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A PREACHING SYLLABUS

John R. K. Savage

'I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God' Ac. 20:27

Such was Paul's testimony to the Ephesian elders. I wonder how many assemblies today can claim such a spiritual diet—'the whole counsel of God'? Very few I should judge, for it is an inescapable fact that there is a gross ignorance of many Christian doctrines amongst our church members which is making them easy prey to the winds of changing doctrine so prevalent today.

Part of this is due to the artificial distinction frequently made between what constitutes 'gospel' and what 'ministry'. This means that a very small area of doctrine is hammered home Sunday by Sunday, at what is in most assemblies the best attended meeting, and to a smaller congregation mid-week is given some other parts of the Christian faith, usually, however, in a piecemeal and haphazard fashion. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the modern 'gospel', padded out with gimmicks and bright ideas, is singularly ineffective in producing God-fearing men and women, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. They are just not getting enough food.

One obvious way to combat this state of affairs is to ensure that the whole Christian faith is covered in a systematic way. And to do this, a plan or syllabus is required.

In this contribution, just such a syllabus is offered. It covers two years, 46 weeks per year, allowing 6 spare Sundays for special services and activities. A main topic¹ is suggested for the Sunday evening service. At first glance it may seem that many of the topics would be most unsuitable for a 'gospel' service. However, a little thought will show that virtually all of them have important bearings upon some aspect of God's plan of salvation, and with due expansion and exposition lead naturally to a situation requiring some response on the part of the hearer. The writer has used quite a number of them in this way.

In addition to the main topic, a suggestion is given for a follow-up or amplification topic suitable for the mid-week meeting. The selection of these mid-week topics has been made with the younger believers in mind. It is absolutely essential that we not only ground them in the faith but also provide them ammunition with which to defend the faith and an opportunity to discuss freely the theology of and reasons for our beliefs. Some may feel that a number of the topics would better be left undisturbed or unmentioned. I can only say that it has been my experience to hear

virtually all of them discussed at one time or another amongst our young people.

Systematic preaching is, to a large extent, a feature of the past. The great exponents are to be found amongst the Reformers and the Puritans who followed in their wake. What giants in the faith were produced under their ministry, and what piety and power were found in their congregations! Most of them preached to a plan, usually one of the great confessions or catechisms. In later years, it frequently followed in outline the famous Westminster Confession of 1646 or the Shorter Catechism derived from it (1647). These great confessions aim to cover Christian doctrine in a systematic way, and therefore form an ideal background for any preaching syllabus having the same aim. I have drawn freely from them in constructing the syllabus that follows.

Finally, I am convinced that a return to systematic presentation of the truth of God is the only way to stem the spiritual drift of the present day, and build up strong and virile Christians.

1. It should be noted that the suggestions made are subjects, *not* titles.

YEAR I.

WEEK	SUBJECTS FOR SUNDAY	SUBJECTS FOR MIDWEEK
1	"God has spoken."	The canon of Scripture.
2	The origin and inspiration of Scripture.	Relation of old and new testaments.
3	The only rule of Faith and Conduct.	Understanding and interpreting God's Word.
4	The Lord's use of Scripture.	The right of private judgment.
5	Can God be known?	Methods of studying the Bible.
6	The nature of God: His spirituality.	The use of Scripture in worship.
7	The nature of God: His infinity and eternity.	The names of God—Old Testament.
8	His immutability.	The names of God—New Testament.
9	His knowledge and wisdom.	Foreknowledge/foreordination.
10	His will.	Guidance.
11	His power.	Can God do everything?
12	His holiness.	Can man thwart God's will?
13	His justice.	God's moral government: why does God allow . . . ?
14	His goodness.	God's love—general benevolence or dynamic power?
15	His truth.	The Bible frequently ascribes change to God.
16	His sovereignty.	The Kingdom of God.
17	The Trinity: A Christian doctrine.	Heretical views.
18	The Trinity: Mutual relationships and activities of persons.	The Nicene doctrine.
19	The Fatherhood of God.	Modernist views—universal fatherhood and brotherhood.
20	The Son of God: His divinity.	Christ's pre-existence, O.T. aspects.
21	The Son of God: His manhood.	Modernist views of Christ.
22	The Holy Spirit: His personality.	Modernist views of the Spirit.
23	The Holy Spirit: His work in redemption.	The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

