

»»» THE NELSON CENTER

ADVANCE

"THE WORD OF GOD GREW AND MULTIPLIED" »»»



JOHN R. RICE: THE PREACHER

A LEGACY OF FIERY PREACHING AND FAITHFUL PRAYER



4 Dr. John R. Rice: THE PREACHER



PULPITS OF THE PAST

12 A Pastor's Job Description, *Dr. Ed Nelson*



PULPITS OF THE PRESENT

16 Homiletical and Rhetorical Skill in the "Sermon" to the Hebrews, *Dr. Paul Himes*



PULPITS OF THE FUTURE

21 Report: Recent modules and seminars
22 Advanced Preaching Certification
22 Upcoming Events



CHURCH PLANTING UPDATES

23 The Manitowoc Project: Testimonies

LETTER *from the Director*

We are thrilled to present you with our second copy of the Nelson Center *Advance*. God has truly blessed the Nelson Center in its second year, and we are thankful for the many men who have given of their time and expertise to raise up the next generation of preachers. Not only were young men in training benefited from the Center, but believers in all stages of life were offered truth invaluable for the ministry to which God has called every Christian.

Similarly to the first issue, this copy of the *Advance* focuses on a man of God who left an incredible legacy in the area of preaching and evangelism: Dr. John R. Rice, an unashamed proclaimer of the plain truths of the Bible. His grandson, John R. Himes, professor at Baptist College of Ministry, specifically honors the memory of his preaching in the feature article of this issue. Great-grandson Dr. Paul Himes also contributes to the magazine with an intriguing study of rhetorical techniques in the "Sermon" to the Hebrews.

In this magazine you will also be excited to read updates of church planting happening right here in Wisconsin! Maritime Baptist Church of Manitowoc, pastored by Chris Sanderlin, held its inaugural Sunday in January of this year. God's obvious stirring in the hearts of the people of Manitowoc has encouraged the faithful team who has ministered there each week for many months. We hope the testimonies from the Sanderlin family and students from Baptist College of Ministry are a blessing to you in your own ministry. God is ready to work all around us! Our passion is that every Christian would be equipped and willing to join His mission as ready servants, and we believe the Nelson Center has a key role to play in advancing this cause.

As Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He is ready. The question facing us all is simple: Will we join Him? Our prayer is that this magazine will encourage you in your journey towards a resounding "Yes!"

NEW!

Dr. Wayne Van Gelderen
NELSON CENTER DIRECTOR



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Dr. John R. Rice

THE PREACHER

by JOHN R. HIMES

A missionary friend and I had stopped to visit the pastor of a church reaching US military members on duty in Japan. As I sometimes did in those days, I dropped the name John R. Rice as being my grandfather, thus hoping to circumvent possible criticism of the great evangelist by the unknowing. As the conversation turned to baptism, I said, "I was baptized by John R. Rice at age six." The good pastor immediately pontificated, "He was an evangelist, so he was not eligible to baptize believers!" I then pointed out that he was my pastor in Wheaton, Illinois, at the time, and the conversation turned to other matters.

Dr. Rice had a many faceted ministry as an evangelist, as a church planter, and as a pastor of churches he had planted. Go with me on my journey of memories of the preaching of John R. Rice.

John R. Rice the Pastor

Dr. Rice was primarily an evangelist, it is true. However, many do not realize that he was also the pastor of several churches he planted, most notably Galilean Baptist Church in Dallas for seven years (originally Fundamental Baptist Church). His move out of the deep South to Wheaton was so that his six daughters could attend Wheaton College, then the premier fundamentalist college in the world.



Dr. Rice started that church in Dallas with a two-week revival in July of 1932. He put out a few wooden benches, preached in the open air, built some more benches, and saw hundreds saved.

When the Lord led Dr. Rice to stay and pastor the church, they built a "tabernacle" style building.

As part of the deal, the founding members agreed to be charter members if Dr. Rice would stay and pastor the work.

In Wheaton he planted Calvary Baptist Church after seeing the lukewarm condition of the Wheaton Bible Church.

I chose his little book, *The Soul Winner's Fire*, being fascinated by the flames on the front cover of that early edition!

Dr. Rice quite often preached in the churches he had planted, and his messages were on various spiritual disciplines, though chiefly on evangelism and prayer. When I was about nine years old I "helped" him at his book table in a local church in Illinois, and he gave me the choice of any of his books.

