

The Six Adverbs of the “How” of Preaching¹

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What follows is a thematic lecture on homiletics, or what we more popularly simply call preaching. I have focused upon certain statements contained in the *Westminster Standards* to mine them for their advice on preaching. It is not exhaustive as there is much more in these *Standards* concerning preaching than can be given in one lecture. However, I continue to be struck by the excellent counsel which can be obtained from these historic Puritan documents as they relate to preaching. My desire is not to live in the 1640's but to allow the wisdom of those who have gone before to interact in a relevant fashion with us today.

My goal is that this should be of use to every preacher and conversely also to listeners. I advised the class who first heard this that this was to be their grid for undertaking self-evaluation of every sermon



Statue of George Whitefield at Univ. of Pennsylvania

¹ The following article first began as a lecture on August 8, 2005 at the Haddington House Summer School held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. It has been expanded, and the author gratefully acknowledges those who have so stimulated his thinking by question and comment. In particular, I am appreciative of discussion with and encouragement by Dr. Mark Ross. The purpose here is not an academic treatise but a popular article to instruct and edify.

they preached. One will not always have a group around him to offer constructive criticism, but each should become personally involved in evaluating what and how he preaches.

My structure here is basically two-fold. Very briefly I will address the “What of Preaching,” followed by a fuller exposition on the “How of Preaching.” By “how” I am not labouring upon techniques or the technical aspects, but rather the over-arching principles of the “how” of preaching. Once these encompassing principles are established, then and only then are we ready for the more technical lectures on the subject. So let us aim at “first things first,” then take up the latter in the future.

Our main focus will be Question and Answer 159 of the Westminster Larger Catechism. Allow me to quote it at the beginning in the original English version of 1648:²

Original English Text

Question 159: How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?

Answer: They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word, are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation.

For the benefit of all, I have also included the full-text modern English version, edited by Rollinson, Kelly, and Fortson:³

Modern English Text

Question 159: How should those who are called preach the word of God?

² I have used the 1648 text for “The Larger Catechism,” in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1983), 251-252.

³ Philip Rollinson, Douglas F. Kelly, and S. Donald Fortson, eds., “The Larger Catechism,” in *Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms in Modern English*, Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Signal Mountain, TN: Summertown Texts, 2004), 126-127. I have found this to be the most complete modern English version I have seen to date for the Larger Catechism.

Answer: Those who are called to labor in the ministry of the word should preach sound doctrine, accurately, in season and out of season, clearly, and not with seductive words of human wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. They should faithfully and fully express the whole counsel of God; this should be done wisely, taking into account the needs and capabilities of the audience. Their preaching should be motivated by a zealous and fervent love for God and the souls of his people. Finally, it should be done sincerely, aiming to glorify God and to convert, edify, and save his people.

Although this Question is about “how,” it does also briefly tell us about “what preaching is.” This is where we begin.

I. The WHAT of Preaching

I consider the Larger Catechism to be strong meat for the maturing of the saints and for the instruction of the leaders as well. Answer 159 makes a concise introductory statement about the cardinal nature of real preaching: labouring in the ministry of the Word to bring forth “sound doctrine.” For the Puritans “sound doctrine” was certainly labouring to make truth known, but it was much fuller than simply setting forth truth. Sound preaching is that which is good for health and wholeness of being. Such preaching will “heal our spiritual diseases.” The noted London Puritan, William Taylor, writing on preaching sound doctrine, wrote: “it wholly leads unto Christ, for the law is a schoolmaster unto him, and the gospel teaches nothing else...” and “it is wholesome doctrine in regard to its work or effect, when it makes the souls of men sound and thriving.... The food of the soul is the word of God, here again called ‘doctrine’ and elsewhere called the bread of life, and ministers are called pastors or feeders...”⁴ Preaching is truth on fire for the spiritual health and wholeness of man. We need to plunge the depths of this powerful biblical image of “soundness” more deeply than we do. It is far more than making preaching a cerebral exercise; it is a spiritual exercise. It is to the great end of healing our spiritual diseases (see Psalm 103:3). This truly is the great “what” of preaching – to labour so that men and women are made whole by the real truth of the gospel. True evangelical preaching is where the sickness of mankind because of sin is properly addressed through faith and repentance, the

