

The Benefits and Blessings of Preaching from the Old Testament to a New Testament Congregation

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Tourists returning from the great game preserves of Africa pride themselves in having seen and photographed one or more of the “big five” wild animals. Some animals in this category are more difficult to spot than others, but all five are familiar to all who visit Africa’s national game preserves. In fact, the animals in this category are so familiar, that some tourists return disappointed because, although they saw a great amount of wildlife and fauna on the preserve, they did not see one of the “big five.” Many Christians consider the Old Testament in a similar manner. They are familiar with the “big five” stories of the Old Testament, but, for the most part, pass over all the rest of the rich material God placed there for the benefit of His children. Having contented themselves with the stories of “Adam and Eve,” “Noah and the Ark,” “Moses and the Ten Commandments,” “David and Goliath,” and “Sodom and Gomorrah,” most Christians are content to limit the rest of their knowledge of Scripture to New Testament concepts. To continue our illustration, many Christians know the “Old Testament game preserve” is full of wonderful and exotic wildlife, but its sheer size and unfamiliar terrain make it an intimidating place to travel without a guide. And so, because there are precious few “Old Testament guides,” most believers content themselves with seeing “slides” that occasionally come their way in the form of an occasional message preached from an Old Testament text. Consequently, they miss out on a great deal of inspired revelation God deemed important enough to write down and preserve for His people. Believers have come to see the Old Testament as “interesting” material; but not important enough to give the kind of time and attention normally

reserved for the New Testament. And, the Church has paid a steep price for allowing this sad state of affairs to develop.

Why Is There So Little Preaching From The Old Testament?

The neglect of the Old Testament in contemporary preaching is not a new phenomenon in American Evangelicalism. Sadly, it seems that from the days of the ancient heretic Marcion up through modern times, the Church has remained uncomfortable with preaching the material found in the Old Testament. There are several reasons for this.

The Neglect of the Old Testament for the New

Clearly, the New Testament recounts the story of the establishment and formation of the Church; a story not expressly told in the Old Testament. Books like Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians unfold, explain, and apply the doctrines that comprise the theology of the Church. Acts contains the story of her history from the earliest days of her existence. The Pastoral Epistles lay out the structure by which she is to operate. The Corinthian correspondence addresses problems and answers practical questions that arise as her members attempt to live in light of their faith in a world fraught with difficulty and hostility. Since modern believers live in the Church age, it is only natural that her preachers would turn first to these documents for preaching. Additionally, since most problems and life situations that arise in the contemporary Church find immediate attention in the New Testament, her preachers have tended to focus almost exclusively on this testament. Consequently, however unintentional the intent, they rarely use the Old Testament in formal preaching. This neglect by preachers has produced a spiritual ignorance of frightening proportions among believers who sit in their churches. Believers who are ignorant of the Old Testament are stunted in their ability to understand the truths contained in the New.

The Divorcing of the Old Testament From The New

Unintentional neglect is certainly one reason why preachers neglect the Old Testament in preaching. However, there is also, on the part of some, a divorcing of the Old Testament from the New which results in an intentional silence when it comes to preaching from the Old Testament.

For some men, this divorcing happens because of exposure to the theories of German Higher Criticism that challenged the historical accuracy and spiritual value of the Old Testament. Preachers trained in seminaries where these theories were propounded were made suspect of the Old Testament.¹ Their suspicions are too often confirmed by the commentary literature consulted in sermon preparation. Thankfully, there are now many conservative commentaries being produced to combat this trend, and to defend the historical reliability and theological value of the Old Testament.

Other preachers neglect the Old Testament for exegetical reasons. Sadly, this is true in many conservative Evangelical churches whose pastors were trained at conservative seminaries where expository preaching was stressed. Perversely, it may be that a flawed view of expository preaching on the part of some of these men has resulted in a dearth of preaching from the Old Testament. First, many men believe that expository preaching is limited to a verse by verse approach to a book of the Bible. Obviously, this is more easily accomplished from a New Testament book than from an Old Testament book. Additionally, many men are totally

¹Sidney Greidanus makes this same observation and then goes on to say about many of these seminaries, “The Old Testament was studied only to recover the history of Israel, the history of its literature, and the history of its religion—and future preachers were left without a word from God to preach.” Greidanus goes on in the next paragraph to mention the resignation of the well-known proponent of the documentary hypothesis, Julius Wellhausen, from his position as professor of theology at Greifswald University. He quotes Wellhausen’s explanation of his leaving theology for Semitic studies, “I became a theologian because I was interested in the scientific treatment of the Bible; it has only gradually dawned on me that a professor of theology likewise has the practical task of preparing students for service in the Evangelical Church, and that I was not fulfilling this practical task, but rather, in spite of all reserve on my part, was *incapacitating* my hearers for their office.” *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), p. 17.

