

*Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, Graeme Goldsworthy. Eerdmans, 2000. Grand Rapids, MI, 271pp.

“Nothing...except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1) is not only the theology of Paul’s mission to the Corinthians but is also a summation of Graeme Goldsworthy’s attempt to maintain a marriage between preaching and biblical theology. The author states some principles of biblical interpretation and theology that have fallen out of favor in some circles, but those with a Restoration heritage will gladly identify with much of what he says. Although Goldsworthy’s theology clearly stamps him as an evangelical, what he espouses will hopefully fuel some needed discussion across a broad spectrum of theological colors.

As the title suggests, the author is concerned with the whole Bible. Rather than preaching the Bible as a fragmented and independent collection of books, he insists the preacher must learn to consolidate the individual messages of each book into a unified whole. This demands that the biblical exegete stop analyzing bits and pieces of biblical literature as if each were unrelated to the other. This unified whole is most important to Goldsworthy, and he is concerned that too much contemporary theology and preaching make the mistake of not seeing the forest for the trees. He believes, for example, that the Bible is more than just a collection of timeless truths. Any given sermon must incorporate each truth with the setting in which the particular truth is given. In effect each timeless truth has a context, and in losing the context the bigger picture also is lost.

One of his guiding assertions is his insistence that the Bible, as our supreme source of authority, should shape our presuppositions. Systematic and dogmatic theology are more inclined to start from presuppositions not contained in the Bible, and history likewise must learn to build its foundation on the Bible’s view of history. In particular the preacher must take into account the flow and message of salvation history, namely, that which demonstrates God’s historical acts in bringing about the Gospel.

Consistent with this view is Goldsworthy's particular assertion that all the spokes of the biblical wheel revolve around the hub that is the Gospel of Christ. The trajectory of history lands in Gospel territory and the events surrounding the person and work of Christ arch back to sustain the meaning of events in the Old Testament. How any passage of scripture testifies to Christ and how the entire scope of biblical revelation finds its ultimate meaning in Him is the essence of what Goldsworthy wants preaching to demonstrate. Since Christ is the focus of biblical theology, he must also be the focus of preaching.

The book is worth some sustained reflection because of its insistence on context, unity, and salvation history in the preaching task and in the task of understanding the Bible properly. The second part of the book where he applies his ideas to different sections of scripture, however, would benefit from a more detailed treatment. Theological particulars demand more discussion to unpack them properly.

In addition a significant help would have been to include a sample sermon from each of his biblical categories. His suggestions were good but exactly how he preaches the big themes and the salvation of Christ in every text, especially the portions of scripture where seeing Christ is not so obvious, would have clarified specifically how to preach the big picture and include Christ in every sermon. In spite of this shortcoming, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* deserves a thorough discussion by anyone who takes the preaching task seriously.

(Published in *Stone-Campbell Journal*, Spring 2002, Vol. 5, no. 1, p. 127.)