⁴ Thomas Taylor, *Exposition on Titus*, original 1619 (reprint Minneapolis: Klock and Klock, 1980), 237.

work of free grace. Such “sound” preaching is never “legal” preaching, which is man-centred and legalistic, but neither is it antinomian. Sound preaching plums the call to faith and repentance with focus and clarity. “Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 15:1). Sound preaching is evangelical, grace-oriented, balanced, and aiming at spiritual health. What a labour that is! Now “how” will we do this? That is the heart of this lecture.

II. The HOW of Preaching

The framers of Answer 159 elucidate the “HOW” by organizing their answer around six adverbs: diligently, plainly, faithfully, wisely, zealously, and sincerely. These six adverbs are not “laid in concrete” by the framers. They are not necessarily exhaustive, and they themselves slightly adjust the list, as we see in a brief comparison between Larger Catechism, Q. 159, and the Westminster *Directory For the Publick Worship of God*, where a summary of seven points is made at the conclusion under the section “Of the Preaching of the Word.” There is clearly some adverbial overlap, for example “plainly” appears in both. However, the exact words are not robotically used in both documents.⁵ (Just a cautionary word lest we turn these into idolatrous shibboleths.)

Adverbs are words which modify another word, in this case a verb, and often end in “ly,” as you will recall. For example, he ran wildly. The adverb is “wildly.” Thus when talking about preaching, Q. 159 gives us six adverbs which modify “preaching.” Our purpose now is to see what we can learn through these six adverbs and how we can use them to evaluate our own preaching.⁶

#1. Diligently – “diligently, in season and out of season”

Simply put, to be a preacher one must be “industrious, attentive to one’s duties, assiduous, steady in the work.” The *Directory* uses the word “painfully,” which certainly grips our modern minds! One old etymological dictionary drew a connection between pain and labour as in the “throes of childbirth.” Any preacher who really is diligent will

⁵ I am referring here to the Free Presbyterian reprint edition. See, *The Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, in *The Confession of Faith* (Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1983), 381.

⁶ Various writers have noted the six adverb organizing structure in Q. 159. See, Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 916.

tell you that, yes, it takes a lot of energy and concentration to see a sermon come to birth! There can be no room for laziness in preaching – it is intensely demanding.

The Scripture text used here is Acts 18:25: “He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.” (NIV) What a fascinating text. Apollos did not have the full story concerning Jesus Christ, but what he did know he taught fervently and with great diligence. What an example!

The symbols of our lives speak volumes, whether a ring, a flag, or words on a door. For years I have been a stickler about the name plate on my door. I have always refused to label it “OFFICE.” It is not that – it is a “STUDY.” The nameplate is symbolic of the first priority – be diligent in preparation.

Where does such diligent preparation begin? It begins long before that one sermon. It should begin in the *personal preparation* of a man called to give his life fully to the ministry of the Word through committed years of training. I would include here the years of due diligent preparation in arts to ensure that all the best of the preacher’s mind be brought to the task of informing and shaping him. Then it will include diligent preparation in theological and biblical training. It begins long before the one sermon!

So, there is certainly a commitment to diligent personal preparation through education. There is also a diligent commitment to the preparation of our souls and lives in living for the Lord each day. I recall once speaking at an assembly where I felt completely overwhelmed. The Lord was most gracious. Afterwards a dear preacher-brother came up to me and made this one lasting comment – “It took you all of your life to preach that one sermon.” I knew immediately what he meant – do you? The Christian ministry demands diligence in preparation both educationally and in consecration long before the sermon. We should never pride ourselves in bypassing either. I encourage you to read the three chapters on “Preparing the Expositor” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, which wonderfully deals with the personal preparation of the preacher.⁷ Also, though dealing with three separate themes in preparation, the essays by

⁷ John MacArthur, Jr., and others, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 63-115.