unfamiliar with how to preach the different genres that characterize large portions of the Old Testament. Furthermore, many of these men understand the importance of using the original languages in sermon preparation, and although many of them have made valiant efforts to keep their skills in Greek, most have all but forgotten their Hebrew. Finally, the sheer size of some of the Old Testament pericopes as well as the relative scarcity of Old Testament resources available to the average pastor at affordable prices, all conspire together to discourage preachers from preaching these texts. In other words, since they can't preach these Old Testament texts with the same level of skill and exegetical commitment that they are able to devote to a New Testament passage, many have decided not to preach them at all.

Some preachers divorce the Old Testament from the New in their preaching emphasis because of theological positions they hold in several important areas.² Some preachers who have rightly understood the discontinuities and distinctions between Israel and the Church, have wrongly concluded that since the Old Testament was given to Israel, it has no real abiding value for the New Testament Church. Others have erroneously concluded that the Old Testament teaches a different means of salvation than the New and is therefore to be avoided. Some have seen the Mosaic Law in a very negative light and have concluded from misunderstanding Paul, that it has no value for a New Testament believer. Furthermore, in a flawed conception of Paul's teaching on grace, some preachers have rejected the Old Testament because of its strong emphasis on the ethical and moral obligations God expected His people to abide by in their daily lives.

²Greidanus observes a different set of theological difficulties in addition to the ones mentioned here that cause some preachers to neglect the Old Testament. While most preachers in Evangelicalism probably do not struggle with the idea that the God of the Old Testament is substantially different from the God of the New Testament, they may struggle with some of the ethical/moral difficulties presented in the Old Testament. For example, how does one explain why the God of mercy and grace presented by Paul and the New Testament writers would brutally exterminate entire people groups such as the Canaanites right down to children and livestock? How does one preach the passages in the Old Testament that appear to show God granting righteousness on the basis of obedience when Paul clearly states otherwise in well known New Testament passages? These difficulties have caused some to turn only to the New Testament for preaching. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-34.

Finally, certain preachers have deemed the Old Testament to contain too much that is potentially offensive to the sensitivities of their hearers. Greidanus' response is classic and well worth repeating here.

Sensitive Christians can easily be offended by certain parts of the Old Testament. In this connection John Bright raises the interesting question as to why, “although the Old Testament on occasion offends our Christian feelings, it did not apparently offend Christ’s ‘Christian feelings’! Could it really be that we are ethically and religiously more sensitive than he? Or is it perhaps that we do not view the Old Testament—and its God—as he did?”³

The Misuse of the Old Testament In View Of the New

A third major category of reasons contemporary believers are unfamiliar with the Old Testament relate to its misuse at the hands of contemporary preachers. Many preachers treat the Old Testament as nothing more than a Divine repository of stories and illustrations by which New Testament truth may be clarified, exemplified, and applied. Many who take this approach scour the Old Testament for stories that illustrate whatever point they might be making in the Sunday message. They preach the stories not to communicate their intrinsic theological intent, but rather as the backdrop for a pre-determined theological point or moral application. Examples of this use of the Old Testament abound in the popular literature, on sermon websites, and among popular radio preachers. Who has not heard the story of David slaying Goliath used primarily as a means to encourage people that by faith, they too can slay certain “spiritual giants” commonly encountered in daily living or ministry?

More frequently, even when a preacher determines to preach the Old Testament narrative as a stand alone passage with its own message, all too often he resorts to mere spiritualizing of the text. For example, the five stones in David’s pouch are made to represent the five points of Arminianism by which one may slay the Goliath of Calvinism (or vice-versa if the preacher is

³*Ibid.*, p. 25.

more Calvinistic). Or, the names of the gates in Jerusalem's broken down walls during Nehemiah's day explain why the modern church is in such a sad state. Many interesting and highly subjective applications are drawn from these Old Testament narratives and end up becoming the Biblical evidence for a particular ministry agenda of that preacher. This kind of regular abuse has caused most believers to seriously undervalue the Old Testament. In hearing the stories (and their morals) divorced from their larger theological and contextual structure, many believers have no idea that the Old Testament has a cohesive, coherent, and identifiable message running through each book. In missing the larger story, many believers never connect how the particular story or portion they are reading contributes to that larger message. Furthermore, in immediately trying to identify the "moral of the story," many believers miss the true moral or ethical requirement or instruction intended by the author of that passage.

