwealth and they are to reflect it." Second, "the distinctive *kurios* Christology in the letter suggests that the conflict at Philippi was focused on a clash between the Christian gospel and Roman ideology."[270] It is crucial to understand that in Philippians 2:9-11, Paul does not depict Jesus as one of many lords, but rather has the one supreme Lord, to which all, even the emperor himself, will one day bow down. Third, "the prominence of the theme of suffering and martyrdom in the letter demonstrates that the

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[267] Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 31.

[268] Tellbe, 110.

[269] Tellbe, 110

[270] Ibid, 111.

church suffered from its conflict."[271] Tellbe argues that since there seems to be only a small Jewish population in Philippi and with virtually no power the only logical conclusion is that this suffering and possible martyrdom is the result of a "severe class between the pagan society and the church."[272] This helps to set the stage for Paul's warning in 3:1-11 concerning Judaizers.

One problem that an interpreter faces in Phil 3:1-11 is to explain what the motivation would have been for Gentile men in a city like Philippi to be circumcised. Tellbe suggests that the most logical explanation in light of the background is that they simply desire to avoid persecution by gaining the legal protection offered to Judaism. He writes, "the Judaizers' teaching may thus have been appealing not only as a means of obtaining social identity but also as a means of achieving social protection."[273] Jews in Paul's day enjoyed the legal protection of the Roman government whereas Christians did not. In a setting like Philippi where the situation was tense and the possibility for persecution high, Christians would have been tempted to seek protection by identifying themselves as Jews. The chief way of doing that would have beeen to be circumcised. Tellbe writes:

> The Philippian church would have been held suspect by the local community for its withdrawal from the common cults, and under such circumstances it must have been tempting for the Gentile converts to seek identification with the local Jewish community. If my suggestion that the Philippian church had clashed with the local Roman authorities is right, it would have been all the more appealing for the church to refer to themselves as a continuation of a community that in the past had been granted special status by Rome.[274]

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[271] Telbe, 114

[272] Ibid, 115

[273] Ibid, 116

[274] Ibid, 118

The Date and Provenance of the Letter

The fact that Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter is undisputed (see Phil 1:7, 13, 17). The location and circumstances of his imprisonment, however, are highly disputed.[275] Traditionally it has been held that Paul wrote this letter while he was imprisoned in Rome. There are two main reasons for this. First, the reference to the *praitorio* in 1:13 is, "naturally understood to to refer to the praetorian guard, which was centered in Rome."[276] The use of this word seems to rule out Ephesus and Caesarea as possible candidates for where this letter was written. There was no *praetorium* in Ephesus and while the word could be used in reference to the governor's palace in Caesarea it would difficult to understand Paul's statement that it had become evident to the "whole praetorium" that his imprisonment was for Christ. Gordon Fee observes states that: " Paul's sentence implies that this 'became evident' to a large number of people over a period of time and through his direct involvement, whereas in Caesarea the number of people involved would be relatively small; and in any case, his arrival on horseback under the protective care of seventy cavalry, followed by a very quick hearing, would have been a major 'event' in the *prateorium* in Caesarea and scarcely what Paul is referring to in 1:13."[277]

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[275] For more information on alternative theories see *An Introduction to the New Testament* edited by D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 319; Polhill, *Paul and His Letters, 164-166;* Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, 34-37; Moises Silva, *Philippians*: Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 5-7

[276] *An Introduction to the New Testament* edited by D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 319

[277] Fee, 36

Second the circumstances of Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30-31) fit well with those described within the epistle (see Phil 1:12-18; 2:19-30; 4:22). Third, the fact that Paul saw death as a possible outcome of this imprisonment (1:20) would suggest Rome because if anywhere else he would have the option to appeal to Caesar.[278] Fourth, Silva notes that an, "important factor supporting the traditional view is precisely the fact that it is the only tradition that has survived. Whereas every other argument consists of inferences drawn from internal evidences, early tradition provides external attestation— presumably less ambiguous and therefore more objective."[279] Silva goes on to assert that the earliest record of the traditional view can be traced back to the Marcionite Prologue of the second century.[280] Given these reasons, it seems reasonable to accept the traditional view that Paul wrote this letter while he was imprisoned in Rome.