Nederhood, Hulse, and Boice are certainly stirring calls to self-examination concerning our diligence and preparations as preachers.⁸

Then such diligence comes down to the preparation of the specific sermon. It is with care, love, and devotion that we diligently mine the text for its context, doctrines, and applications, and it is with diligence that we wisely consider to whom we are to preach (more to be said on this momentarily). Keep the testimony of Apollos (Acts 18:25) before you – show forth such fervour and industry. The Puritans believed in preparation – extemporaneous and study-less preaching was not their way! Proper study and preparation which is undertaken all in subordination to Christ and to His Spirit is a blessing, not a curse. J. I. Packer wrote:

To prepare good sermons may take a long time – but who are we, whom God has set apart for the ministry, to begrudge time for this purpose? We shall never perform a more important task than preaching. If we are not willing to give time to sermon preparation, we are not fit to preach, and have no business in the ministry at all.⁹

Each of the six adverbs is followed by an adverbial phrase. After diligence follows “in season and out of season” from 2 Timothy 4:2. Here is a great reminder – our main business as preachers is the Word, sown not occasionally, but *constantly*. Yes, I have opportunities on Sunday, but also beyond that. Thomas Ridgeley comments here:

This statement implies that the word ought to be preached, not only on that day which God has sanctified for public worship, of which preaching is a part, but on all occasions when ministers are apprehensive that the people are desirous to receive and hear it.¹⁰

Thus my diligence in proclaiming the Word has a continual aspect about it. It is not to be intermittent but a norm in my ministry – that is,

⁸ Samuel T. Logan, Jr., *Preaching: The Preacher and Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1986), 31-104.

⁹ J. I. Packer, “Puritan Preaching” in *A Quest for Godliness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1990), 282.

¹⁰ Thomas Ridgeley, *Commentary on the Larger Catechism*, vol. 2, 1855 edition, ed. John M. Wilson (reprint, Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1993), 476.

after all, my calling. This is a serious charge to every preacher to be clear in his priorities and not be occupied with other tasks which may all be very worthy (for example, serving tables in mercy work, Acts 6:1-7) but which can take one away from his chief calling as a minister of the Word.

#2. Plainly – “plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom”

This adverb “plainly” is very important given the date of the document we are reading. It expresses the whole notion of the style of preaching which generally characterized Puritan preaching. It was in “the plaine style.” William Perkins’ text, *The Art of Prophesying*, is a homiletical textbook in this style. Perkins (1558-1602) predates the Westminster Assembly, and his influence was still well known.

Sinclair Ferguson, writing on Perkins and the plain style, makes this summarizing comment:

The form of the plain style was as follows: the preaching portion, be it text or passage, was explained in its context; the doctrine, or central teaching of the passage was expounded clearly and concisely; and then careful application to the hearers followed in further explanation of the ‘uses’. Thus the message of the Scriptures was brought home in personal and practical, as well as congregational and national applications to the hearers. What does Scripture teach? How does this apply to us today? What are we to do in response? How does Scripture teach us to do it? These became the issues handled with seriousness and vigour in the pulpit. Biblical and classical erudition was frequently present, but usually veiled; the sermons of many plain-style preachers scintillated with vivid language and illuminating illustration; but the main business was to preach Christ and to reach the heart. Everything was subservient to this.¹¹

Puritan plain style preaching is often characterized as dull. The reality is very much to the contrary. Plainness never was intended to mean dullness, but its aim was clarity of presentation, to make the text readily understood. It is as the KJV translates 2 Cor. 3:12, “Seeing then

¹¹ William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, original English 1606 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1996), ix-x.

that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” To use Paul’s hyperbole, better five clear words for a whole service than that which is unknown and will not profit others. In essence, this is a contrast to flowery rhetoric, which was a style eschewed by Puritan preachers. The goal is not to be an orator and “show off” your human learning and rhetorical skill in the pulpit. To do this is to rest in the wisdom of men, not ultimately in the power of the Spirit.

Now, this does not mean that the preacher is to throw his message together with no sense of order, etc. NO! Rather, he will work diligently to ensure good order, development, and clear application, while at the same time knowing that the real power is ultimately from the Lord. The preacher will know that it takes great effort and work to be plain in the pulpit – clear, possessing that unusual simplicity of style which hides all the learning it takes to make the Word preeminent. Perhaps here the contemporary KISS principle is best – “keep it sincerely simple.” All of this is truly an “art,” to quote Perkins again, but an art which combines hard labour with true spiritual reliance.