"His messages...were chiefly on evangelism and prayer"

He was well known for these two emphases in his sermons, whether on the road or in his home church. Many of his printed books were collections of his sermons as taken down by secretaries in his early years, and then in later times recorded electronically.

Though this essay will discuss both his pastoral preaching and his evangelistic preaching, it must be noted that even when he preached as a pastor during his seven year in Dallas, his messages were often those of an evangelist. This can be seen in his book of sermons from that early ministry, *Preaching that Built a Great Church* (Murfreesboro: Sword of the Lord, 1974). We will discuss those messages first.



The Preaching of Pastor Rice

"He rarely preached without tears"

Surprisingly to some who only think of Dr. Rice as an evangelist and fighting fundamentalist, the next section in this book of sermons is "Sermons of Comfort," with titles such as "Heaven," "Are You Thirsty?" "Flowers, Birds and Oxen," and "Abounding Grace." The truth is that John R. Rice had a very compassionate heart. As many who heard him preach have noted to me, he rarely preached without tears.

The next section in the book was, unsurprisingly, "Prayer Life." For those of us who knew him best, his prayer life was a central feature of his Christian life, and thus something he preached on often. This section has titles such as "Prayer and Fasting," "Christ in Gethsemane," and "Have Faith God."

"He was very serious about prayer"

My personal experience with him often taught me that he was very serious about prayer. It is a shame for a pastor to preach on the Christian life without living it! After college, I lived with him and my grandmother, the saintly Lloys Rice. (By the way, her maiden name was "Cooke," so on marriage she became Lloys Cooke Rice.) I remember in family devotions one day counting who he prayed for, and hearing him pray for well over 100 pastors, friends, and loved ones by name!

Again, one day as I sat on the sofa, he came in the door and walked right by me without noticing me, praying as he walked!

The next section of Preaching that Built a Great Church is "Application of Scripture to Current Events," something at which he excelled.

One sermon title was "Lessons From East Texas School Tragedy," which told about an explosion in a school which killed 455 students and teachers. His Scripture for the message was Luke 13:1-5, about the Galileans Pilate killed and the tower of Siloam which fell.

Other sermons in this section included "Mattson Boy's Kidnapper and Murderer," and perhaps surprisingly, "Lessons from the Abdication of King Edward of England."



The author with his grandfather

"Current events was a common theme of Dr. Rice's preaching"

Current events was a common theme of Dr. Rice's preaching through which he made his messages relevant and interesting. He was adept at comparing sad events of Scripture to modern tragedies and driving home important lessons about salvation, Christian living, and soul winning.

Let me share with you the bare outline of one of Dr. Rice's sermons to his church, "Jesus and Peter." Note that he was very matter of fact in his points, which were designed to be helpful, rather than a technical exegesis. The passage is Luke 22:31-34, and then vv. 54-62.

I. Really Born-Again Christians May Get Drunk, Curse, or Deny Christ.

II. Peter Lost Out by Not Praying.

III. Peter Was Weak Enough to Deny Christ Because He Did Not Know His Bible.

IV. Had Peter Understood Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22, He Would Never Have Denied Christ.

V. What Bad Company Cost.

VI. Peter Fell Under the Enslavement of an Old Habit—Cursing.

VII. Which Was Greater Shame: Betrayed by Judas or Denied by Peter?

VIII. Jesus Loved Peter Still!

IX. Jesus Prayed for Peter.

X. Jesus Warns, Loves, Prays for Then Holds on!

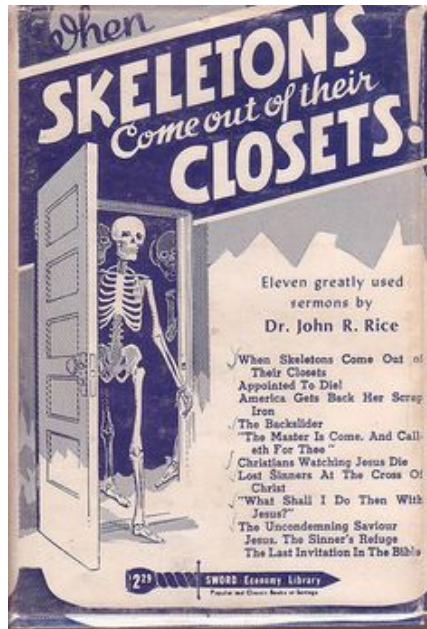
Note that his sermon is broadly on the whole Christian life. The focus was the failure of Peter, and how it happened, rather than on these individual failures. We, too, can totally fail in our Christian life without drawing nigh to Him and living close to Him. Then Dr. Rice gives the cure to the sinning of a Christian: Jesus still loves us and will help us do right!