2. Determine the Branch of Rhetoric

Everything within this letter bears evidence that this is a piece of deliberative rhetoric intended to persuade the audience towards some future action. In 1:27-30, for instance, Paul writes:

> Only conduct yourselves in a manner wroth of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

This is clearly a call for the Philippians to take future action. In the very next passage (2:1-

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[278] Carson, Moo and Morris, 319

[279] Silva, 5

[280] Ibid.

11) Paul continues to demonstrate the deliberative nature of this letter by calling for the Philippians to be "like minded" and using the example of Jesus to demonstrate what this kind of humility looks like. This deliberative tone is maintained throughout the rest of the letter.

3. Develop a Rhetorical Outline

Epistolary Prescript (1:1-2)

*Exordium/*Introduction (1:3-11) Praising God for Partners in the Gospel

Narratio/ Statement of Facts (1:12-26) Suffering for the sake of the gospel

Propositio/ Proposition (1:27-30) Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel

Probatio/Proofs (2:1-3:21)

Exhibit the Mind of Christ (2:1-11)

Be blameless and harmless (2:12-18)

Follow the example of other faithful partners in the gospel (2:19-30)

Avoid false teaching (3:1-16)

Live out your citizenship (3:17-21
Protect the unity of the church (4:1-7)

Meditate on these things (4:8-9)

Peroratio/ Conclusion (4:10-20) The continuing partnership

Epistolary Postscript (4:21-23)

4. Formulate Initial Theme

The above outline would suggest that the primary theme of this letter is "how to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel." Paul begins the letter thanking God for the "fellowship" or partnership that he has enjoyed with the Philippians in the gospel. It would appear that his primary purpose in writing this letter is to see this partnership continue

in spite of the recent outbreak of persecution and heresy against the church. All of the rhetorical features within the book seem to point towards this central theme.[281] The *propositio* of the letter specifically states, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." This theme is developed through specific exhortations in the *probatio* (2:1-3:21). This basic theme reflect that nature of Paul's partnership in the gospel with the Philippians. Therefore, the theme of the sermon series could be "Partners in the Gospel" and each sermon could show a different aspect of how partners in the gospel conduct their lives. A nine week outline for this series could be as follows:

1. Partners in the Gospel: Praise God and Pray for Each Other (1:1-11)
2. Partners in the Gospel: Rejoice in the Advance of the Gospel (1:12-21)
3. Partners in the Gospel: Conduct Themselves in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30)
4. Partners in the Gospel: Reflect the Mind of Christ (2:1-11)
5. Partners in the Gospel: Work Out Their Salvation with Fear and Trembling (2:12-18)
6. Partners in the Gospel: Follow the Model of Faithful Servants (2:19-30)
7. Partners in the Gospel: Defend the True Gospel (3:1-21)
8. Partners in the Gospel: Protect the Unity of the Church (4:1-9)
9. Partners in the Gospel: Give Generously to the Work of the Gospel (4:10-20)

[281] Fee makes a slightly different conclusion asserting that the main theme of the letter is found in 1:25, "your progress in the faith. – (p.39)

APPENDIX 2
SERMON FROM COLOSSIANS 1:1-8

Faithful in Christ

The Christians in the city of Colossae were very much like us today. We really don't know a great deal about how this church got started but in v.7 Paul says that a man named Epaphras was involved in planting the church. Very likely this was one of the churches that was started during the three years that Paul based his missionary outreach in the city of Ephesus. From everything, we can tell be Paul's introduction, this church had a good start:

1.) He refers to them as saints and faithful brethren in v.2
2.) In v.3-4 he routinely thanked God for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and their love for all of the saints.

Paul had heard good reports about the church's faith but he also knew there were some dangerous times ahead that could threaten its future. Therefore, he writes this letter to encourage them to continue being faithful in Christ.

In this introductory passage to the letter, Paul emphasizes the main theme of this letter by repeating the word "faithful or faith" at the beginning, middle, and end of the passage.

- In v.2 he refers to the Colossians as "saints and faithful" brethren"- this is similar to Eph 1.1 where he refers to the Ephesians as, "saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus."
- In the very middle of this passage Paul once again draws attention to the word "faith" in v.4
- In v.7 Paul refers to Epaphras as a "faithful minister"

This threefold repetition not only marks the where the introduction to this letter begins and ends but it also tells us what the main theme is going to be about- "Faithfulness in Christ"

Paul knows there is grave danger on the horizon. A dangerous and deadly heresy threatens the future vitality of the church and Paul is being proactive. He wants to prepare the church and equip them to "continue in the faith" as he says in ch. 1:23.

