

STRIKING SIMILARITIES BETWEEN TWO EXTRAORDINARY EXPOSITORS

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In each generation, God raises up one dominant voice in the church that speaks with the greatest biblical authority and theological profundity, yet with far-reaching appeal. Through his prolific pulpit and pen, such a pivotal figure becomes the primary instrument that most influences the direction of God's work around the world. Whether it be John Calvin in the sixteenth century, John Owen in the seventeenth, Jonathan Edwards in the eighteenth, or Charles Spurgeon in the nineteenth, every hour of human history has one such strategic leader who marries both depth and breadth of ministry, and most impacts the times in which he lives. For the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a compelling case can be made that these two individuals are, respectively, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John MacArthur. Six remarkable resemblances characterize their comparable, extraordinary preaching.

Through Lloyd-Jones' prolific Westminster pulpit in London, and later by the global distribution of his printed sermons, this formidable leader came to be widely regarded in his day as "the greatest preacher in Christendom."¹ Affectionately known as "the Doctor," this brilliant physician-turned-preacher became the foremost expositor in the mid-twentieth century and was the leading influence in bringing about a resurgence of biblical preaching. "There is little doubt," Eric J. Alexander writes, "that Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was the greatest preacher the English-speaking world has seen in the twentieth century."² Through his strategic pulpit, only a short walk from Buckingham Palace, Lloyd-Jones spoke to the nation and impacted the evangelical church around the world.

¹ Wilber M. Smith, *Moody Monthly* (October 1955), 32 as quoted by Iain Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth, 1990), 329.

² Eric J. Alexander, "Foreword," in *Martyn Lloyd-Jones, The Cross: God's Way of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1986), vii.

With unflagging confidence in Scripture, this fiery Welsh-born preacher burned like a bright torch in a day that had witnessed “the decline in powerful biblical preaching in the English-speaking world.”³ Despite contemporary trends to the contrary, Lloyd-Jones staunchly refused to cave in to the many pressures around him that clamored for man-centered programs to attract a crowd. While others looked to church growth techniques, this feisty Puritan-born-out-of-due-time relied chiefly upon the exposition of the Word to build the church. In spite of his many skeptics, Lloyd-Jones eventually preached to capacity crowds of 2,500 on Sunday mornings and evenings and 1,200 each Friday evening. Throughout his ministry, Lloyd-Jones emphasized that the preaching of the Word must always be the priority.

Recognizing Lloyd-Jones’ enduring legacy, Peter Lewis writes, “In the history of the pulpit in Britain, the preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones is outstanding. He takes his place in a long line of great preachers since the Protestant Reformation, who have stood for the reformation and renewal of the church, the evangelization and awakening of the world.”⁴ Despite the spiritual decline in post-World War II England, this exemplarily expositor stood virtually alone in his commitment to biblical preaching. Hughes Oliphant Old states, “The greatest impact of Lloyd-Jones on the English-speaking pulpit of today is the recovery of true expository preaching.”⁵ In addition, Lloyd-Jones founded the Banner of Truth Trust, a publishing house for the distribution of Puritan and Reformed literature. Moreover, he chaired the annual Puritan Conference and moderated the Westminster Minister’s Fraternal, leaving an indelible mark upon the Christian church.

RAISING UP OF A NEW VOICE

As Lloyd-Jones stepped down from his Westminster pulpit on October 9, 1968, none could have known that at that moment, the next strong voice was being raised up across the Atlantic Ocean, one that would continue this same resurgence of biblical preaching. On February 9, 1969, only four months after Lloyd-Jones resigned his pastorate, a twenty-nine-year-old preacher assumed the pulpit of Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, California and launched what would become more than four decades of prodigious sermon output. His name is John MacArthur, and like Lloyd-Jones before him, the focal point of his prolific ministry would be the clear and compelling exposition of the Scripture. Under his preaching, Grace Church would witness explosive growth from the

³ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁴ Peter Lewis, “The Doctor As A Preacher,” in *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Chosen By God*, ed. Christopher Catherwood (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1986), 92-93.

⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*: Vol. 6, *The Modern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 938.

300 who first heard him in a small chapel to two morning services and one evening service filled to capacity in its newly-built 3,000-seat auditorium. As with Westminster Chapel, so Grace Church would witness the unmistakable power of the Word of God preached.

The influence of MacArthur's preaching has reached far beyond the walls of Grace Community Church, gaining "a reputation for solid expository preaching."⁶ Flowing out of this pulpit has come nearly 400 books and study guides either written or edited by MacArthur. Included in this prolific ministry came the *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* series, a thirty-one volume commentary set that when completed, will address every verse of every book in the New Testament. What is more, the *MacArthur Study Bible* is the direct fruit of this prolific pulpit and has become the cornerstone resource of his ministry, available in English, Spanish, Russian, German, French, Italian, Chinese, Arabic, with more languages on the way.

Reaching around the globe, the Grace pulpit has truly become a world pulpit, exerting an influence of staggering, if not unprecedented, proportions. Through "Grace to You" radio broadcasts, MacArthur's sermons are heard daily some 1,000 times throughout the English-speaking world in the United States, Canada, Europe, the Philippines, South Africa, and beyond. In addition, his sermons are heard another 1,000 times daily in 23 Spanish-speaking countries, including Mexico, Spain, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, and Colombia. Moreover, under this far-reaching pulpit, The Master's Seminary was birthed in 1986 for the purpose of training men in expository preaching. Remarkably, a series of fourteen training centers has emerged around the world, known as The Master's Academy International (TMAI). These institutions are staffed by TMS graduates and are designed to equip a new generation of biblical expositors throughout the world.⁷

In the summer of 2011, MacArthur will complete his verse-by-verse exposition through the Gospel of Mark, which will mark a far greater milestone—the completion of his preaching at Grace Community Church through the entire New Testament. This monumental achievement of long term, consistent exposition will become a model inspiration and resource for pastors and teachers for generations to come. So remarkable is this accomplishment that one must go back to the voluminous output of Calvin in Geneva to find a comparable standard.

⁶ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*: Vol. 7, *Our Own Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 553.

⁷ These training centers include Albania (Southeastern Europe Theologian Seminary), Croatia (Theological Biblical Academy), Germany/Switzerland (European Bible Training Center), Honduras (*Ministerios Evangelicos de las Americas*), India (Pastoral Training Seminary), Italy (Italian Theological Academy), Japan (Hamadera Bible Institute), Mexico (Word of Grace Biblical Seminary), New Zealand (The Shepherd's Bible College), The Philippines (The Expositor's Academy), Russia (Samara Preachers' Institute & Theological Seminary), Russia (Word of Grace Bible Institute), South Africa (Christ Seminary), and Ukraine (Irpin Biblical Seminary).