The Preaching of Rice the Evangelist

The main gifting of John R. Rice was as an evangelist, no matter how many churches he planted and pastored. Therefore, most of his sermons left to posterity are of Dr. Rice the evangelist, and this is how most remember him. He had promised to give himself as a pastor to Galilean Baptist Church, but after seven years he could not wait any longer, and hit the evangelism trail.

"The main gifting of John R. Rice was as an evangelist"

Consider the preaching of the evangelist. Like the other giftings in Ephesians 4, this one is of course "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (v. 12). This means that as a good part of his ministry, an evangelist should be connected with a local church and striving to be a blessing and a help to the members there. Dr. Rice was a member of Calvary Baptist Church (which he planted) in Wheaton, Illinois, in the 40's and 50's, and then of Franklin Road Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, when he moved the Sword of the Lord, his publishing ministry, to that area in 1962.



Evangelist

Here is the brief outline of one of his evangelistic sermons with the arresting title of "When Skeletons Come Out of their Closets," on Revelation 20:12 about the Great White Throne Judgment. (Dr. Rice was sometimes very imaginative with his sermon titles!) After along introduction about sin and the end result of it in the lake of fire, Dr. Rice goes on.

I. Which, of Several Bible Judgments, Is This?

A. There are several judgments discussed in the Bible.

1. The Judgment of Christians: Already in Resurrected, Glorified Bodies, Already in Heaven.

2. The Later Judgment: Those Alive of All Nations.

3. The Last Judgment of the Unsaved Dead [the subject of the sermon]

"Dr. Rice was sometimes very imaginative with his sermon titles!"

II. Who Will Be Judged Here?

A. Not a Single Christian; Only the Unsaved.

B. Both Small and Great Are Sinners Alike.

C. Sinners With Physical Bodies, Literal Knees and Tongues.

D. Bodies raised from the Sea and Grave.

III. How Will Sinners Be Judged? On What Basis Is This Judgment?

A. According to the Perfect Records of God.

B. Exactly According to Their Works Sinners Will Get Exactly What They Deserve; No More, No Less.

INVITATION: Will you today confess your sins and trust Christ to forgive you? Will you claim Him as your Savior? If you will, why not solemnly, with all your heart, settle the matter with God.

Controversialist

Because of his gifting as an evangelist, in his preaching he was sometimes a controversialist; he was bombastic, he was bold, and yet he was compassionate. However, because he was always based in a local church, he also often preached on themes of the Christian life. In this essay, let's examine these characteristics of his preaching, and see if his version of homiletics can be valuable for your ministry.



After an introduction giving the historical background, Dr. Rice gave his points

I. How America Sowed the Wind (Rom. 13:1 & 4)

II. Nations Reap What They Sow: Are Punished for Their Sins

"God has a hand in every war. For His own reasons he allows the suffering and death and ruin that come when wicked men bring on war. Obviously the government must punish criminals..... Armies are simply a national police force, and our navy and army and air force act as our police force, and as 'the minister of God' in protecting America and punishing Japan. But God allowed Japan to bring on the war, and doubtless it was in punishment for our sins."

III. How God Has Punished Russia

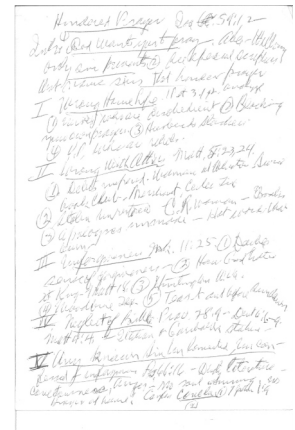
IV. Time for America to Repent

"If by our help to Russia we are led to tolerate her sin and take up the doctrines of the Communists, or allow them to multiply or influence our government, then the fierce wrath of God will be upon us, and we shall sin grievously, and grievously suffer for our sin!" The sins of America he lists include: "lust and lewdness and adultery" (especially in the movies, which he opposed), "drunkenness, her government endorsed and protected beer, wine and booze business," lawlessness, and "lukewarmness and halfheartedness among Christians."

How much more is our beloved country guilty of today! It is shameful that we have allowed millions of tiny, defenseless babies to be killed in the womb. We now allow all kinds of immorality, things unheard of in John R. Rice's day. As preachers, we have a duty to call out such sin. Dr. Rice was a patriot, having served in the US Army during World War One, though God kept him from combat (see Ch. 11 in my book, *John R. Rice, the Last Revivalist of the Twentieth Century*). However, he was not shy about preaching on the sins of his country, and neither should we be.