In this passage, we find four sources of encouragement to remain faithful in Christ.

1. **We can stay faithful in Christ by recounting past faithfulness (v.2-3)**
   - **A.** Paul reminds the Colossians of their past faithfulness in two ways here:
     - **1.** He refers to them in v.2 as "saints and faithful brethren in Christ"
     - **2.** He says that he has prayed for them ever since he heard of their faith.
   - **B.** The word "faith" in v.4 does not refer to their initial "faith" in Jesus,
     - **1.**That would add nothing to the passage
     - **2.**Paul has already established the fact that they are Christians by referring to them as saints and brothers in v.2
     - **3.**The word here is better taken as a reference to their fidelity to Christ, in other words their faithfulness.
   - **C.** Recounting past "faithfulness" can be a tremendous encouragement to help you persevere in the present.
     - **1.** Paul during a particularly difficult time in his ministry as he dealt with the church in Corinth recounts his past faithfulness as an encouragement in the present situation.
     - **2.**Sometimes I like to go back and read the biographies of some of the great men of the faith- Spurgeon and the downgrade controversy, Luther at the Diet of Worms, Adrian Rogers and others.
     - **3.**Ultimately, however, when we recount past faithfulness it is not our faithfulness that we celebrate but God's.
       - **a)** It is God who has worked in our past and kept us and delivered us.
       - **b)** I remember how God has come along side of me in some of my deepest, darkest, most desperate situations and He loved me, and sustained me, and carried me through the trial.
       - **c)** Some of you here this morning know what I mean.
         - **i.** Do you remember when you lost that loved one….
         - **ii.** Do you remember when you didn't know how you were going to make ends meet…
         - **iii.** Do you remember when you thought you couldn't go another day…
     - **4.**God is faithful! When we recount all of the ways that He has been faithful to us, it moves us to remain faithful in Christ.
2. **We can stay faithful in Christ by remembering the hope that we have. (v.3-5)**
   - **A.** Notice in v.5 the word "because" – the faith and love mentioned in v.4 are caused by the hope we receive in the gospel.
   - **B. Hope is a present reality**
     - **1.** In Paul's mind the hopes offered to us in Christ is the source of assurance that produces spiritual fruit.

2. The hope that we have is that this world is not all that there is, there is more to come, there is a real heaven where we will be rewarded for our faithfulness in Christ.
   a) The hope of heaven, the hope of living in for eternity in the presence of God,
   b) the hope that all of the troubles of this life will be over
   c) motivates us and encourages us to continue to be faithful in Christ.

3.The hope of heaven does even more than that, it helps to give purpose to all of the struggles and challenges of life.
   a) Hebrews 11:9-10 ***"By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and make is God."***

4.Hope motivates us and moves us to stay with the task even though it is hard or difficult.

Admr. James Stockdale was shot down over North Vietnam on September 9th, 1965 and was held prisoner by the Vietnamese for seven years. He was the highest ranking naval officer held as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Stockdale, who's heroic defiance of his captors is legendary, endured unspeakable torture, solitary confinement and other abuses at the hand of his guards. In his biography written by James Collins, Stockdale was asked how he coped with this unimaginable ordeal for seven years.

Stockdale replied, "I never lost faith in the end of the story, I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trace."

When asked about those who did not make it out, he said, "Oh, that's east, the optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, 'We're going to be out by Christmas.' And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart."

Collins coined this philosophy the Stockdale paradox which simply says, "**You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end- which you can never afford to lose- with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."**

Christian hope is the assurance that we will prevail in the end but it never removes the fact that we must confront the brutal facts of our current reality.

3. We can stay faithful in Christ by reflecting on the power of the gospel. (v.6)

A. Paul wants the Colossians to know that the power of the gospel has been unleashed on the world and that it is bearing fruit everywhere it goes.

1.He wants them to know that they don't have to look anywhere else

2. The gospel is powerful and is completely sufficient not only for our salvation but for our life of godliness.

3.The heretics that Paul knew were out there would try to come and draw the Colossians away from their trust in the gospel.