In fairness, the sheer size of the material comprising the Old Testament represents a challenge to men who are committed to preaching from its content regularly. Additionally, lack of familiarity and exposure to the different genres leaves many pastors clueless in terms of how to preach through the legal or genealogical portions of the Pentateuch. The difficulty of interpreting and dealing with the extended prophetic passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, not to mention the cryptic prophecies of Daniel, tend to make this task even harder.

Unfamiliarity with the theological intent of similar books such as 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles create the misconception that preaching through all six of these books is overly repetitive, and for lack of a better expression, "a waste of valuable preaching time." Lack of knowledge regarding the structure and nature of wisdom literature or poetry makes these sections of the Bible intimidating for preachers to tackle. The delicate nature of the material discussed in Song of Solomon creates even greater difficulties for the preacher. The Minor

Prophets unfortunately are seen as unimportant (that is why they are minor rather than major) and are put off until more important books have been preached.

The Perceived Irrelevance of the Old Testament to Modern Life

In an essay entitled “The Church’s Need for Old Testament Preaching,” Michael Duduit bemoaned the lack of preaching from the Old Testament. Among other things, he observed that while most Evangelical Christians affirm the inspiration of the entire Bible, they fail to see the relevance of a major segment of those Scriptures – the Old Testament.

In this brave new world of science and technology, communication is no longer measured in days or weeks but in milliseconds. Images of war now rush onto our television screens in America even as they are occurring on the other side of the globe. Fax machines, satellites, and computer technology have made the global village a reality. For men and women living in such an age—pressed on all sides by technological innovation and social change—what possible relevance could be found in a collection of religious writings written three or four millennia ago? Does the Old Testament still have any meaning or value even to the Christian church in the 21st century?⁴

Perhaps this is the greatest reason for the demise of Old Testament preaching in modern pulpits. In an age of consumer Christians, pastors who desire to build growing churches have increasingly turned to pragmatism rather than biblical preaching for help. Their commitment to giving the people what they want rather than what they need has led them to a preaching philosophy that does justice to neither testament. Tragically, many modern sermons are nothing more than secular self help ideas flavored with enough Biblical terminology to make the message seem to represent what God has said on the matter. This approach to preaching is clearly driven by the need to come up with sermons that are practical before they are biblical; that are brief and catchy before they are true and authoritative. When sermons are driven by the needs of the congregation rather than the intent and exegesis of the passage, it is no wonder that the Old Testament has suffered. Many preachers have asked, “What could be less relevant to a modern

⁴Michael Duduit, “The Church’s Need for Old Testament Preaching” in *Reclaiming The Prophetic Mantle*, ed. George Klein (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), p. 9.

congregation than a book written to and about people who lived thousands of years ago in a different cultural, historical, and theological setting?” For the most part, very few have risen up and said, “On the contrary, nothing could be more relevant to such a congregation than the truths taught in the Old Testament!” Few congregations are blessed to have such men in their pulpits; those that do have a treasure beyond price.

All of these misuses and misunderstandings on the part of preachers in relation to the Old Testament have resulted in a massive undervaluing of the Old Testament in the hearts and lives of God’s people. Consequently, for many Christians, over two-thirds of their Bible remains a dark and mysterious place that is relatively unsafe to travel. This has resulted in a spiritual robbery of Scripture from people whose spiritual health has been seriously affected regardless of the motives by which the Old Testament was taken from them. The contemporary Church is in desperate need of a call similar to that of the Old Testament prophets who called God’s people back to the Word of God, which, in their day, was the Old Testament.

Why Should People Listen to Preaching From The Old Testament?

There are important practical, spiritual, and theological reasons for a return to the Old Testament by the Church of God as she faces a new millennium. Christian preachers must recommit to preaching the Old Testament accurately, regularly, and from an expository perspective for at least the following reasons:

Because Of What The Old Testament Is – Its Nature

Clearly, the New Testament writers considered the Old Testament to be the inspired, authoritative Word of God. Of the many passages that support this statement, perhaps none is more familiar than Paul’s reminder to Timothy that the Old Testament Scriptures were inspired and therefore authoritative and profitable for believers (2 Tim. 3:16). In fact, earlier Paul

instructed Timothy not to neglect the public teaching and preaching of the Old Testament Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13). These passages make clear that the Old Testament is inspired Scripture. What may not be equally clear in the minds of many contemporary preachers is that these same passages also teach that the Old Testament is God's Word to New Testament believers. It is one thing to believe in the inspiration of the Old Testament. It is another thing entirely to believe that these same Scriptures are truly profitable, and therefore necessary for the spiritual development and maturity of New Testament believers. Yet, this is precisely the point Paul is making in these texts. Believers need to hear the Old Testament preached because it is part of God's inspired Word, and as such, is a necessary prescribed component for their spiritual growth as New Testament saints. Tragically, many pastors who truly desire the spiritual health and growth of their congregations pass over the Old Testament, and in so doing, miss an important means God ordained for the health of His people.