**"He was bombastic
he was bold, and yet
he was compassionate"**

One sermon that illustrates this area of his preaching is in the aforementioned book, *When Skeletons Come out of their Closets*. The title of this message is, "America Gets Back Her Scrap Iron." Here is the historical milieu for this sermon. In the years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, America companies sold their scrap iron to Japan, which then used it for building weapons to conquer Asia. Chinese-Americans protested these sales, but to no avail. This sermon, written after the United States entered the war, made the point that America was reaping what she sowed. The weapons of war made with her scrap iron were then used against America! Here is the outline of that message.



Dr. Rice's Sermon Illustrations

In 1978, working at the Sword of the Lord as a proofreader and editor before heading off to Japan as a missionary, I had the privilege of editing a volume of Dr. Rice's sermon illustrations with the title *50 Years of Soul-Stirring Illustrations*. A primary source for his sermon illustrations was in the harvest of souls he or others had led to Christ. Here is one of those stories:

I Have Found the Harvest Always Plenteous

The fields are white unto harvest. Bless God, I have found it always has been true. I was in the Holy Land again in 1976 and I won our Arab guide, a university graduate, to the Lord. After he was saved he said, "I have been wanting to hear more about this for a long time." Yes. He had guided lots of Christians, but I suppose nobody had time to talk to him about being saved. Here in Atlanta, the academic dean of the Southern Baptist University, Dr. Trachian, came from Lebanon. He was principle of Lebanon High School. Someone had gotten me to speak at that Arab high school in Lebanon. When I asked, "How long do I have" he said, "Everybody else has only thirty minutes. I take THE SWORD OF THE LORD. You can have as long as you want." When I preached and gave an invitation, fifty-two were saved. Arabs? Yes.

In an Arab high school in Old Jerusalem there were fourteen senior boys. We got five of them saved. One of them has already been to America to train as a preacher.

"The fields are white...to harvest"
(John 4:35)."

"The fields are white
to harvest"

One of his favorite types of sermon illustrations was poetry. He often quoted poems and hymns in his messages, and sometimes would even break out in song right in the middle of a message! His favorite poet was Alfred Lord Tennyson. In 1980, I sat by his bed in the hospital in the middle of the night a few months before his Home-going, and saw him quote "Crossing the Bar" by Tennyson, about going home to Heaven. As he looked up towards his destination, he quoted the poem clearly to himself, and also perhaps for my benefit:

Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of
the bar
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems
asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of
farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of
Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

Back in his day, the Sword of the Lord published several books of Christian poetry edited by Dr. Rice.

You can still buy second hand a book he edited, 742 Heart-Warming Poems. Even today, a search online will reveal many books of Christian poetry. If you cannot write poetry, you can invest in one or more of such books, and use them in your messages.

Conclusion

Now let me caution you. Learn from the sermons of John R. Rice. Buy some of his sermon books, and study them. Listen to some of his sermons online. But after all that, you must be the preacher God wants you to be, not the best imitator of an admired preacher.

Remember, you have the same resources as Dr. Rice did for preaching. First of all, he quoted Scripture more than the average preacher in his sermons. Remember the power of God in His Word (Heb. 4:12)! Secondly, he believed strongly in the power of the Holy Spirit for the work of God, and you also can be filled with the Holy Spirit for preaching. Thirdly, he was a very compassionate preacher. As many preachers who heard him preach in person have remarked to me, he wept for sinners all the while he preached. This is something we can and should all do: preach the Word with compassion for the saved and tears for the lost.

John Himes is a professor of Greek, church history, Bible, missions, and theology at Baptist College of Ministry. He is also the lead translator for the Lifeline Japanese New Testament, due to be published in late 2018. John has had several books and pamphlets published, including The Making of a Soul Winner, and A Christian Philosophy of Self-Defense.



PULPITS OF THE PAST

research on sermons, writings, and preachers of the past



A Pastor's Job Description

LESSONS FROM 1 TIMOTHY 4

December 7, 1941, fell on a Sunday. All of us old timers remember where we were that day. That afternoon, regular programming was interrupted with stunning news: Pearl Harbor had been bombed. For those who heard it firsthand, the moment was unforgettable. I had just gotten out of the hospital, but was in a hospital bed in my own home, with my mother as my nurse and I was starting to get better. I had the radio beside my bed, and about five o'clock, they interrupted a program to announce that Pearl Harbor had been bombed by the Japanese. I'll never forget it. And we ought not forget it. We need to thank God for the freedom - oh, how many people died in World War II for our freedoms today - and we're taking them so for granted. The freedoms we now enjoy were purchased at a great price.