4.He wants to make sure that they reflect in the power of the gospel and stay faithful in Christ

B. There are all kinds of things in the world and church today that try to draw our trust away from the gospel.

1. Legalism, mysticism, deeper-life theories, psychologized Christianity, all have one thing in common – they undermine the sufficiency of the gospel

2. Romans 1:16 " For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

3. The gospel is the power of God- we don't need to go looking for some better philosophy of life or something we need to add on to the gospel in order to grow.

C. The best way to see the power of the gospel is to reflect on the profound change that it has made in your life.

1. What was your life like before you were saved?

2. What is it like now?

3.If God can make that profound of a change in your life doesn't it demand that you remain faithful

4. We can stay faithful in Christ by resembling our spiritual mentors. (v.7-8)

A. Paul reminds them of Epaphras the "faithful minister of Christ on your behalf."

1. In Philemon 23 Paul calls Epaphras, "my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus"

2.By calling for the Colossians to think about their spiritual leader/mentor Epaphras- Paul is asking them to think about his faithfulness to the gospel as an example for how they should act and live.

B. Everyone needs a Spiritual mentor to look up to- mine was John Hayes.

1. John was the Pastor that lead my sister and brother-in law to Christ who in turn lead my dad to Christ.

a) He was the first person I ever heard the gospel from.

b) He was later the chairman of my ordination council

c) He planted the church that I ended up Pastoring for ten years.

d) Over the fifty years of his ministry he planted 11 churches. He never made more than $15,000 in a year, lived in a small two bedroom house, drove the same car for 20 years.

2.Whenever I think of the years of faithful, diligent service that John put in it moves me to stay with the stuff.

Are you being faithful to Jesus? Look back at your life, has there ever been a time when you were walking closer to Jesus than you are right now? If so, then you have backslidden. You

have started down a slippery slope. This morning I want to urge you to take the points of this message and reflect upon them. Go home and work back through this message with your notes and ask God to speak to your heart. Recommit yourself to finishing the race strong. Examine your life to see what idols and deceptions have taken your heart captive and turn in faith to Jesus.

APPENDIX 3

SERMON FROM EPHESIANS 1.1-14

Introduction:

I want you to get your listening guide out and take a little test with me. I want you to think about all of the blessings that God has poured out upon your life and then write down the top three. Right there on the top of your listening guide write down the three greatest blessings that God has poured out upon your life. Take just a minute to write them down. I don't want you to think about them very long, just the first three blessings that come to your mind. Then turn with me to Ephesians 1.1-14.

In this opening passage of Ephesians, Paul does something unusual. Instead of opening his letter with the usual salutation followed by a thanksgiving and then a prayer, Paul here launches into a torrent of praise. His goal is to move the readers of this epistle to a deeper level of worship that will encourage them to continue to grow in their walk with Jesus.

As we read this incredible passage of Scripture, my prayer is that the Holy Spirit will work in your heart and cause this passage to grab your spirit and move you to a deeper level of worship as we reflect on the spiritual blessings that are yours in Christ. My desire is that when you walk out of here tonight that your soul be ablaze in worship and adoration of God for the spiritual blessings that He has given us in Christ.

[READ TEXT]

The English translations break this passage down into several sentences but actually in the original Greek, v.3-14 form one incredibly long sentence consisting of 202 words. The structure and form of this sentence is very complex but two things are clear:

1.) Paul uses an OT form of praising God combined with distinctively Christian content in order to grab the attention of his readers.

Psalm 28:6 "Blessed be the Lord, because He has heard the voice of my supplications"
Psalm 31:21 "Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!"
Psalm 68:19 "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our Salvation!"

Even Paul's gentile readers would have recognized this form of speech because it was in the form of a eulogy. We all know what a eulogy is— that's where people talk nice about you at your funeral. That is not all that eulogies were used for in Paul's day, however. Anytime someone wanted to praise a notable figure or someone important or someone who had done a great deed or benefited them a great deal, they would use the form of a eulogy.

So, Paul uses familiar forms of praise that his readers would immediately relate to.

2.) The basic structure of this passage breaks into three parts.
   a. In v. 3-6, Paul focuses on the blessings given to us by God the Father.
   b. In v.7-12, he focuses on the blessings given to us by God the Son.
   c. In v. 13-14, he focuses on the blessings given to us by God the Holy Spirit.