A STRIKING RESEMBLANCE

Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur have proven to be, arguably, the premier expositors of the last two generations. What Lloyd-Jones was to the middle of the twentieth century, MacArthur has become to the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Though these two luminous preachers would never meet, and each would be his own man, many striking parallels can be identified between their pulpit ministries. The common ground shared by these two gifted preachers should serve as a positive example for all preachers to pattern their ministries.

In this article, the focus will be upon noted similarities between the expository preaching of these two extraordinary men. What core commitments distinguished them as great preachers in their day? What can we learn from their distinguished ministries that are worthy of imitation by this generation of preachers? What are the common cornerstones upon which their pulpits were built? To answer these questions, the following parallels should be noted between these two extraordinary expositors.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

The similarities between Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur begin with their unwavering commitment to the authority of Scripture. Both these pulpit stalwarts have strongly affirmed the sovereignty of Scripture over the life of the church and every individual. For both men, the Bible is, indisputably, the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the living God, fully sufficient to accomplish God's purposes upon the earth. Herein lies the underlying genius for their powerful expositions.

The Sovereignty of Scripture

With unshakable certainty, Lloyd-Jones asserts that "the Scriptures are a divine product breathed out by God."⁸ He maintains, "They were produced by the creative breath of the almighty God." "It is not merely that the thoughts are inspired, not merely the idea," Lloyd-Jones contends, "but the actual record, down to the particular words."⁹ Regarding the divine inspiration of Scripture, he states, "The Holy Spirit has thus overruled and controlled and guided these men, even in the particular words, in such a way as to prevent any error, and above all to produce the result that was originally intended by God."¹⁰ With deep

⁸ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son: Volume I, Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 24.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

conviction, Lloyd-Jones insisted that the Bible is the very breath of God, and that it speaks with perfect accuracy and divine authority.

To this point, Lloyd-Jones affirms: “This subject of authority is indeed the great theme of the Bible itself. The Bible presents itself to us as an authoritative book.”¹¹ The Doctor adds, “The authority of the Scriptures is not a matter to be defended, so much as to be asserted...it is the preaching and exposition of the Bible that really establish its truth and authority.”¹² “The Scriptures *themselves* claim that authority,” Lloyd-Jones asserts. “They come to us as the Word of God... You cannot read the Old Testament without feeling that everywhere there is the assumption that this is the Word of God.”¹³ He further notes, “Our Lord Himself fully accepted that position. How often does He say, ‘It is written’! And He directs men to that as the final authority. He meets the attack of Satan by quoting Scripture.”¹⁴ Only when the Scripture is held to be supremely authoritative can the preacher wield the sword of the Spirit with power.

Regarding the Old Testament, Lloyd-Jones writes: “To the Lord Jesus Christ, the Old Testament was the Word of God; it was Scripture; it was something absolutely unique and apart; it had authority which nothing else has ever possessed nor can possess.”¹⁵ Similarly, this distinguished preacher recognizes this same authority in the New Testament: “The authority of the apostles undergirds and underlies the authority of the Gospels and the Epistles, the Book of Acts, indeed the whole of the New Testament. And we either accept that or we do not. It is the only authority: it is the final authority.”¹⁶ To be sure, Scripture is the highest authority and final word in the Westminster pulpit, the undisputed arbitrator in all matters.

Absolute Authority

Assuming this same stance, MacArthur likewise affirms the absolute authority of Scripture. This noted expositor believes that this fundamental truth is rooted and grounded in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible: “All Scripture is God’s inerrant Word.” He writes, “God divinely superintended the accurate recording of His divinely breathed truth by His divinely chosen men.”¹⁷ MacArthur believes that divine inerrancy is inseparably connected with biblical

¹¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Authority* (1958; repr., Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1984), 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 187

¹⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Authority*, 55, 59.

¹⁷ John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 142-43.

authority: “Those God-given, humanly-recorded words became God’s written Word, inerrant and authoritative as originally given.”¹⁸ He further asserts, “If the Bible is infallible and inerrant, it must be the final word—the highest standard of authority.”¹⁹ Consequently, MacArthur argues that “the truth of Scripture...has the full weight of *God’s own* authority behind it.”²⁰ Because the Bible is divinely inspired, it is divinely authoritative, a truth that mandates biblical preaching.

“If the Bible is true,” MacArthur insists, “then it is also authoritative. As divinely revealed truth, it carries the full weight of God’s own authority. If you claim to believe the Bible at all, you ultimately must bow to its authority.”²¹ To this end, he states: “Preaching the Bible establishes the authority of God over the mind and the soul. When we preach the Word of God, our people understand who has sovereignty over their souls—it is God alone who reigns over their thoughts and their actions.”²² The Bible, MacArthur notes, “is not a book of suggestions. Its divine mandates are authoritative and binding. Those who treat it lightly place themselves in eternal peril. Those who take it seriously find eternal blessing.”²³ Consequently, “The Bible claims complete authority over our lives.”²⁴ This is to say, Scripture possesses supreme authority over every part of every life.

Such biblical authority, Old notes, breeds great confidence in MacArthur as he preaches: “What he seems to have is a witness to true authority. He recognizes in Scripture the Word of God, and when he preaches, it is Scripture that one hears.”²⁵ He adds: “Surely one of the greatest strengths of MacArthur’s preaching ministry is his complete confidence in the text.”²⁶ Therefore, MacArthur’s approach to the biblical text must surely be defined by his complete reliance upon its unrivalled authority. Old further stresses: “This basic assumption that the text of Scripture is reliable is part of the foundation of his effectiveness as an interpreter.”²⁷ Unquestionably, MacArthur’s firm

¹⁸ Ibid., 144.

¹⁹ John MacArthur, *How to Get the Most from God’s Word* (Dallas: Word, 1997), 51.

²⁰ John MacArthur, *Why One Way? Defending an Exclusive Claim in an Inclusive World* (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 2002), 49.

²¹ Ibid., 50-51.

²² John MacArthur, “Why I Still Preach the Bible,” in *Preaching the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 149.

²³ John MacArthur, *Truth Matters* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 6.

²⁴ MacArthur, *How to Get the Most from God’s Word*, 52.

²⁵ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 7:558.