24	The Holy Spirit: His work in sanctification.	Pentecost, its implications.
25	The Holy Spirit: His work in the world—common grace.	The gifts of the Spirit.
26	The Holy Spirit: His work in the the Church.	Grieving and quenching the Spirit.
27	God's decrees.	All events included.
28	God's decrees in action—Creation.	Modern objections.
29	God's decrees in action—Providence.	Providence in my life.
30	God's decrees in action—Miracles.	Do miracles happen today?
31	God's decrees in action—Election and Reprobation.	Is God unfair?
32	Man—his original state.	The Soul.
33	Man—his fall.	The consequences today.
34	Sin—original and actual.	False theories of Sin.
35	Total depravity.	The bearing of total depravity on evangelism.
36	The covenant of works.	The relation of Law to the Christian.
37	The covenant of grace.	The plan of salvation.
38	The Mediator of the covenant.	Christ: human and divine.
39	His Mediation: As Prophet—His teaching.	Comparison of O.T. prophets and prophecy.
40	His mediation: As Priest—His perfect life.	Can Christ's teaching be lived today?
41	His mediation: As Priest—His atoning death.	Objections to the evangelical view of substitution.
42	His mediation: As Priest—His resurrection.	For whom did Christ die?
43	His mediation: As Priest—His intercession.	Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood as types.
44	His mediation: As King—His dominion and kingdom.	Characteristics and duties of citizens.
45	Lord of the Church.	His body—His bride.
46	His triumphant return.	'When shall these things be— What shall be the sign?'

YEAR II.

WEEK	SUBJECTS FOR SUNDAY	SUBJECTS FOR MIDWEEK
1	The Christian's death and resurrection.	The present state of the dead.
2	Heaven.	The Old Testament concepts of Paradise, Sheol, Hades.
3	Hell.	The error of purgatory.
4	The 'good news'—its content.	Is there a second chance?
5	The call of God — general and effectual.	The gospel in the Old Testament.
6	Regeneration.	Preaching in the New Testament: Preparation and delivery of sermons.
7	Repentance.	The marks of true repentance.
8	Faith: Saving and Dead.	The relationship of faith and prayer.
9	Faith and Works.	Good works.
10	Assurance.	When is assurance not presumption?
11	Justification.	Comparison and contrast of Roman Catholic and Protestant views.
12	Sanctification—Its nature.	Is perfection possible in this life?
13	Sanctification—Its progress.	The marks of Christian maturity.
14	Christian character.	'Dress' inward and outward.
15	The Law of God: Introduction.	'Law and Grace.'
16	1st Commandment	Modern substitute gods.
17	2nd Commandment	'A Jealous God.'
18	3rd Commandment.	'Vows and oaths.'
19	4th Commandment.	How should we use Sunday?
20	5th Commandment.	My place in the home.
21	6th Commandment.	The problems of war.
22	7th Commandment.	Christian courtship and marriage.
23	8th Commandment.	Integrity in business.

24	9th Commandment.	My responsibility to state law.
25	10th Commandment	The spiritual nature of the Law—its function.
26	A new commandment.	Does love render the rest of the law irrelevant?
27	The Christian's enemies: Satan—person and work.	Objections to a personal devil.
28	The Christian's enemies: Satan—his defeat.	Temptation—our Lord's experience.
29	The Christian's enemies: The world.	Temptation—its recognition.
30	The Christian's enemies: The flesh.	Spiritual discipline.
31	Means of grace: The Word.	Bible Study methods.
32	Means of grace: Prayer.	Prayer problems.
33	Means of grace: Fellowship.	Relations with Christians of other denominations.
34	Means of grace: Breaking of Bread.	Necessary preparation for the morning meeting.
35	Means of grace: Baptism.	Why don't we baptise infants?
36	The Christian in the world.	Social commitments.
37	The Christian in his job.	'Full time service.'
38	The Christian in his home.	The problems of a non-Christian home.
39	The Christian citizen.	The N.T. Church's contacts with 'the powers that be'.
40	The Christian in his Church.	The requirements for office bearers.
41	The Christian under trial.	Must I expect persecution?
42	The Christian pilgrim.	'No continuing city.'
43	The Christian and his possessions.	'Tithing.'
44	The Christian and his time.	'Priorities.'
45	The Christian hope: The Lord's return.	How should it affect me now?
46	The Christian hope: A new heaven and earth.	Safeguards against apostacy.