We must be careful here to make sure we are clear on the negatives of what “plain” preaching is *not*. It is not about dullness nor a false piety which says, “I cannot order what I preach because the Spirit will”! Neither is it the rhetorical skill of a Greek orator. Plain preaching is also not “heaping up citations of Fathers, and repeating words of Latin or Greek.” These are the signs of bad preaching – it is ostentatious because Christ is not being portrayed, but ourselves! There are several errors which are all being attacked here by the simple mention of “plain.” It is like a loaded cannon going off. So, there are all these things which “plain preaching” is not.

Plain preaching must reach all people – in the language and dialect of the people – reaching the learned but also the “plain.” Yet this simple style and language is not rude – “to preach simply is not to preach rudely, nor unlearnedly, nor confusedly, but to preach plainly and perspicuously that the simplest man may understand what is taught, as if he did not hear his name.”¹² “There is a simplicity which dignifies as well as a simplicity that diminishes.” Plain preaching does the former.

Plain preaching is working for clarity, working for affecting the consciences of hearers, and resting ultimately in the Spirit’s power (2 Cor. 2:4).

¹² Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 105.

#3. Faithfully – “faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God”

The chief texts here for faithfully bringing the Word to people are Jeremiah 23:28: “Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the Lord” (ESV) and Acts 20:27: “...for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God” (ESV).

Here we find the image of faithfully bringing forth the Word of God as being akin to the image of a “steward” or a “trustee.” Such individuals manage an estate, etc., for the owner. Joseph in Genesis had a steward (Gen.43:16). The steward, if he is faithful, must never hoard the goods of the estate nor waste his master’s goods. We have been entrusted with the Master’s estate and are not given freedom to alter His instructions. We must do as the Master has directed. John Stott’s portrait on the “Steward” is very helpful here.¹³ The biblical steward keeps care of the whole content of the Scriptures and simply says, “My Master has said...”

It is very easy for all preachers to be consumed by their own preaching interest so that the same themes are continuously prominent as virtual hobbies. I have heard it myself and I am sure you have. Can you describe this as being a faithful steward of all the Master’s book? The writers of the Larger Catechism were trying to safeguard a faithfulness to a full-orbed preaching of the whole counsel of God.

#4. Wisely – “wisely, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers”

Consider Colossians 1:28: “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (KJV). Wisdom (*sophia*) is that amazing blend of experience and knowledge which leads to judicious application, thereby issuing in being someone who lives with practical prudence. What a tremendous virtue to have as a believer! Properly speaking it denotes, first, a quality of character in a person which then, second, will lead to the activity of living wisely.

For the believer the matter of living wisely should be of consuming interest. Just the sheer fact that we have a whole body of literature in the Scripture grouped together known as “wisdom literature” should

¹³ John Stott, “A Steward” in *The Preacher’s Portrait*, original 1961 (Reprint, Leicester: IVP, 1995), 9-28.

make an impression upon us that we need to seriously consider the matter of living wisely; and, by extension, as preachers we need to be wise when we preach.

Wisdom will issue in practical mastery of a situation, and it will express itself in knowing how to deal with others (cf. Prov. 1:5). The Lord Jesus should be a constant testimony here for the believer: “And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40, NIV) and “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52, NIV). The wise child of God will seek the knowledge of God’s will and worthily conduct himself accordingly thus issuing in a life of piety.