Because Of What The Old Testament Does – Its Function

When referring to the inspiration of the Old Testament, Paul teaches it is profitable or useful for preparing and equipping the servant of God for life and ministry. In his second letter to Timothy, he warned Timothy to be on guard because he was ministering to people living in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1). Paul went on in the next thirteen verses to paint a very graphic picture of what men in this kind of society would be like. They would be fierce, savage, and radically self-centered. Against this tide of wickedness, Paul gave Timothy one defense—the continued reading and instruction of the Old Testament (2 Tim. 3:14-17). The reason for this instruction has to do with the function of the Old Testament. It is powerful enough to take someone who is characterized by the wicked qualities articulated in the previous verses (2 Tim 3:2-13), and make him wise unto salvation. Then, by these same Scriptures, that new convert can be thoroughly

equipped unto all good service for the Lord in the midst of that environment. No wonder Paul went on to charge Timothy to “Preach the Word!” (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Most, if not all, Evangelical preachers would argue that this statement by Paul is broad enough to include the New Testament, even though some of it had yet to be inspired at the time of Paul’s statement. However, many of these same men, by neglecting the Old Testament Scriptures, unintentionally restrict Paul’s statement in these verses so that for all practical purposes the Old Testament is excluded.

Because Of What The Old Testament Produces – Its Spiritual Effects

There are many good effects produced in the life of a believer who is regularly exposed to sound expository preaching from the Old Testament. First, such preaching informs believers doctrinally. Most of the doctrinal instruction contained in the New Testament is built on the doctrinal foundation of the Old Testament. This is evident in Paul’s presentation of his gospel to the Romans. He states that his message is not new at all. In fact, it was announced by the prophets (Romans 1:-7). This passage more than any other, reveals that the gospel concerning Jesus Christ is inextricably rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures. Earlier, when writing to the Corinthians, Paul reminded them that his gospel consisted of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ just as the Old Testament Scriptures had proclaimed (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Without the regular preaching of the Old Testament, the full expression of many doctrines (starting with the gospel itself) remains out of reach for contemporary believers.⁵

⁵Walter Kaiser makes a similar observation when he states, “There are a number of doctrines that come to their fullest expressions in the Old Testament text. Some of the ones that come to mind are the doctrines of creation (Gen. 1-2), the fall [of Man] (Gen. 3), the law of God (Exod. 20; Deut. 5), the incomparable greatness of God (Isa. 40), the nature of the substitutionary atonement of Christ (Isa. 52:13-53:12), the new heavens and the new earth (Isa. 65-66), and the second coming of our Lord to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14).” *Preaching and Teaching From The Old Testament: A Guide for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 40.

Expository preaching from the Old Testament not only informs believers doctrinally, it shapes them spiritually. Peter, writing to New Testament believers, exhorts them to desire and pursue the Word of God like newborn infants hunger after milk, and they are to do so in order that they might grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2). Peter is clearly including the Old Testament Scriptures in his statement. The writer of Hebrews likewise is including the Old Testament when he rebukes his readers for not growing. The reason for this lack of growth is revealed in the remedy he prescribes – proper use of the Word (Heb. 5:11-14).

A third effect the Old Testament has on the life of believers who are exposed to its truths is that it provides proper spiritual motivation for serving God in this dispensation. Paul used the Old Testament in this way when he corrected the Corinthians who were eating food in the idol temple and justifying where they were eating by arguing that a monotheistic theological commitment precludes the reality of idols. He eventually pointed to God's judgment on Old Testament Israelites who tempted God in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:1-21) in an attempt to instruct and motivate these New Testament believers to right thinking and proper behavior. Pastors frequently are challenged to provide appropriate motivation to help their hearers commit to a path of obedient living. All too often, the motivations provided are drawn from sources other than the Bible. In neglecting the Old Testament, preachers have eliminated hundreds of proper biblical examples that Paul and the other New Testament writers used to provide appropriate spiritual motivation for their hearers.