Reflecting on these three areas of Spiritual blessing has the potential to move you into a deeper level of worship and praise. Like most people, Paul's readers probably equated the word blessing with material things. In fact, most of the blessings of the OT are directly linked land, crops, safety, material goods, and offspring. But Paul wants the Ephesians to go deeper than that. All of the material goods in this world can be gone in a heartbeat- the bank can foreclose, the stock market can crash, we get sick, we lose our job. All of the material blessings are temporary but the Spiritual blessings that God has given us our eternal. So we need to focus our praise on the spiritual blessings that God has given us in Christ.

1. **The Blessings Given to Us by God the Father- Election and Adoption (v.3-6)**
   - **A.** Election
     - **1.** The time of our election- before the foundation of the world
     - **2.**The purpose of election
       - **a.** Holy- to be set apart
         - **i.** A Holy temple is uniquely set apart for worship
         - **ii.** A Holy nation is a nation uniquely set apart from the other nations.
         - **iii.** A Holy God is set apart from all the other gods
         - **iv.** A Holy people are to different from other people

v. We are chosen to be God's unique possession- strengthened by the middle tense of the verb" chosen"- God took a unique interest in us.

b. Blameless- without blemish

i. OT sacrifices were to be blameless

ii. Hbws 9:14 and 1 Peter 1:19 – Christ was without blemish

iii. The purpose of Christ's death was to make us blameless-

iv. **Col 1:21-22** ***"And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh though death, to present you holy and blameless in His sight-"***

B. Adoption

1. Time- again this blessing begins in the annals of eternity past

2.Background-

a. The key to this phrase is that we are **adopted as Sons**

b. As Americans we will tend to read this and either ignore this word or be offended by Paul's chauvinism.

c. But being adopted as Sons is the key.

i. In Paul's day only men were adopted and the adoption involved receiving all of the rights, privileges and legal status of a natural born child.

ii. Tim Keller illustration

d. Adoption means that

i. We are loved like Christ is loved.

ii. We are honored like He is honored.

iii. We have all the same rights, privileges and status that He has because we have been adopted into God's family.

C. Now take a minute and look back at your list,

1. Was election as God's Son or Daughter on your list.

2.If it wasn't, shouldn't it be?

3. Does it not move your soul to praise as you think about the fact that before He even created the world, God decided to save you and to give you hope?

4.Does it not move you to worship as you think about the fact that even though you were a broken, ruined sinner, bound for hell, and living for the devil, God decided to adopt you and give you all of the privileges of being His dear child.

5. In the space above the three blessings that you listed why don't you write down**- God has elected me to salvation and adopted me as His child.**

D. So Paul gives to us the blessings of the Father- but now he turns his attention to the blessings that we receive from the Son

2. The Blessings Given to Us by God the Son- Redemption and Inheritance (v.7-12)

A. The word redemption means to be "set free or released from captivity." (v.7)

1.Meaning of the word

a. It was sometimes used in reference to prisoners of war.

b. Most often in Paul's day it was used in reference to slaves being set free by the payment of a ransom.

2. Paul defines and focuses this word with the next phrase- "the forgiveness of sins."

a. Forgiveness refers to being released from an obligation.

i. A debt for instance

ii. A punishment

b. The initial act in our redemption is the forgiveness of our sons.

3.The means of our forgiveness is His blood (v7)

a. Hebrews 9:22 ***"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is not remission."***

b. The writer goes on to explain that this is the reason that Jesus had to die and why we can now have access to God.

c. Hebrews 10:19-22 ***"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true hear in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled from an evile consicnece and our bodies washed with pure water."***

4.The purpose of our redemption- v.10

a. That all things be summed up or brought together under Christ

b. Things that are in heaven and on earth

i. Things in heaven refers to the spiritual powers and principalities

ii. Things on earth are people- in Paul day the greatest divide was between Jew and Gentile.

iii. Racial divisions in America do not begin to compare with the division and animosity between Jews and Gentiles in the first century.

iv. But God's plan is to bring them all together in one new man.

v. The bringing of Jews and Gentiles together in one body will be a major focus throughout the next two chapters of this book.

B. Inheritance

1. The sense of this word in the original language is not so much that we have obtained the inheritance but rather that we are Christ's inheritance

2.In other words, it could be translated, "we have been made an inheritance"

3. Just as in the OT Israel was considered God's own unique possession so in the NT believers are regarded as Christ's unique possession.