²⁶ Ibid., 556.

²⁷ Ibid., 555.

commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture emboldens his preaching. In this, both Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur speak with one voice.

THE PRIMACY OF THE PULPIT

Flowing out of their common recognition of biblical authority is a second striking similarity, namely, their strict commitment to the primacy of biblical preaching. Though both men have faced demands on many fronts, they, nevertheless, are, first and foremost, preachers of the Word. In their ministries, the public exposition of Scripture occupied the central place. For both men, the pulpit was the principle means by which they exerted their greatest influence.

High Calling to a Sacred Task

By all accounts, the Westminster pulpit was central to every aspect of the spiritual life of the church. Accordingly, Lloyd-Jones maintained that preaching is the loftiest task to which anyone could commit himself. He writes, “The work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called.”²⁸ What is more, Lloyd-Jones insists: “The most urgent need in the Christian church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.”²⁹ Nothing, he maintained, must ever supplant the primacy of the pulpit in the church.

Lloyd-Jones came to this conviction early as a brilliant young physician. He came to the sobering realization that he was merely assisting the physical healing of people who would return to godless living and suffer eternal destruction. He lamented, “We spend most of our time rendering people fit to go back to their sin.”³⁰ Of his patients, he realized: “A man with a healthy body and a diseased soul is all right for sixty years or so and then he has to face an eternity of hell.”³¹ Once converted, Lloyd-Jones came to see that only the Word of God can bring about what ultimately matters, the healing of eternal souls. With this conviction, he was being drawn to the ministry of preaching: “The primary task of the Church and of the Christian minister is the preaching of the Word of God.”³² Everything in the church, he believed, should be shaped and influenced by the pulpit.

²⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 9. So strongly did he believe this that the first chapter in this book is titled “The Primacy of Preaching.”

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Lloyd-Jones, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s,” (Matt. 22:20-21), April 28, 1929 as cited in Iain Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The First Forty Years 1899-1939* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), 80.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 19.

Substantiating this claim, Lloyd-Jones pointed to the earthly ministries of Jesus Christ: "In the life and ministry of our Lord Himself, you have this clear indication of the primacy of preaching and of teaching."³³ In addition, he understood that Christ assigned this same priority to His apostles. When these men were "filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost," he notes, they immediately "began to preach."³⁴ As other needs arose in the early church, Lloyd-Jones paraphrased Peter's assertion, stating: "We are here to preach this Word, this is the first thing. We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word."³⁵ By this statement, he maintained that preaching, empowered by prayer, is job number one in the church. He states that these "priorities are laid down once and forever...and we must not allow anything to deflect us from this."³⁶ No other ministry or church activity must ever supplant the primacy of the pulpit.

In Season and Out of Season

Standing shoulder to shoulder with Lloyd-Jones, MacArthur has voiced this same conviction: "The church's most important function is to proclaim the Word of God in an understandable, direct, and authoritative way."³⁷ Assigning the pulpit this proper place, MacArthur declares: "Preaching the Word *must* be the very heart of our ministry philosophy."³⁸ Resisting present day trends, he emphatically states: "In corporate worship, the preaching of the Word should take first place."³⁹ Therefore, MacArthur maintains: "Preaching is an irreplaceable aspect of all corporate worship. In fact, the whole church service should revolve around the ministry of the Word. Everything else is either preparatory to, or a response to, the exposition of Scripture."⁴⁰ At Grace Church, the centrality of the Word preached is an irrefutable core value.

MacArthur is indefatigable in this fundamental commitment: "Preaching is the non-negotiable heart of the church's ministry. This fact does not change because public opinion changes."⁴¹ MacArthur states that this

³³ Ibid., 21.

³⁴ Ibid., 22.

³⁵ Ibid., 23.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John MacArthur, *The Master's Plan for the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 59-60.

³⁸ John MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the World* (1993; repr., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 45.

³⁹ John MacArthur, "How Shall We Then Worship?" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, gen. ed. John H. Armstrong (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 181.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁴¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., "Unafraid to Preach" in *Whatever Happened to the Reformation?*, eds. Gary L. W. Johnson and R. Fowler White (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2001), 274.

biblically-assigned priority is non-negotiable: “Some people today argue that the church could draw more ‘unchurched’ people by featuring drama and music instead of preaching. But Paul’s instructions to Timothy were clear. He was to preach the Word whether preaching was popular or not—’in season and out of season.’”⁴² Thus, MacArthur sounds this clarion warning: “A ‘church’ where the Word of God is not regularly and faithfully preached is no true church.”⁴³ Only where the Scripture is rightly expounded, he believes, does a true church meet.

Unswayed by contemporary trends, MacArthur states, “Many things have come along to try and supplant preaching. And unfortunately, most people just let it happen. If you open your newspaper and look at the church page, instead of reading about men preaching the Word of God, you read about musical phantasmagorias, movies, and all sorts of other things going on.”⁴⁴ He staunchly insists, “They must never supplant the preaching of the Word. A holy man, who is gifted to preach by the Spirit of God and prepared in the Word of God, has no equal in a power presentation of the truth. That is the pattern of Scripture.”⁴⁵ Such a fundamental commitment to preaching lies at the heart of every great preacher. Bottomline, MacArthur concludes: “Preaching is to be the priority.”⁴⁶

THE CONTINUITY OF EXPOSITION

If preaching is to be primary, it demands a certain kind of preaching, specially, biblical preaching. To this end, Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur have been known for their expository pulpits, a fundamental approach that involves long series through entire books in the Bible. Whether preaching verse-by-verse through whole books, or through sections within books, both men have used the *lectio continua* approach, meaning “continuous expositions.” This comprehensive *modus operandi* has served a balanced diet to their well-balanced congregations.

New Life into a Classic Form

Amid many barren pulpits, Lloyd-Jones so gave himself to sequential expository preaching that, Old insists, he was “breathing new life into a very classic form.” Lloyd-Jones was able to “recover and popularize” expository preaching “throughout the English-speaking world.”⁴⁷ He accomplished this

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ MacArthur, “How Shall We Then Worship?” 182.

