

A Course of Lectures on Preaching

by R.L. Dabney

R.L. Dabney's work on preaching emphasizes the importance of divine commission, technical aspects of preaching, and the cardinal requisites of a sermon.

Scripture: Proverbs 15:28, 1 Corinthians 1:17, Colossians 4:6, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 4:2

Topics: "Homiletics", "Preaching Ministry"

Description

R.L. Dabney's 'Evangelical Eloquence' is a timeless work on homiletics and preaching, emphasizing the divine calling and empowerment necessary for effective preaching. Dabney's scholarly yet passionate approach covers various technical aspects of preaching, including sermon preparation, biblical text handling, and sermon structure. He highlights the cardinal requisites of a sermon and provides practical guidance on sermon force and persuasive argumentation. The book also delves into the preacher's character, credibility, style, preparation methods, and pulpit prayers, offering valuable insights for those dedicated to the ministry of preaching.

Transcript

This book was first published in 1870 with the title Sacred Rhetoric, then in 1979 was reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust as R. L. Dabney on Preaching. Now the Banner of Truth has brought it back into print for a second time in this new edition, Evangelical Eloquence: A Course of Lectures on Preaching. The fact that this work has been preserved through multiple reprintings is a testament to its usefulness and quality.

R. L. Dabney (1820-98) served as a Presbyterian pastor at Tinkling Springs, Virginia, and then assumed the post of professor of both church history and theology at Union Theological Seminary. He also founded Austin Theological Seminary and authored two other books, Discussions and Systematic Theology (also published by Banner of Truth).

The title under review is the fruit of twenty years of Dabney's study, reflection, and teaching. In a display of great catholicity of spirit, he writes in the preface that his hope in authoring the book was that it would be useful to "all my brethren of every name [denomination] and will assist them to preach the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ more directly, scripturally and effectively."

This work is a scholarly treatment on homiletics and preaching, but it is not scholarship without heart and evangelical passion. The opening chapter deals with the subject of the preacher's commission from God.

Dabney clearly believed that true preaching was the result of divine activity. God Himself is the one who calls a man to preach the gospel. Further, only the divine work the Holy Spirit is sufficient to equip and empower a man to preach. Dabney states that when a man is under this kind of divine influence, his preaching will "communicate a peculiar earnestness, tenderness, and authority."

Other chapters in the book deal with various technical aspects of preaching, such as preparing sermons, balancing the topics, and handling biblical texts. Dabney also gives what he calls the "cardinal requisites of the sermon," by which he means textual fidelity, unity, instructiveness, evangelical tone, movement, and order.

Another helpful section in the book includes specific instruction regarding the means by which a sermon acquires force and effective argumentation. Dabney suggests the use of supporting texts, illustrations, arrangement, answers to objections, and the application of truth to ensure that sermons are not only sound but also persuasive. Other helpful topics include the preacher's character and credibility, style, methods of preparation, and pulpit prayers.

This book is not easy reading. It requires serious thought and will yield fruit only to those who study it closely. However, the content is excellent, and the benefits to be gained are well worth the effort.

MT - Editor

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones Letters 1919-1981

Edited by Iain H. Murray

Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust (1994)

248 pages

Correspondence between Christians can be a great source of blessing and encouragement, not only for the correspondents themselves, but also for those who later have the privilege of reading such letters. This is certainly the case with this collection, which consists of letters of David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (most of them previously unpublished) written between the years of 1919 and 1981.

The letters are addressed to many different individuals, ranging from those he knew intimately to individuals who were contacting him for the first time for help or counsel. They cover a wide range of subjects and are arranged in part by the time period in which they were written and in part according to the different groups or organizations that Lloyd-Jones was somehow connected with.

The volume begins with letters from the earliest years of his ministry in the late 1920s, consisting primarily of correspondence to various men and Christian leaders in Wales where he first ministered. They reflect the zeal, anticipation, and faith Lloyd-Jones obviously felt during this period when he was leaving a promising medical career in London in order to answer God's call to preach the gospel in a rural Welsh mission area.

The letters in the second section are to his new bride, Bethan, and were all written in the 1930s. They reveal the warmth and heartfelt communication that continued between them all the days of their life together.

The collection continues with a number of letters to both friends and fellow ministers as well as to individuals related to his pastorate at Westminster Chapel in London. A number of his open letters to his congregation are also included.

An interesting segment of letters written to family members reveals his deep commitment to relationship with his mother and children despite the demands of his busy schedule. His letters to his children when they were grown and married reflect fatherly concern and his keen interest in continuing to communicate with them and encourage them in any way he could.

The remainder of the letters included in the volume deal primarily with the interests of the evangelical community worldwide. There are letters to a younger generation of leaders and evangelical agencies, letters dealing with evangelical controversies, and finally a section that covers his retirement years, during which he remained extraordinarily active in preaching and preparing material for publication until health problems made such work impossible.

Two things stand out as one reads these letters. The first is what a warm and wonderful communicator Lloyd-Jones was through letters. He had a way with words that made the recipient of even the shortest letter feel important and appreciated. His letters surely were a source of great encouragement and measureless help to countless numbers of people.

The second striking point is the amazing amount of correspondence he was able to carry on, given the unrelenting demands on his schedule. He regularly preached three times each weekend at Westminster Chapel, traveled throughout the week to speaking engagements across the British Isles, made numerous personal visits, devoted much time to study and prayer, and maintained a high level of involvement in various conferences and meetings. How he could have written and responded to as many letters as he did is hard to fathom. It reflects the commitment of his heart to help others begin a relationship with the living God and make progress in the faith.

This is a warm and encouraging book to read, especially for those who have profited from the ministry and books of Dr. Lloyd-Jones but desire more of a glimpse into his heart and life.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/rl-dabney/a-course-of-lectures-on-preaching/>

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