C. Stop and think about that for just a minute:

1. Before God ever created the world, He decided to save you and to adopt you as His child.

2.Jesus came and shed His blood in order to redeem you and to make you His own unique and precious possession.

3.How does that make you feel?

4. I'm going to tell you that if you will let that truth grasp your heart it will change you forever.

D. Now look back at your list- does it include the blessings of redemption and inheritance that you have been given through Jesus.

1. Shouldn't it be there?

2.Take a moment to write on your list- **Jesus has purchased my redemption and made me His own possession.**

3. The Blessings Given to Us by God the Spirit- Sealing and the Guarantee of Final Redemption (v.13-14)

A. Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of promise

1. Old Testament promises that God would send the Holy Spirit

a. Joel 2:28 ***"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."***

2.Jesus promised that after He ascended back to heaven that He would send the Holy Spirit

a. John 15:7 ***"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."***

B. Sealed

1. This word refers to a mark of ownership

a. A brand on cattle

b. A tattoo on a slave

c. A seal on a legal document

2.The sealing of the Holy Spirit is the mark of God's ownership of your life.

a. Paul says in 2 Cor 1:21-22 "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who also put His seal on us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."

C. Guarantee of our final redemption

1. The word "pledge" here refers to a down payment or earnest money

2. Real Estate purchase illustration

3.God would have to cease being God in order for a true believer to lose their salvation.

4.Philippians 1:6 "And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

D. Stop and think about that for a moment.

1. What does it mean to you that God has marked you as His own possession by sealing with you with the Holy Spirit?

a. How does that make you feel?

b. Was it on your list? Did you include that as one of the blessings on your list? Why not?

2. We let so many things that are temporal draw our attention away from those things that are eternal.

3. Take a moment and write on your list**- Sealed by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed that God will one day complete the work that He began.**

I want everyone to bow your heads and close your eyes. Take a few minutes to pray a prayer of praise to God, thanking Him for all of the Spiritual blessings He has poured out on your life. Some of you may want to come to the altar, others may want to kneel there in the pew, others may want to pray out loud, however you want to express your gratitude to God, take time to praise Him right now.

Now take a moment to ask God to work in your life during this series of messages and to help you to live for the Praise of His Glory. Ask Him to rekindle a deep desire in your life to give Him the praise that is due His name. Ask Him to renew and revitalize your spiritual life.

If you are here tonight and you have never repented of your sin and trusted Jesus for your salvation. We want to talk with you about the good news of Jesus Christ. See me or Cliff after services and we will share with you how you can receive these blessings that we have talked about tonight.

APPENDIX 4

SERMON FROM PHILEMON

One of the most important issues facing the church today is the problem of relationships. Recently, I was sitting with one of my mentors in the ministry and he said to me, "Joe, most of what is wrong with the church today could be fixed if we just learned to treat each other the way Jesus would."

As I reflected on that statement I have realized the truth of what he is saying. A large portion of the New Testament is focused on the issue of relationships. Just think about Paul's letters for a moment. A great deal of what Paul had to write about dealt with relationship. The book of Romans, for instance, is at least in part about the relationship between the Jewish and the Gentile believers in the church at Rome. Both of the letters to the Corinthians dealt with relationship problems within the church. Colossians and Ephesians both contain lengthy sections about the relationship between husbands and wives, master and slaves, and parents and children. Relationships are a major focus of Paul's writing- at least part of his goal is to show in his letters how the cross effects human relationships.

This is nowhere more central than in his letter to Philemon. But in order to understand this important letter, we need to first understand some of the back story.

Sometime during the middle of the first century, the Apostle Paul began a three year long ministry in the city of Ephesus. This period, in many ways, represents the height of his missionary career. Rather than planting new churches himself, Paul establishes what might be regarded as the first seminary in the school of Tyrannus. (Acts 19:9) For the next two years, Paul trained and equipped men to take the gospel to places where it had never been preached before. It is likely that this is where Paul first came into contact with a man named Philemon. Whether directly or not, the great Apostle was instrumental in leading this wealthy man and his family to Christ.

After his conversion Philemon became the pillar of the new church in the city of Colossae. A wealthy man and influential man, Philemon would have occupied the status of being a patron for the local church. His house was large enough to provide the church with a meeting place and his family members occupied positions of leadership within the congregation. Some of the congregation in Colossae were made up of the household slaves owned by Philemon and his family.