And though today is Pearl Harbor Day {this message was preached on December 7, 1997 at Bethel Baptist Church, Tucson, AZ}, we'll not talk about that tonight.

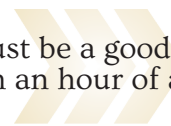
Instead let's talk about a pastor's job description, as we as a church are licensing a young man to the gospel ministry tonight!

In 1 Timothy 4, the apostle Paul writes to a young pastor, Timothy, who was the pastor of the Church at Ephesus. In so doing, he provides what could rightly be called a pastor's job description. The setting is serious. Paul warns that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith," giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Apostasy was not a distant possibility—it was already at work. And in such an hour, Timothy was to be a good minister of Jesus Christ. Now the word for minister there is an interesting word. It's the word that's translated other places in the New Testament as deacon. While often translated, deacon, the Greek word *diakonos* really means servant.

He's not talking about the office of deacon here. He's talking about a man who is the pastor of a church and he challenged a pastor to be a good servant of Jesus Christ.

A faithful servant reminds God's people of truth. He warns them of error. He nourishes them in "the words of faith and of good doctrine." He says you will be a good minister if you warn people about the apostasy that's coming and about the fact that there's unbelief taking over in the church. In so doing, you will be a good preacher, a good minister of Jesus Christ.

One must be a good minister today, even in an hour of apostasy. Apostasy is here. There's no question about it. It's on every hand and we see it spreading constantly.



One must be a good minister... even in an hour of apostasy."

Tonight, as this young preacher steps out into the ministry, he's going to face some things that I as an older man in the ministry have not had to face, and I anticipate it will be more severe. One of the most serious things today is the idea that we ought to market the church and we ought to go out and find out what the people want to hear and then preach what they want to hear.

That's the way some churches are starting. In fact, that's the way a Baptist church right over here in a neighboring community started. They sent out a questionnaire to the community. "What would you like to hear? And what kind of church would you like to have? We want to meet whatever you want." Well, now we didn't start that way. Don't plan to ever get that way. We're not asking what they would like. We're telling them what the Bible wants them to hear, what God would have them to hear.

This preacher we are licensing tonight will face things that I've not had to face, and if the Lord should tarry, I'll be off the scene, and this next generation of preachers will face new hardships, and will need to be a good servants of Jesus Christ.

First, Paul lists his

PRIORITY EMPHASIZED.

In Timothy 4:6 he encourages him that if he is going to be a good minister, then he will have to be nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine. He will give them the Word of God.

We know this is an important passage because in verse nine, he says "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." In other words, this is a faithful saying and you need to accept it. Then in verse 11, he says "These things command and teach." So twice he says, you need these things.

"He that follows these things will save himself and those that hear him." The idea behind this passage is that in preaching God's word, you will delivery your ministry for the glory of God and those that hear it will be delivered from the pitfalls of the devil.

And so we're needing men today in the ministry that take 1 Timothy chapter four and say, "That is my need." Now, as priority emphasized, what's he to do? He's to give them the words of faith and of good doctrine. There's an emphasis in the word of God on this matter of preaching. What we need in our ministries is to preach the word of God.

If there's any need today, it's for great, good, reasonable, sensible, balanced, gospel preaching, Bible preaching. It isn't just gospel preaching. I've seen churches advertised for being famous for the gospel. We better be famous for the whole counsel of God. The gospel ought to be in our preaching consistently so that folks can get saved, but really the preaching is to build up the believers: we ought to constantly be giving them the words of faith and of good doctrine.

"What made America great was the preachers."

And so preaching is important. It's vital today. And that's what this country needs. What made America great was the preachers, and what we need today is preaching of the Word of God.

A number of years ago, a questionnaire was sent out to a large number of preachers. It asked two simple questions. The first question was this: List the five things in your ministry according to the priority they ought to have. In other words, five activities, arranged in the order of importance they should receive. The responses came back, and preaching was at the top of the list, and administration was at the bottom.

Then came the second question: Now list these same five things in order according to the amount of time you actually give them. Do you know what was number one? Administration. That which had been number five in priority was now number one in practice. The thing they said was least important was receiving most of their time. And the very thing they had placed at the top of the list as most important—preaching—was fourth in the amount of time they actually gave to it. What they believed was most important was not what they were spending most of their time doing.