⁴⁴ John MacArthur, *Exalting the Crucified Christ* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace, 1982), 3-4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 6:946.

resurgence at a time when “classic expository preaching...had all but died out.”⁴⁸ Resisting this trend, Lloyd-Jones insisted: “The message should always arise out of the Scriptures directly.”⁴⁹ In other words, the sermon must start and stay with the Scripture, saying explicitly what the text says. But more than that, Lloyd-Jones asserted: “It should be clear to people that what we are saying is something that comes out of the Bible. We are presenting the Bible and its message. That is the origin of our message.”⁵⁰ In short, he maintained that true preaching “must always be expository.”⁵¹

By this approach, Lloyd-Jones delivered over 4,000 sermons from his Westminster pulpit, preaching twice on Sundays, once in the morning and once in the evening, and on Friday evenings (September to May). Further, he conducted regular journeys throughout the English countryside, preaching at least two to three times during the week, including numerous pastors’ conferences.

Lloyd-Jones’s Sunday morning sermons were intentionally directed toward Christians. From his Westminster pulpit, he preached through: 1 Peter (twenty-five sermons, 1943-1944), 2 Peter (twenty-five sermons, 1946-1947), Philippians (thirty-seven sermons, 1947-1948), 1 John (sixty-seven sermons, 1948-1950), and Habakkuk (six sermons, 1950). The most famous Sunday morning series by Lloyd-Jones was the Sermon on the Mount, a thorough treatment of Matthew 5-7 (sixty sermons, 1950-1952). Other Sunday morning series included an exposition of John 17 (thirteen sermons, 1952-1953), Psalm 73 (eleven sermons, 1953), Spiritual Depression from Psalm 42 (twenty-one sermons, 1954), Revival (twenty-six sermons, 1959), Ephesians (260 sermons, 1954-1962), Colossians 1 (fourteen sermons, 1962), and the Gospel of John chapters 1-4 (1962-1968).

In the Sunday evening messages, Lloyd-Jones was purposefully evangelistic, preaching through: Isaiah 35 (six sermons, 1946), Isaiah 40 (nine sermons, 1954), Psalm 107 (seven sermons, 1955), Authority (three sermons, 1957), Galatians 6:14 on the Cross (nine sermons, 1963), Psalm 1 (four sermons, 1963), Isaiah 1 (nine sermons, 1963), Isaiah 5 (seven sermons, 1964), Joy Unspeakable (twenty-four sermons, 1964-1965), and Acts 1-8 (110 sermons, 1965-1968). In addition, Lloyd-Jones started a Friday night Bible study, early in his Westminster ministry, focused primarily upon Christians, an on-going series which became enormously popular. His first Friday night series was on Great Doctrines of the Bible (eighty-one sermons, 1952-1955). Far from being dry lectures, these messages were delivered with all the elements of dynamic preaching. This series was followed by his magisterial exposition of the book of

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 187.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁵¹ Ibid., 196.

Romans (372 sermons, 1957-1968), culminating in Romans 14:17, when he retired from the Westminster pulpit.

The Only Legitimate Way to Preach

Like Lloyd-Jones, MacArthur made the same commitment to expository preaching. He writes: “Preaching and teaching must be expositional, setting forth as clearly, systematically, and completely as possible the truths of God’s Word and only those truths.”⁵² MacArthur emphatically asserts: “It is for that reason that expository preaching—preaching that systematically and thoroughly explains the meaning of Scripture—is the only legitimate way to preach.” Consequently, he states that the message must never originate with himself: “The preacher’s responsibility is not to create messages from his own wisdom or cleverness or to manipulate or sway his listeners by means of his own persuasiveness of charisma but to interpret, explain, and apply God’s Word as clearly and completely as possible.”⁵³ This is the genius of MacArthur’s preaching. Starting at the first verse of chapter one and moving consecutively through the entire book, he simply reads, explains, and applies God’s Word. MacArthur is a mouthpiece for the biblical text.

In all, MacArthur has delivered some 3,000 expositions at Grace Community Church. For over forty years, he has stood in one pulpit and faithfully expounded the Scripture, Sunday by Sunday.⁵⁴ On Sunday mornings, MacArthur has preached, verse by verse, through: Romans (1969), the Gospel of John (seventy-eight sermons, 1970-1972), Acts (103 sermons, 1972-1975), 1 Corinthians (eighty-one sermons, 1975-1977), Ephesians (sixty sermons, 1978-1979), the Gospel of Matthew (226 sermons, 1978-1985), 1 Timothy (fifty sermons, 1985-1987), 2 Timothy (twenty-seven sermons, 1987-1988), Philippians (forty-six sermons, 1988-1989), 1 Thessalonians (thirty-six sermons, 1990-1991), Philemon (four sermons, 1991), 2 Thessalonians (seventeen sermons, 1992), Titus (twenty-four sermons, 1992-1993), 2 Corinthians (ninety-six sermons, 1993-1998), the Gospel of Luke (298 sermons, 1998-2008), the Gospel of Mark (2009-2011).

On Sunday evenings, MacArthur has likewise expounded: Habakkuk (three sermons, 1969), 1 and 2 Peter (1969), Hebrews (forty-three sermons, 1972-1973), Galatians (twenty-four sermons, 1973-1974), Colossians (twenty-three sermons, 1976), Zechariah (nineteen sermons, 1977), Daniel (thirty-one sermons, 1979-1980), Romans (124 sermons, 1981-1986), James (thirty-four

⁵² John MacArthur, *Titus*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 49.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁵⁴ It should be noted that MacArthur preached consecutively through the first seventy-five psalms on Wednesday evenings during his early years at Grace Community Church until the demands of growing ministry, as well as increasing preaching opportunities outside the church, necessitated that his time be reinvested more strategically. Sadly, these early Wednesday evening messages were not recorded.

sermons, 1986-1987), 1 Peter (fifty sermons, 1988-1990), 2 Peter (twenty-seven sermons, 1990-1991), Revelation (eighty-seven sermons, 1991-1995), Genesis 1-11 (forty-nine sermons, 1999-2001), 1 John (forty-two sermons, 2002-2003), 2 John (four sermons, 2003), 3 John (two sermons, 2003), Jude (fifteen sermons, 2004).