This is where the story takes a twist. Recently, Paul has been imprisoned in Rome and somehow has met a run-away slave named Onesimus. As it turns out, Onesimus is one of Philemon's slaves who has stolen some of his property and fled to the city of Rome. After meeting Paul and becoming a Christian, Onesimus becomes one of Paul's most valued and trusted assistants. Eventually, Onesimus comes clean about his past and tells Paul that he is in fact, a runaway slave. Now Paul is in a dilemma. Philemon, according to the legal system of the day, has every right to demand the return of his slave and more than that, has every right to do with him whatever he wishes, even going as far as to have him put to death. As the Apostle thinks about this problem through the lens of the gospel, he sees in it a tremendous opportunity to apply the gospel. Therefore, he writes this letter that we have in our Bibles today.

Before going any farther it is important to understand that this letter represents a major risk that Paul is willing to take for the sake of the gospel.

- He is risking offending a very valuable patron. The patron/client relationship was the backbone of the economic system in Paul's day. Paul needed wealthy patrons such as Philemon to support his ministry and to house the fledgling churches that he helped plant. To lose the support of someone like Philemon would have been a serious blow to Paul's ministry.
    - Paul is asking Philemon to take an unprecedented posture towards Onesimus.
    - Philemon could lose face with his slaves. Forgiveness was not highly valued in the first century and by showing such kindness Philemon risked being viewed as weak by his other slaves, possibly prompting them to rebel.
    - He could also risk losing face with his peers. Other slave owners would frown upon Philemon's decision and see him as being too weak to deal properly with a runaway.
- Not only could Paul lose Philemon's support but he could also end up losing a church that he was obviously concerned about. If Philemon refuses Paul's request it could send shockwaves through the church.
    - Paul would lose face
    - He was already in prison, to be spurned by someone like Philemon could have been the breaking point in the relationship between not only Paul and the Colossians but all of the other churches in the Lycus river valley as well.

So, why would Paul have taken such an enormous risk? Obviously, the issue at stake must have been very important. So, what was it? What was so pressing that would make Paul take such a risky step? I submit to you that what drove Paul to write this letter was his desire to show how the gospel is applied to relationships.

- The tendency is for most Americans to gravitate towards this being the abolition of slavery.
- Our own nation's shameful past with regard to slavery and subsequent struggle with racism has made us prone to read our own sensitivities back into the text.
- However, there was a great difference between slavery in Paul's day and what we normally think of as Americans.
    - Race had almost nothing to do with slavery in the first century.
    - In fact, nearly half of the residents in the Roman Empire were considered to be slaves.
    - Often people who we would consider to be professionals such as doctors and lawyers were slaves as well as most artists and craftsmen.
    - While it may be hard to imagine, almost no one in the first century was calling for the abolition of slavery. It was considered to be a part of life and calls for its abolition did come for many years later.
- A study of Paul's writing will show that he did not call for abolition.
    - **See Colossians 3:33-4:1-** notice that Paul does not call for abolition but rather sees it as a part of life. He shows how Christians are to act as slaves or Masters but does not call for the end.
    - This letter is particularly important because it is written to the very same church the meets in Philemon's house.
    - Obviously, we are not saying that slavery is okay but rather, in order to understand Paul's message in Philemon it is necessary to recognize our own dispositions.

For Paul there was an issue far more important than slavery at stake in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. Paul saw in this relationship an opportunity to demonstrate how the gospel transforms human relationships.

1. **Transformed relationship result produce humble service (v.4-7)**
    - **A.** Love and faith are the chief characteristics of the Christian life
    - **B.** Joy, comfort and refreshing come about through humble service.
        - **i. There is a special emphasis on refreshing (v.7 and 20)**
        - **ii.** Paul says that in the past Philemon had "refreshed" the saints in the church
        - **iii.** Paul concludes by asking Philemon to "refresh my heart in the Lord."
    - **C.** There is something refreshing about a transformed life:

i. We all know the Debbie Downers
   a. Always negative
   b. Always complaining
   c. Never satisfied
ii. But when Jesus takes residence a persons whole life is changed including his or her attitude.
   a. Positive
   b. Encouraging
   c. Content
   d. A breath of fresh air.
iii. By simply surrendering to Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to bear fruit in our lives we become refreshing.
   a. Ask yourself this question- How am I refreshing the body of Christ?
   b. If you can't answer that question you need to go to Jesus in prayer and find out what's the matter.