You need to give time to preparing and understanding messages, getting your soul ready, and having those messages prepared to deliver to the people. By the way, it doesn't come easy. Late last night, a friend called me and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm preparing tomorrow." He said, "You got enough sermons?" I said, "I'm not using any of them. I'm studying like I always did because I want to get something fresh and something that is a blessing." And I said, "Man, am I having trouble with this one. It's really giving me fits. I'm trying to get ready for tomorrow." And he said, "Well, I thought you could just bring one out of the barrel." We need to constantly be in the word of God, you see?

Secondly, Paul speaks in verse seven about

PROFITABLE EXERCISE.

"Exercise thyself rather unto godliness." Bodily exercise profits a little—and it does profit—but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. The word suggests rigorous training, like an athlete in the gymnasium.

No athlete expects to be ready for the contest without hours of preparation. Neither can a minister expect to stand in the pulpit with strength if he has not labored in private with God. And like the athlete who trains daily because he may be called upon at any moment, the servant of Christ must be ready for the battle that is already upon him. The enemy is active and you and I need to exercise ourselves under godliness to be ready when the battle's here - and it's already here. And it'll face you every day. We've got an enemy- Satan is working, isn't he? He is at work today and we're in the battle. Exercise yourself rather under godliness.

Thirdly, Paul describes the

PROPER EXAMPLE

of the minister. In verse 10, he says "we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God." So as the Greek word for labor tells us, we agonize and give ourselves in labor for the glory of God.

"Preaching is work!"

I get tired preaching. Preaching wears me out. By the way, it's work. It's work. Now, listen, I've worked: I've pitched bundles, I've topped sugar beets, I've picked potatoes, I've stacked hay. Now, most of you don't even know what I'm talking about. But I've done it. And I've done them from daylight till dark. And it's work. By the end of the day, I was so exhausted, I couldn't see straight. I get more tired preaching. I'll tell you what, if you give yourself to the ministry, it's work. And it's agonizing work.

Paul further describes the proper example: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers." In word—the things spoken and the spirit in which they are spoken. In conversation—that is, in manner of life. In charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. The life must support the message. No amount of activity can substitute for integrity. The preacher is not perfect, but he must be sincere. He is a sinner saved by grace, yet called to walk cleanly before God.

We also ought to spend a lot of time on purity, as the Bible warns us much about that. Churches are being ruined by immorality. And preachers are being ruined by not having this purity of life. The moral climate of any age presses hard upon those who would serve Christ. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." The vessel must be fit for use. What a man is before God is more important than what he does before men. Service cannot compensate for a compromised heart.

My fourth point, from verse thirteen, speaks of the

PRESENT ENDEAVOR.

"Till I come give attendance to reading." The reading there is the public reading of the Word of God. We ought to practice reading. And there are times when I'm going to read and I dig out my various Bibles and try to find out how to pronounce names and be ready to read. I know some preachers that have difficulty reading. So they practice reading during the week what they're going to read on Sunday. I do not do that. I've not had that problem. I can generally read and pronounce the words. But there are times when I go home and I hear, "Did you know you mispronounced a word today?" It's bad to be married to an English teacher.

Give attendance to the reading of God's Word and spend time studying it, and neglect not the gift. Timothy was not to neglect the gift given to him, but to meditate upon these things and give himself wholly to them, so that his profiting would appear to all. So what do you need to do? Take a passage, meditate on it, and when you get up to preach, you've got some profit you got from your meditation and study of the word, and you can share it with the people.

Finally,

PRAYERFUL EXAMINATION.

in verse sixteen: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them." Watch your life. Guard your teaching. Persevere. In doing so, Paul says, both the minister and those who hear him are preserved from harm.

The job description is clear. In an age of confusion, be anchored in truth. In a culture of distraction, be disciplined in godliness. In a world of shifting standards, be an example in purity and faith. In every season, labor faithfully and walk humbly with God.

There's a big mistake being made today, where some fellows have gotten the idea, if I do enough and serve actively enough, God will overlook some areas of your life. Preachers, don't you believe it. What I do will never cover up for what I am. And what I need to do is be sure that I am right inside, so I can do right when I serve as a true minister of Jesus Christ!

Transcribed from a sermon preached by Dr. Ed Nelson on December 7, 1997 at Bethel Baptist Church, Tucson, AZ.