A fourth benefit to preaching the Old Testament is that such preaching connects New Testament believers historically to the people of God in the Old Testament. While it is important to maintain a clear distinction between Israel and the Church, it is equally important that New Testament believers understand that God has a continued plan for Israel. Furthermore, that plan

will involve New Testament believers. By understanding the history of God's dealings with Israel, believers in this dispensation can gain insight into the heart and mind of God and thereby serve Him more effectively as His royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).

Regular and accurate exposure to the Old Testament has the fifth benefit of exposing New Testament believers to a fuller theological understanding of God's nature as well as His plans. Without the Old Testament, our understanding of the sovereignty of God would be seriously imbalanced. We would know little of God's future plans for both Israel and the nations of the world. Our understanding of creation, the fall, redemption, sanctification, holiness, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, God's mercy, God's justice, and a host of other doctrines would be severely limited. Additionally, our understanding of the New Testament would be hindered if we had no access to the doctrinal foundation laid by the Old Testament writers.

The Old Testament discloses God's acts of redemption in a history that stretches from the creation to just prior to the coming of Christ. It reveals how God, after the fall into sin, seeks to save his people and restore his kingdom (rule) on earth. It reveals God's redemptive acts over many centuries as well as God's promises and their fulfillments. We do not find this long history of God's acts of salvation in the New Testament; it simply assumes and builds on this history. Since only the Old Testament reveals this redemptive history, it is indispensable for the Christian church.⁶

Perhaps the greatest benefit the Old Testament gives to God's people in this dispensation, and the final one to be discussed here, is that it prepares them Christologically. Without the compendium of teaching found in the Old Testament, our understanding and our relationship to Christ, God's Messiah, would be seriously affected. The New Testament writers present Christ

⁶Greidanus, *Preaching Christ From The Old Testament*, pp. 26-27. In this section, Greidanus goes on to list additional truths taught only from the Old Testament. Examples of such truths are the Old Testament revelation that man was created in God's image, the age-long enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the Decalog, The Day of Atonement, the Day of the Lord, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, and the promise of a Messiah. Without the New Covenant teaching of Jeremiah, Hebrews would be very difficult to understand (pp. 27-28).

with the assumption that their readers were intimately familiar with the teachings of the Old Testament, or could easily avail themselves of those teaching if they were not already familiar with them. The writer of Hebrews built his entire message that Jesus Christ is “better” than the Mosaic system on the presupposition that his readers were intimately familiar with that system. Peter and Paul both presented major theological doctrines on the assumption that their readers understood the Old Testament teaching related to those doctrines. For example, Paul’s argument in Romans 6-8 clearly assumes that the Roman believers were more than passingly familiar with how the Old Testament Mosaic system operated.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of the Old Testament’s value for preparing New Testament believers Christologically is found in the Lord’s gentle rebuke to the disciples on the road to Emmaus for not understanding that the Old Testament Scriptures contained everything they needed to reach proper conclusions about the life and the death of one called Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 24:25-27). Given this benefit, it is difficult to understand why so many preachers who genuinely love the Lord neglect to preach so much of the Bible that testifies of Him.

The point for contemporary preachers is this: if the Old Testament indeed witnesses to Christ, then we are faithful preachers only when we do justice to this dimension in our interpretation and preaching of the Old Testament. The tragedy is that contemporary historical-critical exegesis, which tries so hard to recover the original meaning of the Old Testament, usually ignores this dimension. Although Christ is pictured in the Old Testament, contemporary Christian preachers frequently fail to notice it.⁷

What Are The Keys To Preaching The Old Testament Effectively?

Given the need to preach the Old Testament, how is a preacher to do so effectively? Numerous books have been published recently in an attempt to offer suggestions, and to provide help to preachers wanting to preach the Old Testament effectively. Three are worth mentioning

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 62.

here.⁸ First, Walter Kaiser has written voluminously on the topic of understanding, exegeting, and preaching the Old Testament to contemporary believers. His most recent work, *Preaching And Teaching From The Old Testament: A Guide for the Church*, is an invaluable aid in this endeavor. *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle* edited by George Klein and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* edited by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese are equally helpful, and provide much in the way of instruction and motivation for preaching from the Old Testament.