2. Transformed relationship break down barriers

A. Two primary barriers represented in this text- the forgiveness barrier and the social barrier.

B. The forgiveness barrier
   i. Paul is asking Philemon to forgive Onesimus
   ii. Forgiveness was not something highly valued in the ancient world:
      a. An society in which honor was highly valued and looked at forgiveness as losing face.
      b. This situation makes forgiveness even more precarious:
         1) Other slave owners who knew Philemon are not going to be happy
         2) The news of his kindness might spread and motivate other slaves to runaway.
   iii. Paul reminds him that this is what is "fitting"
      a. In other words, the society at large may not take this position but this is what is "fitting, appropriate, or correct" for a Christian to do.
      b. It's not hard to see that Paul is applying the gospel to this situation.

C. The social barrier
   i. Philemon is of the patron class- to behave in the manner that Paul describes will certainly bring shame upon him.
      a. The societal expectation is for Philemon to make an example of Onesimus
      b. After all, Onesimus dared to runaway after Philemon had been so kind to him.
   ii. Paul, however see the situation far differently.
      a. Onesimus is now a brother in Christ(v.17)
      b. Paul is simply applying what he had written earlier:
         1) **Galatians 3:27-29**

2) The gospel breaks down every social barrier because in Christ we are united as brothers and sisters.
3) **For Paul it was unthinkable that Philemon should reject Onesimus because they were now brothers in Christ.**
4) Their relationship had been fundamentally changed by the cross.
5) **No longer master slaver but brothers.**

D. If we viewed people through the cross it would change the way we think of them:
- **i.** No longer any reason not to forgive (more on that in minute)
- **ii.** No longer any need for social and racial barriers.

3. Transformed relationships model the gospel.

A. The gospel is modeled here:
- **i.** Onesimus stands in need of forgiveness
- **ii.** Philemon stands in the position of being able to forgive.
- **iii.** Paul intercedes and is even willing to pay the price in order to see these two men reconciled.

B. Our relationship should reflect the gospel:
- **i.** Standing ready to forgive
- **ii.** Standing ready to be the agent of reconciliation
- **iii.** Standing ready to show people Jesus through the humble service we perform on their behalf.

Jesus transforms every area of your life, including your relationships. If you have a relationship that is broken and needs transformation I want to invite you to come to the altar right now and to pray that God will transform it through His grace and mercy. I want you to pray that God will help you to humbly serve other people, to break down every barrier that divides you, and finally to help your relationships become a model for the gospel.

APPENDIX 5

SERMON SURVEY FORM

Date: ____/___/____

Title of Sermon:_____ Text: _____

1.) What was the main theme of this sermon? _____

_____

How well was this theme stated? 1 2 3 4 5
Not clear at all Very Clear

2.) What was the original author of the Biblical text attempting to accomplish? _____

_____

_____

How clearly was this intent stated in the message: 1 2 3 4 5
Not clear at all Very Clear

3.) What backgrounds from the text were mentioned in the message?

_____

_____

How clearly were these issues stated in the message: 1 2 3 4 5
Not clearly at all Very clear

4.) Were the main points of the message clearly connected to the Biblical text?

1 2 3 4 5
Not Connected Clearly Connected

5.) What did the Pastor want you to do as a result of hearing this message?

_____

_____

APPENDIX 6

Biblical Backgrounds Survey

1.) Do you enjoy when the Pastor uses Biblical backgrounds in his sermons?

Not at all Sometimes Usually All of the time

2.) Do you find Biblical backgrounds in the sermons to be:

Not helpful at all Somewhat helpful Helpful Very Helpful

3.) Do you find Biblical backgrounds in the sermons to be:

Boring Somewhat Boring Interesting Very Interesting

4.) Do Biblical backgrounds in the sermon help you to understand the Bible better?

Never Occasionally Most of the time All of the time

5.) Do Biblical backgrounds help you to see how the Bible relates to the modern day?

Never Occasionally Most of the time All of the time

6.) Would you encourage the Pastor to continue to include Biblical backgrounds in the sermons?

Absolutely not Rarely Occasionally Most of the time

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