A person wearing a light-colored, patterned suit jacket and dark trousers is walking. They are carrying a brown leather messenger bag with a flap and a buckle. The bag contains several books, with the spines of two books visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus outdoor setting with a warm, golden light. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing the title and subtitle.

PULPITS OF THE PRESENT

sermons, writings, and research by Senior Presenters



HOMILETICAL AND RHETORICAL SKILL IN THE "SERMON" TO THE HEBREWS

By Dr. Paul A. Himes

What is it about preachers that makes them want to alliterate?

The story is told of a young seminary student who took this to the extreme, managing to alliterate the entire parable of the Prodigal Son: "Feeling footloose and frisky, a featherbrained fellow forced his fond father to fork over the farthings and flew far to foreign fields and fabulously frittered his fortune with faithless friends. Fleeced by his fellows in folly and facing famine, he found himself a feed-flinger in a filthy farmyard. . . ." and so forth.¹

Notwithstanding such extreme examples, there is something inside of us that desires our sermons to go beyond merely imparting information and catch the audience's attention with some flashy oratory technique. Is this selfish or arrogant?

Well, it certainly could be, but as it turns out, the desire to use fancy rhetorical techniques like alliteration is not only natural, **it's even biblical.**

The Word of God in the original languages contains a surprising amount of artistic liberties and rhetorical techniques:

alliteration, puns, chiasms, mot crochet ("hook words"), etc. that cannot be translated as well into English or any other language.

In other words, the Bible is more sophisticated and more artistic than we ever could have imagined.

To a certain degree, God's choice of Koine Greek as the language of the New Testament means that the inspired authors would naturally reflect certain characteristics of Greek communication in their writings. Just as we should not be too surprised that the Apostle Paul could quote a pagan poet to make a point (Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12; probably also 1 Cor 15:33b), we should also not be surprised that Paul or Peter or Luke could imitate Greek rhetorical style in their writings.²

At the same time, however, much of the literary and rhetorical artistry we see in the New Testament already existed in the Hebrew Old Testament. God did not have to wait for the Greeks to come along in order to find people capable of fancy writing!

The psalms, for example, are replete with wordplays and alliteration, most of which cannot be reflected in English translation.

The greatest example ever of an alliterated outline, Psalm 119, consists of 22 segments of 8 verses each, and each line of each segment verse starts with the same letter. In other words, the first eight verses each starts with aleph ("A"), the next eight verses each starts with beth ("B"), and so forth. Indeed, if anyone has any doubt about the rhetorical skill it took to compose Psalm 119, they should try to compose a similar poem in English, including eight consecutive lines starting with "y" and another eight consecutive lines starting with "z"!

Another point to consider: Modern American society (and much of the world today) is gifted with a high literacy rate, but this was not the case in either ancient Hebrew or ancient Greco-Roman society, where the percentage of people (mostly men) who could read or write was significantly smaller. Christians in a local church generally did not have their own copy of Scripture. Instead, Scripture was read publicly to the audience (and memorized)—this is why Rev 1:3 blesses the reader, singular, and "they that hear," plural.

In other words, when the inspired authors of Scripture composed their works, they were not thinking primarily of individuals reading silently in the comfort of their own home. They were thinking of public reading, out loud, and the effect that words would have upon the ear. Consequently, because the preaching of God's Word is a public and oral exercise, **preachers should pay attention to both the effect of the written Word of God and the effect of the publicly read Word of God.**

The Epistle (Sermon) to the Hebrews

Often the first book of the Bible that beginning Greek students will translate from is 1 John, due to its rather simple, unadorned Greek (though it does not lack for theological depth!). At the other end of the spectrum is Acts, which includes some very advanced Greek (the shipwreck narrative near the end of the book is considered to be some of the most difficult Greek in the entire New Testament).³ Most of the rest of the New Testament falls between those two books in terms of literary sophistication.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, however, has long been regarded as a literary and rhetorical work of genius in its own right. James Moffatt famously declared that the author “has an art of words, which is more than an unconscious sense of rhythm.

He has the style of a trained speaker.”⁴

We must remember, however, that Hebrews is not an “epistle” in the normal sense. Although it ends as an epistle, it most definitely does not begin as an epistle, and unlike most NT epistles which change topics frequently, for the first 12 chapters Hebrews focuses almost exclusively on one theme: the superiority of the Son and the danger of drifting away from Him.

Hebrews is, first and foremost, a homily, a sermon intended to be read from start to finish, perhaps the only such book in the New Testament (though some consider Jude, also, to be a homily).