In addition to the help provided by these books in the areas of understanding how to exegete the different genres of Old Testament literature, the following brief suggestions are offered in the hopes of furthering the goal of more authoritative preaching from the Old Testament.⁹

First, preachers must preach the Old Testament comprehensively. By this I do not mean that every message must contain the entire “big picture” of the Old Testament. However, I do mean that every message must be preached by a preacher who does understand the comprehensive message or “big picture” of the Old Testament. The only way to connect our people to the message of the Old Testament is for those of us who preach to ourselves understand how our passage fits into the larger scheme of God’s intent for the Old Testament.

Second, preachers must preach the Old Testament in an expository fashion. By this I mean more than doing sound exegesis. I believe that preachers should approach preaching through the Old Testament books in the same fashion that they preach through the books of the New Testament. Many expositors who are committed to preaching paragraph by paragraph through a book in the New Testament would never dream of approaching Romans in the same

⁸Publication information has been included in the bibliography.

⁹Due to the nature of these suggestions, the writer has determined to use the less formal first person approach in certain places.

way they approach the books of Samuel or Kings. One of the reasons the Church lacks the kind of appreciation for the Old Testament that she has for the New may be that she has rarely been exposed to a comprehensive, cohesive exegetical treatment of the Old Testament books.

Third, preachers must preach the Old Testament exegetically. The bane of Old Testament seminary professors is the abundance of preachers who misuse Old Testament texts because of faulty or careless exegesis. Granted, there are exegetical challenges unique to the Old Testament that must be faced, but given the nature and importance of this part of Scripture, it should receive from the preacher the same exegetical commitment and careful treatment that is given to the New Testament. Anything less is inexcusable. Perhaps the reason for the lack of authoritative preaching from the Old Testament corresponds to the lack of careful and sound exegetical preparation by those called by God to preach its texts.

Fourth, preachers must attempt to preach the Old Testament contextually. Rather than attempting to import an application or a meaning for an Old Testament story or narrative, preachers must carefully determine the author's meaning or intent for that narrative from the context. And, they must preach that meaning from that context so that their contemporary hearers understand and see that meaning in that context. This does not mean the passage should not be applied to the modern life setting; it must be. However, it does mean that whatever application is made from the story must be derived from and in line with the contextual and authorial meaning and intent of that passage.

Fifth, preachers must preach the Old Testament theologically. As has been observed already, many of the important New Testament doctrines depend on the Old Testament for their full expression. Contemporary believers rarely associate the Old Testament teaching on a particular doctrine when they hear that doctrine preached from the New Testament. When

preaching a doctrinal truth from the New Testament, preachers must find ways to bring the Old Testament information on that doctrine into the picture for the contemporary audience. To argue that Paul did not do so is to miss an important point. Quite often the New Testament author could legitimately assume that his hearer's intimate familiarity with the Old Testament would cause him to make appropriate theological connections to the doctrinal truth being presented that modern readers who are unfamiliar with the Old Testament don't make.

Sixth, preachers must preach the Old Testament profitably. In other words, they must demonstrate the abiding relevance of the Old Testament to believers in any cultural or temporal setting. It is important to state that preachers do not make the Old Testament relevant. It is relevant because it is God's inspired Word. However, we must help people who are linguistically, culturally, and theologically separated from the Old Testament text understand how and in what ways the message of those texts can legitimately be applied to life in our time and culture.

Finally, preacher must preach the Old Testament regularly. All too often, preaching from the Old Testament, even when done well, is a rare treat. Most congregations can go entire years preaching through the book of Romans and never hear a message from the Minor Prophets. Many preachers have taken their congregations through the majestic truths of Ephesians, but have totally neglected the equally majestic truths in Isaiah. Congregations would be much better served by a series on Christian parenting from Proverbs than from the latest book on child rearing by the "guru" of the day. Young couples would be spared literally years of confusion and potential hurt by a frank and careful discussion of marital intimacy as presented in Song of Solomon than by the latest book on marriage read by the preacher.

God has given His Church a book designed to provide her with everything she needs for life and godliness. However, part of that valuable information is found in the Old Testament. In preaching regularly from the Old Testament there is great blessing; in neglect, great danger. May the Lord raise up in His Church preachers who are committed to the task of faithfully, carefully, passionately, and regularly preaching the richness of the Old Testament to their congregations.

If we are to have a balanced and full ministry, we must preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) to the whole person. Neglect of any area of Scripture will provide the fertile soil for either heresy to grow in the church or, in the merciful providence of God, for a parachurch ministry to reclaim what has been neglected or deliberately set aside by the preaching ministry of the church.¹⁰

¹⁰Kaiser, *Preaching And Teaching From The Old Testament*, p. 44.

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