In addition, MacArthur has also preached the following topical expository series: The Superiority of Christ (seven sermons, 1972), The Second Coming of Jesus Christ (twenty-three sermons, 1973), Is the Bible Reliable? (twelve sermons, 1974), God, Satan, and Angels (nine sermons, 1975), The Charismatic Movement (twelve sermons, 1977), Spiritual Bootcamp (four sermons, 1978), True Worship (eight sermons, 1982), The Anatomy of a Church (eight sermons, 1983), Heaven (eight sermons, 1987), Spiritual Growth (four sermons, 1988), Seven Steps to Spiritual Stability (six sermons, 1989), Whatever Happened to the Holy Spirit? (six sermons, 1989), The Love of God (six sermons, 1994-1995), The Fulfilled Family (eleven sermons, 1996), A Biblical Perspective on the Middle East and Terrorism (four sermons, 2001), The Doctrines of Grace (ten sermons, 2004), Spiritual Terrorism (ten sermons, 2004), Making a Case for the Bible (five sermons, 2006), Why Every Calvinist Should be a Premillennialist (six sermons, 2007), The Kind of Worship God Desires (five sermons, 2008), Romans chapters 3, 4 and 5 (ten sermons, 2009), Hebrews 11 (twelve sermons, 2009-2010), 1 Corinthians 13 (four sermons, 2010), 1 Corinthians 15 (six sermons, 2010).⁵⁵

THE INTEGRITY OF THE TEXT

Fourth, Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur are equally committed to serious study in their sermon preparation. Possessing commanding intellects, these two master expositors feverishly devoted themselves to the diligent study of the Scripture. The depth of their sermon preparation has determined the breadth of their ministry. Both men have labored to search the Scripture in order to discover its essential meaning, key doctrines, and timeless principles.

Digging into the Scripture

As a promising medical student, Lloyd-Jones knew the discipline required in rigorous academic study. Following his demanding schooling, he joined the staff of the foremost teaching hospital in the world, St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. There he became the chief clinical assistant to Sir Thomas Horder, a leading heart physician and doctor to the royal family. Under this privileged tutelage, Horder's Socratic approach to logic and learning

⁵⁵ Other shorter topical series have been preached by Dr. MacArthur from the Grace pulpit. Consulting Grace to You (www.gty.org) will provide the listing for the few other smaller series.

sharpened the intellectual prowess of this future preacher.⁵⁶ Horder acclaimed Lloyd-Jones to be “the most acute thinker that I ever knew.”⁵⁷ Once converted and called into ministry, Lloyd-Jones applied his ingenious mind to the study of Scripture.

As Lloyd-Jones approached the Bible, it was as though he was examining a patient. Of each text, he asked probing questions, synthesized his findings, and determined the proper diagnosis. He said: “You have to question your text, to put questions to it, and especially this question—What is this saying? What is the particular doctrine here, the special message? In the preparation of a sermon, nothing is more important than that.”⁵⁸ In scrutinizing the Scripture, Lloyd-Jones insisted that his analysis must involve studying in the original languages. He stated that the Greek and Hebrew “are of great value for the sake of accuracy; no more, that is all. They cannot guarantee accuracy, but they promote it.”⁵⁹ Thus, he insisted, linguistic tools need to be employed in interpreting the Scripture. After digging into the text, Lloyd-Jones then urged the consulting “commentaries or any aids that you may choose to employ.”⁶⁰

In this pursuit, Lloyd-Jones’s entire life was “immersed in Scripture.”⁶¹ Using the Robert Murray McCheyne system of daily Scripture reading, he poured over four passages of Scripture each day, two in the morning and two at night. Those who knew him best said: “He knew that Bible inside and out!”⁶² For Lloyd-Jones, this gave him a thorough knowledge of the whole Bible. As he dug into each text, he looked for the doctrine taught therein. Lloyd-Jones said: “Biblical study is of very little value if it ends in and of itself and is mainly a matter of the meaning of the words. The purpose of studying the Scripture is to arrive at its doctrine.”⁶³ Like a hard-working miner, he explored each passage until he extracted its theological gems, core doctrines, and biblical principles. Out of this daily reading and sermon preparation, he was armed with the truth and, in turn, preached the Word.

⁵⁶ Christopher Catherwood, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: A Family Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 30.

⁵⁷ Christopher Catherwood, *Five Evangelical Leaders* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1985), 56.

⁵⁸ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 76.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 171-73.

⁶¹ Catherwood, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: A Family Portrait*, 70.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Murray, David *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith*, 261.

Rightly Dividing the Word

Hard study has been equally present in MacArthur's sermon preparation. Iain Murray notes this relentless pursuit in study of the Scripture: "For forty-four or forty-five Sundays, through forty years, two new sermons have been prepared every week; in the early years it was three, as MacArthur also spoke at the church on Wednesday nights. The pattern of his week has been to give the best of his time, from Tuesday to Friday, to preparation for preaching."⁶⁴ This regimented study has been consistent over the lengthy span of more than four decades. Murray adds: "In early years, this meant some fifteen hours of work for each sermon; and he still requires from eight to ten hours."⁶⁵ Week after week, month after month, year after year, MacArthur has devoted himself to the meticulous study of the biblical text. The deeper he has dug down into the text, the stronger his pulpit has grown.

Regarding his approach, MacArthur states: "I always begin by reading the whole book. It is imperative for the expositor to be familiar with the overall message and flow of the book before he begins preaching any passages from it."⁶⁶ In so doing: "I also read the introductory sections in several good commentaries" in order to "become familiar with the author of the book, the addresses, the book's theme or purpose, the date of its writing, and other important background material."⁶⁷ With the individual passage isolated, "I ask myself, 'What is the primary message of this passage? What is the central truth? What is the main expositional idea?'"⁶⁸ Having found the main point, "I begin to look for the subordinate points that support it."⁶⁹ Subsequently, "The next step is a detailed analysis of its words and grammar"⁷⁰ to find "any problems in the passage, such as an important textual variant, an unusual word, or a difficult grammatical construction."⁷¹ Then he will "diagram the passage" to become

⁶⁴ Iain Murray, "John MacArthur: A Sketch of An Evangelical Leader," in *Truth Endures: Commemorating Forty Years of Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time 1969-2009* (Panorama City, CA: Grace to You, 2009), 30.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ John MacArthur, "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Study Method for Faithful Preaching," in *Preach the Word: Essays on Expository Preaching: In Honor of R. Kent Hughes*, eds. Leland Ryken and Todd A. Wilson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 86.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ John MacArthur, "A Study Method for Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 220.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

“aware of the grammatical structure.”⁷² At last, “I put together a preliminary outline.”⁷³

MacArthur contends, “Rightly dividing the Word of truth demands great effort. It was originally written many years ago in very different contexts, today’s exegete has to work hard to bridge the gaps of language, culture, geography, and history. He must also do his best to understand the flow of the argument, as it would have been understood by its original readers” and “intended by its original human author.”⁷⁴ In summary, MacArthur states, “The meaning of the Scripture is the Scripture. If you do not have the interpretation of the passage right, then you do not have the Word of God, because only the true meaning is the Word of God.”⁷⁵ Consequently, MacArthur has shown himself firmly committed to finding the proper interpretation of the biblical text. Until he has it, he realizes, he can proceed no further.

