

face to face with a great text, written by a man he has never known, in a country he has never seen, to a people separated from him by continents and oceans, by centuries of time, and farther still by differences of thought and circumstance; written, too, in a language he has never read, the idioms of which he cannot understand, the spirit of which he has never breathed. What is he to do with such a text? He can do only what the unskilled man in other departments does: the best he can, and run the risk of failure.

Too much emphasis cannot be laid on the importance of Exegesis. By means of it we lay bare the hidden meaning of our text. The grammar and lexicon, biblical philology and exegesis—the preacher who would discourse with freshness, authority and power cannot afford to neglect these.

But the preacher must do more than examine and master his selected text if he would grasp its subject firmly and discourse upon it with effect. He must know its setting. If possible, he must study its author, his history, mental and spiritual peculiarities, and his point of view. He must also know the people to whom it was first addressed, their history and circumstance. Then, too, he must master the argument of the entire book: from which the text is taken, its dominant thought and purpose, whether history, poetry, prophecy, gospel or epistle. Dr. A. B. Davidson uttered a truth of vast importance, that should be burned into the consciousness of every preacher, when he assured his students in Edinburgh that they need never hope to preach the truth of any one verse truly and with authority until they had mastered the entire book, its history, meaning and message.

And is all this enough? No! surely not. Philology, exegesis, biblical theology, geography, history,—all these are but tools. The preacher needs them all; but with them he needs a sympathetic soul, the poet's brooding spirit, the prophet's master-passion. It is with Revelation as it is with Nature, only choice souls are granted audience. Only he that hath ears can hear. Nature never blabs her secrets to a stranger. College training may assist expression, but only the hearing ear can catch the voice

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

Shakespeare and Wordsworth and Burns and Ruskin and Tennyson