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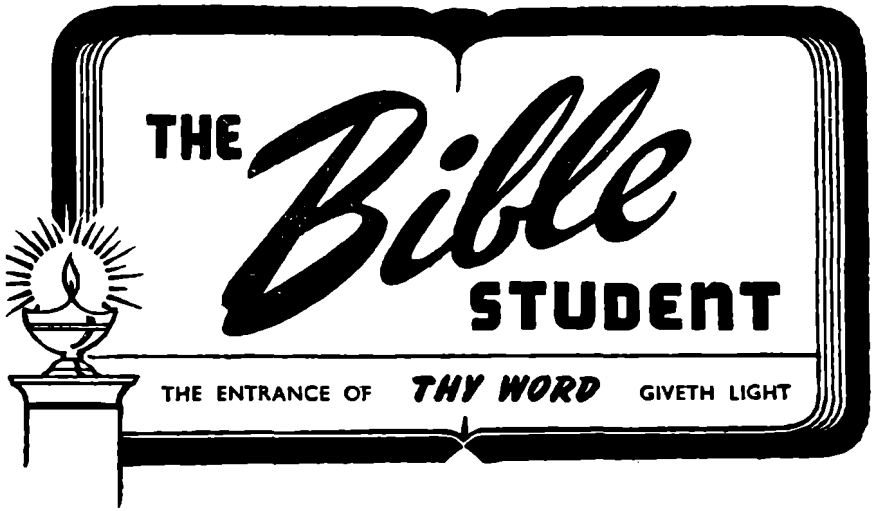
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

DR W. GRAHAM SCROGGIE

The Word of the Lord can be communicated by the preacher in one or other of four ways, by *reading*, by *memory*, by *notes*, or *extempore*. Which of these is the right way? No one of them is *the* right way. That is the best way for any man by which he best accomplishes the end he has in view; and as minds work in different ways, different methods will be adopted. I have heard it said that *reading* is not *preaching*. If that were true, it would mean that Dr Thomas Chalmers and Dr J. H. Jowett did not preach, for they both delivered their messages by reading them. But what reading! When preaching, Dr Chalmers was not a slave to manuscript, nor were those who listened to him bored with a sense of monotony. Exact expression of profound thought did not dull the imagination, nor quench the flame of holy passion. Chalmers 'allured to brighter worlds, and led the way'. I have met many who often heard Dr Jowett, but did not know that he read his sermons, so consummately was it done. He told Dr Stuart Holden that he spent about six weeks on each address, and the result is seen in what we have of his sermons. Perhaps it is not too much to say that he was the greatest phrase-maker, among ministers, of the last half-century. Dr Jowett was an artist, and his pulpit craft was the product of great pains. He paid laborious attention, not only to the substance of his messages, but also to their form; and always read what he wrote.

But there is reading, and reading. It were far better to stop at home and read something oneself than to listen to some preachers read their sermons. The goodness of the *matter* will not alone interest and hold an audience. 'Preaching is truth through personality', and where there is a want of personality, you might as well read a book. What is on a man's manuscript should still be in his heart, and if it is, he will read with unction; precision and power will go together.

Of this method let this at least be said, that if one elects to *read*, let him do it *well*. This will mean severe discipline and much practice *in private*.

The second way is to depend on one's *memory*. This is more exacting than the former, for, added to all the labour of that, is the task of fixing it all in the mind, and, without manuscript, of delivering it as written. There are few men who can do this for long, but some have done it, and with great effect. I need only mention the names of the late Dr Alexander Smellie and Dr George Morrison in evidence of the practicability of such a method, without the sacrifice of power. I heard Dr Morrison deliver his Moderator's Address on 'Revival', and observed that he had no manuscript, and on leaving the Assembly Hall I found the Address was on sale, word for word as he had just delivered it. I often heard Dr Smellie, and always he talked literature. He had a wonderfully chaste style, and his messages were rich in quotation. Once, when staying with him in the Manse at Carluke, he showed me some of his manuscripts, and I then learned that he memorized. I did this myself for several years at the beginning of my ministry, but had to give it up; there was no more room in my head to 'park' sermons. Memory is a most valuable faculty, but, like our other faculties, it can do only so much, and will certainly rebel if put constantly to undue strain.

The third method is the use of *notes*, more or less. I suppose most preachers find this means necessary, alike to assist memory, and prevent wandering. Such notes may be a digest of a fully written manuscript, or the product of prayerful study and meditation without further writing. Charles Haddon Spurgeon used briefest notes, sometimes only a small half-sheet of notepaper; but back of that were wide reading, much thought and prayer, and an amazing memory, not to speak of an imagination which quickly flamed in the presence of a multitude of hearers.

I think that certainly there should be some record of a man's preparation, else his reading and thought are lost, as is water poured through a sieve. Dr Parker once said that every preacher should fully write all his sermons for the first twenty years, and then he need write no more. What he meant is clear; he said '*write*', not necessarily *read* and *write* for the sake of exactness and in the interests of mental discipline. If this labour is reduced to *notes*, that still further will promote clarity of thought and concreteness of expression.

The fourth method is what we call '*extempore*' preaching. Of course, this does not mean preaching without preparation, but, having prepared, the preacher allows himself the fullest liberty in the Spirit in the delivery of the message. For some types of mind this is the best method, but for some other it would be unsafe. Whatever method be adopted, three things are essential if preaching is to be good and effective, namely, *thoroughness* in preparation, and *naturalness* and *freedom* in delivery.

THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL

H. L. ELLISON, B.A., B.D.

The Midnight Hour (24:1-27)

In January 588 B.C., when Jehoiachin's captivity had lasted almost ten years (v. 1), Zedekiah's plots and treacheries had their reward, and Nebuchadnezzar's army ringed Jerusalem for its last agony. The iron ring was to relax for a few weeks to deal with the relieving army of Pharaoh Apries (Jer. 34:21 f; 37:5, 11), but it is doubtful whether it even came to a battle. Certainly the Egyptians were soon back over their frontier (Jer. 37:7), and they did not stir again to save their Judean allies from their fate.

On the very day that Jerusalem was invested—cf. v. 1 with 2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 39:1—God revealed the fact to Ezekiel and ordered him to make a special note of the date. It is not likely that this was to enhance Ezekiel's reputation as a prophet. It was rather to anticipate and prevent any later suggestion that the siege and capture of Jerusalem could have been due to some passing inattention and carelessness on Jehovah's part (cf. 1 King 18:27).

It is impossible to be sure whether the remainder of the chapter is to be looked on as happening on the day on which the siege began and on the next, or whether it extends over some time. We have earlier seen that the dates prefixed to the sections of the prophecy need only apply to the first oracle in the section; the remainder may extend up to the next recorded date. In view,