THE PURITY OF DOCTRINE

Fifth, Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur have been keenly aware they must exposit doctrinal truths. This focus has yielded a depth lacking in other expositors. Murray observes there is “a growing difference between the older, [G. Campbell] Morgan tradition of exposition and MacArthur’s. In his case, as with Lloyd-Jones, the devotional thought is grounded on the bringing out of clear doctrinal principles. Exposition needs to lead hearers to doctrinal certainties.”⁷⁶ Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur have been committed to preaching biblical and systematic theology from each text.

Theology on Fire

Lloyd-Jones was adamant that true preaching must be doctrinal preaching: “What is preaching?... It is theology on fire. And a theology which does not take fire, I maintain, is a defective theology; or at least the man’s understanding of it is defective. Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.”⁷⁷ Each sermon, he maintained, must set forth doctrinal truths. To this point, Lloyd-Jones reiterates: “Preaching must always be theological, always based on a theological foundation... There is no type of preaching that should be non-theological.”⁷⁸ With deep conviction, he states: “You cannot deal

⁷² Ibid., 221.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ MacArthur, “Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” 79-80.

⁷⁵ MacArthur, *Why One Way?*, 34.

⁷⁶ Murray, “John MacArthur: A Sketch of an Evangelical Leader,” 28-46.

⁷⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 97.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 64-65.

properly with repentance without dealing with the doctrine of man, the doctrine of the Fall, the doctrine of sin and the wrath of God against sin.”⁷⁹ In other words, preaching must be aimed at teaching “doctrinal certainties.”

Consequently, Lloyd-Jones believed that strong preaching demands that the preacher have a strategic grasp of systematic theology: “To me there is nothing more important in a preacher than that he should know it and be well grounded in it. This systematic theology, this body of truth which is derived from the Scripture, should always be present as a background and as a controlling influence in his preaching.”⁸⁰ For Lloyd-Jones, sound doctrine was the very backbone of his preaching. Each passage must be tested by the analogy of Scripture and show its perfect consistency with the rest of Scripture.

Murray explains that for Lloyd-Jones, preaching expositively is “not simply to give the correct grammatical sense of a verse or passage. It is rather to set out the principles or doctrines which the words are intended to convey. True expository preaching is, therefore, doctrinal preaching, it is preaching which addresses specific truths from God to man.”⁸¹ Without teaching the doctrine of a passage, a sermon is devoid of power. Thus, Lloyd-Jones asserted, “The purpose of studying the Scripture is to arrive at doctrine.”⁸² Setting forth the doctrine of the passage, he believed, is essential to the sermon.

The Faith Once for All Delivered

This same focus upon sound doctrine is found in MacArthur’s preaching. This noted preacher writes: “The pastor’s purpose is not to make Scripture relevant to his people but to enable them to understand doctrine, which becomes the foundation of their spiritual living.”⁸³ No matter what people want, MacArthur states, solid theology must be put forth. He writes: “People’s ears may be itching for anything but sound doctrine, but the faithful pastor will defy the spirit of the age, confront his own fear, and boldly preach the truth anyway.”⁸⁴ Accordingly, he states: “In his preaching and teaching, it should be the pastor’s sole objective to enlighten his congregation in doctrine that protects and preserves their spiritual health.”⁸⁵ In other words, right living results from right doctrine.

In MacArthur’s preaching, Murray notes: “The necessity for doctrinal content—the making clear of biblical principles—became an increasingly

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁸¹ Murray, *The Fight of Faith*, 261.

⁸² Lloyd-Jones, *Faith on Trial* (Clover, SC: Christian Heritage, 2008), 88.

⁸³ MacArthur, *Titus*, 49.

⁸⁴ MacArthur, “Unafraid to Preach,” 271.

⁸⁵ MacArthur, *Titus*, 48-49.

important part of MacArthur's preaching."⁸⁶ To this end, MacArthur states: "Authentic Christianity is concerned first and foremost with truth. The Christian faith is not primarily about feelings although deep feelings will surely result from the impact of truth on our hearts. It is not about human relationships, even though relationships are the main focus in many of today's evangelical pulpits...Biblical Christianity is all about truth."⁸⁷ Consequently, MacArthur stresses that the absolute nature of truth necessitates that every pastor teach sound doctrine. He writes: "An excellent minister is to disseminate sound teaching to all people at all times through all means. That is the heart and soul of the ministry."⁸⁸

Regarding current trends, MacArthur notes: "There is much relational preaching today that attempts to make people feel better about themselves and about how God might feel about them, but there is little forceful defense of the full truth. As in most periods of church history, strong and effective defenders of the faith are at a premium."⁸⁹ Expositors of sound doctrine is the dire need in this present hour, he believes, those who uphold the standard of sound words. Such a commitment to preaching "the faith once for all delivered to the saints" galvanizes the pulpit.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SPIRIT

Sixth, Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur have stressed their utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit in preaching. Their complete reliance involves the Spirit's role in the preacher's study, as well as in the pulpit. The expositor's preparation in diligent study of the Word is entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit must enlighten the expositor's understanding of the biblical text and deepen his convictions in it. The same can be said regarding the Spirit's role in delivering the sermon. There can be *no* real preaching apart from the supernatural empowering of the Spirit of God.

Spirit-Empowered Preaching

Lloyd-Jones asserted that the Spirit's work in the preacher's delivery is "the greatest essential in connection with preaching."⁹⁰ Authoritative preaching, he claimed, "is God giving power, and enabling [him], through the Spirit... [to] do this work in a manner that lifts it up beyond the efforts and endeavors of

⁸⁶ Murray, "John MacArthur: A Sketch of an Evangelical Leader," 28.

⁸⁷ MacArthur, *Why One Way?*, 41-42.

⁸⁸ John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 176.

⁸⁹ MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, 125.

