

the subject you intended, you must find a text in which it is contained, and not take one in which it only seems to be contained, else you do grievous dishonour to the Word of God, and in doing so how can you expect that the blessing of the Lord will accompany your discourse? If the subject on which you wish to address your people be contained in or legitimately deducible from the Word of God, then take the passage where it is contained or whence it is deducible; but if there be no such passage, you have no business with the subject at all. It is the Word of God, not the word of man, which is the instrument of edification.

Another inference from the principle laid down is very obvious, viz.: that inasmuch as the Word of God is the great instrument of edification, the more of the Word we can bring to bear the better. "Bring to bear" we say; for you must remember what you have been so carefully taught in the department of Homiletics, that all your discourses, whether sermons or lectures, should be characterized by unity. You may lay it down as an axiom that you cannot bring more than one subject at a time to bear successfully upon an audience. But with this limitation, demanding unity in the subject, the more of the Word itself you can present to your people the better. Some preachers seem to try how very little of the Word of God they can use. They will take a short text and preach a long sermon, or perhaps half a dozen sermons from it. They give as little exposition and as much excogitation as possible. Now, if we would successfully edify our people, we will give them as much exposition of the Word as possible. We will not be over-anxious to choose a very short text; or if we do this for the sake of point and clearness, we will endeavour to combine as much exposition with it as the case will admit. It is true that it is a great deal easier to take a short text on some familiar subject, and follow some easy beaten track of thought; but it is not ease, but efficiency we must aim at. In adopting the expository method you may have to spend as long time on the simple exegesis of the passage as would suffice to write the whole discourse on the other plan; and perhaps those of your hearers who are too indolent to think, and too careless about the meaning of Scripture to pay any attention to the exposition of it, might prefer the discourse which cost you almost nothing to that which has cost much labour; but if you would be faithful ministers of Christ, you must faithfully use the instrument of edification which God has given you, at whatever expenditure of mental labour, and whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

Another inference is, that we ought to make use of the *precise and specific meaning* of the passage which we may choose as the subject of discourse. It is not generalizing so much as specializing, that we need in these times. Some preachers are so very general in their preaching that they could preach the same discourse equally well from half a dozen different texts. Now this vagueness and pointlessness is due entirely to the neglect of exegesis. Such is the variety in the modes of presenting even the same truths in the Word of God, that you can scarcely find two texts in the Bible that present the same truth in precisely the same way. Now unless you catch these specific differences, your preaching will be exceedingly lean, repetitious, and unsatisfactory. To illustrate: here are two texts which present the same truth: "He that believeth not is condemned;" and "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you." But the sermon written on the latter text, that could with any propriety be preached from the former, would