Now, how will one preach wisely? The adverbial phrase which follows our fourth adverb makes clear the application. To preach wisely will involve preachers “applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers.” Ridgeley saw an immediate two-fold application here: select the essential and frame sermons to suite the level of one’s hearers. This is basic but an excellent starting point. A preacher must wisely exegete his people and the context in which he is preaching. It really means a preacher needs to major on the important or essential. This is not ever to deny “the full counsel,” but the wise preacher will discern what is most needed. Often it will be that which is essential. “There is to be wisdom in the choice of those subjects which have the greatest tendency to promote the interest of Christ, and the good of mankind in general.” And, “There are many doctrines which must be allowed to be true, which are not of equal importance with others, nor so much adapted to promote the work of salvation...”¹⁴

Secondly, we must frame sermons to suit the level of our hearers. Some will be completely ignorant of biblical truth, others will need “milk,” while others will be capable of “strong meat.” The Puritans preachers were masters of recognizing the incredible diversity of hearers before them. There are the wavering, there are those who are lukewarm and need to be awakened, there are those living in fear and others with incredible doubts and needing to hear words of assurance. Some discerned as many as twenty-one varieties of hearers assembled before the preacher! Surely one must be wise in attempting to suit the level of these hearers. There is a connection here to our discussion under “plainly,” but to be wise in one’s preaching is more than a simplicity of style. There is the art of discerning those to whom we preach. Plain style preaching certainly may deal with “capacities,” but

¹⁴ Ridgeley, *Larger Catechism*, 478.

wisdom will be a greater discerner of the “necessities” of the people before whom we preach.

#5. Zealously – “zealously, with fervent love to God and the souls of his people”

Now we come to the matter of the religious affections of the preacher. Such will greatly affect the “how” of preaching. It will be known instinctively by those who hear the preacher. Is he affected himself by what he preaches? Does he really care for the souls of the people? The scriptural reference for this adverb is again Acts 18:25, which in the KJV reads: “He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

Fervency in Christianity is a matter of religious affection. The preacher must love God “fervently” or with zeal. There is much more to making a preacher than simply training him in orthodox teaching. Is there love? Jesus asked it of Peter, three times. I find myself wanting to ask it at every licensure and ordination examination.

Love for God will not be easy to measure at times. When we love Him we are devoted to Him, to His will, and to His glory. There is a zeal that inflames this devotion. The zealous attitude of many at the soccer field is incredible next to the fervency that we often know for the Lord. And if we really love God, it will be seen in our love for men’s souls.

At some point when studying homiletics, we have tried to think through all the definitions offered on what preaching is. Recall the classic: “Preaching is personality on fire”? This matches the fifth adverb of the “how” of preaching. Some of the technique may be lacking, but if people know in you something of your love for them, they will say, “Now, there is a preacher!” Do you weep for the lost? Are you affected by humanity and the wrong ways they seek for the truth?

Do not ever allow people to say to you that the Puritans who framed this document were emotionless, detached theologians – theirs was a faith that was deeply experimental. Ponder these three Puritan quotations and see if your zeal is there for God and souls:

I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel.... Indeed I have been as one sent unto them from the dead. I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of.

– John Bunyan

I preached, as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.

– Richard Baxter

Preaching, therefore, ought not to be dead, but alive and effective so that an unbeliever coming into the congregation of believers should be affected and, as it were, transfixed by the very hearing of the word so that he might give glory to God.

– William Ames

#6. Sincerely – “sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification, and salvation”

At first sight, the final adverb for the “how” of preaching does not unpack itself very neatly. However, once read in the context of the adverbial phrase which follows “sincerely,” we begin to plunge a depth of “how” which takes us back to my introductory qualifying statements that this is clearly a principled exposition and not a technical “how to” manual.

To describe preaching as to be done sincerely is really best illustrated through the Bible character Nathaniel, of whom Jesus said, “Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false” or “in whom there is no guile” (John 1:47). Sincerity really has to do with matters of motive – surely significant considering the pragmatic spirit of our age which is often underscored. In preaching we must not have “false” aims – the right aims in view will affect the “how” of our preaching.

It is a very serious matter to be clear in our hearts why we preach. “Sincerely” forces every preacher to self-examination and a real evaluation of why he preaches. “He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him” (John 7:18, NIV). Ultimately preaching aims at God’s glory. It brings glory to Him, for it is the heralding of His truth. Thus the preacher’s aim must not be expressing his own thoughts, but making God’s thoughts known. Spurgeon majestically stated it this way: “The grand object of the Christian ministry is the glory of God. Whether souls are converted or not, if Jesus Christ be faithfully preached, the minister has not laboured in vain, for he is a sweet savour unto God...”¹⁵

¹⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, complete and unabridged (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 336.