⁹⁰ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 304.

man.”⁹¹ Such preaching is God in the preacher, energizing him to expound the Scripture with supernatural ability. He states, “If there is no power, it is not preaching. True preaching, after all, is God acting. It is not just a man uttering words; it is God using him. He is being used of God. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit.”⁹² Lloyd-Jones believed this divine element in preaching is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Recognizing this supernatural dimension, Lloyd-Jones described the Spirit’s activity in the preacher: “You are a man ‘possessed,’ you are taken hold of, and taken up...you have a feeling that you are not actually doing the preaching...You are looking on at yourself in amazement as this is happening. It is not your effort; you are just the instrument, the channel, the vehicle: and the Spirit is using you, and you are looking on in great enjoyment and astonishment.”⁹³ By this, Lloyd-Jones affirmed the sovereign work of the third member of the Godhead in preaching, quickening his mind, enflaming his affections, and deepening his convictions.

In the pulpit, Lloyd-Jones acknowledged that the Spirit gives an expansion of thought and depth of profound expression: “It is of the very essence of the act of preaching—this freedom in your own mind and spirit, this being free to the influences of the Spirit upon you. If we believe in the Holy Spirit at all, we must believe that He is acting powerfully while we are engaged in this most serious and wonderful work.”⁹⁴ Therefore, he urged that the preacher should earnestly pray that God would “let Him manifest His power in you and through you.”⁹⁵ Lloyd-Jones believed: “Nothing but a return of this power of the Spirit on our preaching is going to avail us anything. This makes true preaching.”⁹⁶ In short, Lloyd-Jones affirmed that if preaching is to know God’s blessing, it must know the power of God’s Spirit.

In Demonstration of Power

MacArthur, likewise, emphasizes the preacher’s complete reliance upon the Holy Spirit. “Powerful preaching occurs,” he writes, “only when a Spirit-illuminated man of God expounds clearly and compellingly God’s Spirit-inspired revelation in Scripture to a Spirit-illuminated congregation.”⁹⁷ The Holy Spirit, who inspired the biblical text, is the same Spirit who must enlighten the

⁹¹ Ibid., 305.

⁹² Ibid., 95.

⁹³ Ibid., 324.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 229.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 325.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ MacArthur, “The Spirit of God and Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 103.

preacher and the congregation. MacArthur clarifies: “Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit that opens one’s spiritual eyes to comprehend the meaning of the Word of God. It involves the preacher of Scripture and his audience. God’s objective and historically past revelation in Scripture cannot be understood accurately apart from the present, personal, and subjective work of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁸ Without the Spirit teaching both the preacher and the listener, the Bible remains something of a closed book. Without His empowerment, the preacher will resort to manipulative techniques and fleshly coercions with the listener.

In preaching, MacArthur affirms that the preacher must not depend upon mere rhetoric, but upon the Holy Spirit: “Regardless of the erudition, the compelling logic, the soaring rhetoric, or the clever and interesting communication style, if the truth spoken is not accompanied by the power of God, it accomplishes nothing. But when empowered by God as it enters the prepared soul, the gospel truth saves.”⁹⁹ To this end, MacArthur stresses that the Spirit must be at work, or preaching is in vain: “Genuine soul-transforming power accompanying gospel preaching is the work of the Spirit energizing both the preacher and the hearer.”¹⁰⁰ The preacher can deliver the truth to the listener’s ear, but the Holy Spirit must take it to the mind and heart.

Aware of his vulnerability, MacArthur states: “I just pray that my own church would be a place of powerful preaching, and that we would never substitute anything for the Spirit-energized preaching of Christ, His cross, and the Word of God.”¹⁰¹ No amount of truth, if delivered without the Spirit’s ministry, can impact those who hear it. Is it any wonder that God has chosen to bless these two faithful servants, Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur, as they have relied upon the Holy Spirit in their respective pulpits?

THE GRAVITY OF THE MESSAGE

Finally, Lloyd-Jones and MacArthur, as they have stood in their pulpits with an open Bible, have been gripped by the weightiness of their message. These are both no nonsense men, marked by sobriety, gravity, and dignity. These men are expositors, not entertainers. Lloyd-Jones was fond to say that the preacher must be as Richard Baxter once stated: “I preached as never sure to preach again and as a dying man to dying men.”¹⁰² As they have proclaimed the Word, the weightiness of their message has rested upon them. Such *gravitas* has made their preaching impactful upon their listeners.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ John MacArthur, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, MNTC (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 196.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰¹ John MacArthur, *Exalting the Crucified Christ: Study Notes Acts 2:14-42* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace, 1982), 5.

¹⁰² As quoted by Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 75.

The Weightiness of the Truth

Lloyd-Jones maintained that the preacher must be dominated by what he preaches: "A preacher must always convey the impression that he himself has been gripped by what he is saying. If he has not been gripped, nobody else will be... He must impress the people by the fact that he is taken up and absorbed by what he is doing. He is full of matter, and he is anxious to impart this."¹⁰³ Lloyd-Jones believed that the truth must sober the man of God: "The preacher must be a serious man; he must never give the impression that preaching is something light or superficial."¹⁰⁴ Such seriousness was certainly seen in Lloyd-Jones' pulpit demeanor. Lloyd-Jones warns: "A preacher of necessity must give the impression that he is dealing with the most serious matter that men and women can ever consider together."¹⁰⁵ The preacher "should always create and convey the impression of the seriousness of what is happening the moment he even appears in the pulpit."¹⁰⁶ The preacher should reflect a sense of gravity in his countenance, tone, and delivery.

Lloyd-Jones also believed the preacher must never go to the other extreme: "Seriousness does not mean solemnity, does not mean sadness, does not mean morbidity."¹⁰⁷ The Doctor stressed that sobriety is never a license to be dour: "The preacher must never be dull, he must never be boring... With the grand theme and message of the Bible, dullness is impossible."¹⁰⁸ Expository preaching must never be mundane. Rather, he insists: "This is the most interesting, the most thrilling, the most absorbing subject in the universe; and the idea that this can be presented in a dull manner makes me seriously doubt whether the men who are guilty of this dullness have ever really understood the doctrine they claim to believe, and which they advocate."¹⁰⁹ Bottomline, "I would say that a dull preacher is a contradiction in terms; if he is dull, he is not a preacher."¹¹⁰ Simply put, a lackluster preacher is one who has never been gripped by the truth he proclaims. If he remains stoic, it is because the truth has not affected him.

Lloyd-Jones stresses: "A man who is not moved by these things, I maintain, has never really understood them. A man is not an intellect in a

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 87

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

vacuum; he is a whole person. He has a heart as well as a head; and if his head truly understands, his heart will be moved.”¹¹¹ Despondent over monotone preaching, Lloyd-Jones agonized: “Where is the passion in preaching that has always characterized great preaching in the past? Why are not modern preachers moved and carried away as the great preachers of the past so often were? The Truth has not changed. Do we believe it, have we been gripped and humbled by it, and then exalted until we are ‘lost in wonder love and praise?’”¹¹² If the preacher is not on fire, the truth will never ignite the people.

A Mandate from God

In the same way, MacArthur embodies a similar gravity in preaching. Describing the passion that must be present in preaching, he urges: “Feel deeply about the truth you are to preach. Remember that expositors have a mandate from God to preach the truth and that eternal consequences hang in the balance. This mandate is not easy to obey, nor is it a light load to carry.”¹¹³ No one, after hearing MacArthur, would conclude that he is anything less than blood-earnest in his preaching. He adds: “Taking this charge seriously produces an inner compulsion to reach the pulpit better prepared than when leaving the study.”¹¹⁴ In other words, every preacher must feel the responsibility of his calling weighing heavily upon him. Without this inner sobriety, MacArthur concludes, there is no true preaching.

Tragically, MacArthur warns that many of today’s preachers “cater to the tastes of their audience—precisely what Paul warned against. They want to minister to people’s ‘felt needs.’ They are obsessed with being ‘relevant.’ They think too much doctrine, or too much Scripture, is a turn-off to the ‘unchurched’ people they want to reach.”¹¹⁵ Consequently, he notes: “They allow opinion polls to determine the content of their message. Their greatest fear is offending their hearers. This style of ministry is often labeled ‘seeker-sensitive’ or ‘user-friendly,’ but Scripture calls it ear-tickling.”¹¹⁶ This kind of lifeless rhetoric, MacArthur contends, lacks the necessary gravity of real preaching. Such shallowness that marks many contemporary pulpits defies the biblical mandate to proclaim the transcendent truth, “Thus says the Lord!”

To this end, MacArthur sounds this clear warning: “Evangelicals have lost their tolerance for bold, confrontative, biblical preaching. People have demanded to be entertained. Pastors, fearful of ‘turning people off,’ have

¹¹¹ Ibid., 90.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ MacArthur, “Delivering the Exposition,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, 323.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ MacArthur, “Unafraid to Preach,” 276.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

acquiesced to public opinion. And now the church, on several fronts, is flirting with serious doctrinal error, unable to distinguish truth from falsehood. Having turned aside from the truth, they are susceptible to myths."¹¹⁷ But to the contrary, MacArthur asserts that the man of God must be fearless in the pulpit: "The preacher of the Word must be bold, thorough, unrelenting, persevering in the face of hardship and opposition—and above all, fearless."¹¹⁸ Sadly, he states, "This kind of sobriety is the polar opposite of the flaky, whimsical, superficial, celebrity-type televangelists who color the public perception of preachers today."¹¹⁹ Thus, MacArthur earnestly pleads, "The faithful preacher should be well-rooted and grounded, steadfast, stable—rock-solid."¹²⁰ In short, if a man is to truly preach, a sobering sense of God must weigh heavily upon him. If there is to be biblical exposition, the preacher must first be gripped by the Word of God. Without question, MacArthur has ardently demonstrated this kind of awe-inspiring preaching to an entire generation.

PREACHING THAT ELECTRIFIES

What is the effect of preaching that is thoroughly biblical, authoritative, and well-studied? What is the result of expository preaching that is intensely doctrinal, Spirit-empowered, and delivered with a sense of urgency? How has God used the expository preaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John MacArthur?

The Thunder of the Truth

J. I. Packer, then a student in London, has reflected upon what it was like to be under Lloyd-Jones' preaching at Westminster Chapel. Packer writes: "I had never heard such preaching and was electrified"¹²¹ Further, Packer stated: "I have never heard another preacher with so much of God about him."¹²² The effect of such preaching was powerful: "There was in the Doctor's preaching thunder and lightning that no tape or transcription ever did or could capture... Through the thunder and lightning, I felt and saw as never before the glory of Christ and of His gospel as modern man's only lifeline and learned by experience why historic Protestantism looks on preaching as the supreme means

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 277.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 280.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 278.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Letter to Iain Murray, May 21, 1981. As quoted by Iain Murray, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981*, 188.

¹²² Quoted in *Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching*, eds., Clyde Fant, Jr. and W. M. Pinson, Jr. (Waco, TX: Word, 1971) 11:269.

of grace and of communion with God.”¹²³ Such is the power of God in the preaching of His Word.

Reflecting upon Lloyd-Jones’s biblical preaching, Eric Alexander writes, “Those of us who have had the privilege of hearing him will not easily forget the sense of awe which came upon one’s soul as he was gripped by the glory of the gospel and God spoke with such power through him.”¹²⁴ This is the effect of such preaching, which “left an indelible mark on his hearers.”¹²⁵

Compellingly Clear

From untold numbers of people, the same testimonies can be offered concerning the authority of John MacArthur’s preaching. The Scripture proclaimed from his pulpit has come with life-changing impact upon those who have sat under its force. Baptismal services on Sunday evening at Grace Community Church reveal the repeated testimonies of those who have been converted under the power of the Word of God preached. Students at both The Master’s Seminary and College bear witness that the supernaturally empowered force of MacArthur’s pulpit has drawn them from across the country or the world to sit at his feet.

“What one hears from MacArthur’s pulpit,” Old states, “is a very straight Christian message.”¹²⁶ He “has an amazing ability to explain Scripture by Scripture” in such a way that is “richly informative and mightily convincing.”¹²⁷ Old adds, “The strength of his preaching is the content,”¹²⁸ as MacArthur speaks with “complete clarity.”¹²⁹ The truth is this, “He recognizes in Scripture the Word of God, and when he preaches, it is Scripture that one hears.”¹³⁰

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of John MacArthur’s presidency of The Master’s Seminary, it is only fitting that we give praise to God for this faithful servant. For over four decades, this distinguished leader has given himself to the preaching of God’s Word at Grace Church with unwavering tenacity. What is more, the Lord has used his influence in the training of the next generation of Spirit-empowered biblical expositors, who follow in their president’s footsteps.

¹²³ Charles Turner Packer, ed., *Chosen Vessels: Portraits of Ten Outstanding Christian Men* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine, 1985), 119.

¹²⁴ Eric J. Alexander, “Foreword,” vii.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 7:552.

¹²⁷ Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 7:554-55.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 7:557.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 7:556.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 7:558.

May John MacArthur's prolific life and pulpit legacy impact a new generation of preachers. And may there come from his faithful ministry the next wave of leading voices in the church.