Next, the preacher must sincerely desire to see the lost brought to Christ Jesus through his preaching. A sincere heart in a preacher will be a heart full of love with a warm fire for “free offer” preaching. Referring to Spurgeon again, he saw all three points, God’s glory, conversion, and edification, as being held together. “The glory of God being our chief object, we aim at it by seeking the edification of the saints and the salvation of sinners.” And, “Yet, as a rule, God has sent us to preach in order that through the gospel of Jesus Christ the sons of men may be reconciled to Him. Here and there a preacher of righteousness, like Noah, may labour on and bring none beyond his own family circle into the ark of salvation; and another, like Jeremiah, may weep in vain over an impenitent nation; but, for the most part, the work of preaching is intended to save the hearers.”¹⁶ Thus, an answer is very much contained in this adverbial phrase, that when we preach sincerely we will preach evangelically, making clear the gospel offer and seeking for the lost to receive Christ.

Some will struggle right at this point. They do not see the free offer of the gospel as a need in their preaching because they usually preach to Christian congregations. But we need to be clear first of all that the visible church we preach to is where many from the “public” at large may come to hear. Secondly, the very nature of the visible church is an intermingling of believers and unbelievers as well as those who may think they are Christians and are not. Here the gospel needs to be preached with an aim toward conversion. True, God can and does bring true conversion outside of preaching, but it is the ordinary means of saving men. This last adverbial phrase is the settled language of Puritan understanding on free offer preaching. See the extensive way Thomas Goodwin answers the question, “Why has God chosen the preaching of the Word by men to be the principal means of converting sinners?”¹⁷ Now, you must ask, “How am I preaching to call sinners to Christ Jesus?” As Richard Sibbes said it so well, it is to “woo” men to Christ, “to persuade people to come out of their estate they are in, to come and take Christ.”¹⁸ Do we sincerely want folks to come to the Saviour? Then we best preach like it! We must be clear on faith, repentance, law and gospel, free offer and election, visible and invisible church. It is

¹⁶ Spurgeon, *Lectures*, 336. See also 337.

¹⁷ Peter Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, original 1977 (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 40.

¹⁸ Lewis, *The Genius of Puritanism*, 51, 52. See also, Packer, *Quest for Godliness*, 294-295, 308.

through the “oracles” of preaching that the Lord ordinarily gathers in the saints. (See *WFC*, 25:3.)

Next, we must sincerely desire that the saints be matured, nurtured, and edified (or “perfected,” see *WFC*, 25:3). Ridgeley is right: “As for those who are converted, their farther establishment and edification in Christ is designed, together with the increase of the work of grace which is begun in them.” The converted are yet imperfect. They continue to face spiritual enemies. The Lord uses preaching to nurture His children. Preaching will encourage them in the promises of the Lord, excite them “to go in the ways of God, depending [depend] on Christ, and deriving [derive] strength from him, for the carrying on of the work which is begun in them.”¹⁹ The finest of evangelical preachers preach with that godly art whereby with great sincerity they combining the gospel call to unbelievers and the edifying call to believers, nurturing them on in the fullness of their salvation.

Conclusion

We now conclude this homiletic lecture in which we have sought to extract wisdom from certain statements in the *Westminster Standards*. Our focus here has been upon the over-arching principles of the “how” of preaching, not so much the technical matters. Diligently, Plainly, Faithfully, Wisely, Zealously, Sincerely. Preachers, are these six adverbs increasingly evident in your preaching? I encourage all of us who preach to use the six adverbs of the how of preaching for self-evaluation of every sermon we give. And Congregation, are you praying for your minister that he would be granted these blessings as the Word comes to bear upon his own soul and as he prepares to feed others with the Word? May meekness and humility be granted to us all.

“It is not saying hard things that pierces the consciences of our people; it is the voice of divine love amid the thunder.”

- Robert Murray McCheyne

¹⁹ Ridgeley, *Larger Catechism*, vol. 2, 480.

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#2. *Plainly* – “plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom”

#3. *Faithfully* – “faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God”

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