Hebrews is probably the most carefully crafted sermon in the history of Christianity, and it is one of the few sermons ever written that is guaranteed perfection in what it communicates because of the Spirit’s supernatural guidance. Consequently, we would do well to pay attention to the author’s homiletical techniques (whoever that mysterious author might be!).⁵

Sophisticated Structure in the Sermon to the Hebrews

The sophisticated structure of Hebrews has been a popular topic for scholars for over 70 years. The epistle as a whole shifts back and forth between “exposition” (describing the past and its theological significance) and “exhortation” (commands, requests, and urgent pleading directed at the audience).⁶

Consider, for example, the beginning of chapter 5. In the preceding context, the author has addressed his audience with an “exhortation,” urging them not to fall into the same sin of unbelief as the wilderness wandering generation. The end of chapter 4 has introduced the theme of Jesus Christ as high priest, the basis for our confidence in approaching “the throne of grace.” Chapter 5, with the post-positive conjunction *gar*, then introduces the “exposition,” the historical basis for why we can approach the throne of grace confidently. Hebrews 5:1-10 reminds the audience of the superiority of Christ’s high priestly office to that of Aaron,

a high priestly office that stems not from the Aaronic, Levitical lineage, but that of Melchizedek (a theme the author will return to later).

Yet 5:11 then turns back to exhortation, a stinging reminder to his audience that they are not as spiritually mature as they should be. The expression “of whom” (*peri hou*) builds off of the previous section, but introduces a new topic with new key words (“teachers/teach”; “milk/meat”).⁷ Then the conjunction *dio* in 6:1 builds off of the previous section and continues the rebuke, but it is softened somewhat by the author’s including of himself in the audience (“let us go on unto perfection”), compared to the previous sections more direct rebuke (5:11b-12, “ye are dull of hearing” . . . “ye have need that one teach you again . . .”). Indeed, the author’s language here and in 6:1 shows that he “is wholly optimistic about the community: a foundation has been laid (cf. 2:3-4) that need not, and cannot, be laid again (6:1, 4). The exhortation extended to the community in 6:1-12 is precisely a reminder of that solid foundation.”⁸

Interestingly, even later parts of the book interlock with earlier parts. For example, 10:19, 21-22 deliberately links back to 4:14-16 with similar terminology: *echontes oun* in 4:14 and 10:19 (“seeing then”/ “having therefore”), references to Jesus as “high priest” (*archiereia megan/ hieria megan*) in both 4:14 and 10:21, and the key verb *proserchōmetha* (4:16, “let us . . . come”; 10:22, “let us draw near”).

As Paul Ellingworth writes, “The resemblance is in fact greater than these verbal parallels show. In 4:16 as in 10:19, there is a reference to *παρρησία* [*parrēsia*]. More generally, there is a fusion between the ideas of Christ as supreme ruler over God’s people and as high priest”⁹

The Homily to the Hebrews is a magnificent creation, a sophisticated amalgam of interlocking parts and thematic echoes. **Although simplicity has its place in homiletics, so does complexity.** The author of Hebrews often opted for the latter strategy, fully intending to capture his audience, suck them into this vortex of persuasion, and never let them go until he had fully confronted them with his message about Christ.

Rhetoric in Hebrews

The inspired preacher to the Hebrews does not only concern himself with the grand design, but also the minutia—the aesthetic and rhetorical function of individual words.

For example, it is well known that the entire sermon begins with an incredible piece of alliteration of the *p* sound: *Polumerōs kai polutropōs palai ho Theos lalēsas tois patrasin en tois prophētais.*

Remember, this was meant primarily to be heard, publicly, not read privately.

Consequently, as David Alan Black writes, “We can see in Hebrews 1:1–4 a writer who at the very beginning of his work is consciously and deliberately choosing his words or rearranging them for euphonic effect, much like (according to Dionysios) the care that Plato gave to the opening lines of his Republic.”¹⁰

The inspired author’s alliteration, then, is a form of rhetoric, defined as “the deliberate, calculated use of language for the sake of communicating various kinds of information in the manner intended by the speaker.”¹¹

In other words, the author is deliberately formulating his opening salvo in such a way as to prepare his audience to receive his argument.

Since alliteration tends to link together sounds and words,¹² the author is essentially lumping together various aspects of past revelation in order to contrast it with the even more glorious revelation through the Son. The contrastive effect is amplified by the extremely rare words both in v. 1 (*polumerōs . . . polutropōs*, about past revelation) and in v. 3, when describing God’s ultimate revelation of His Son (*apaugasma . . . charaktēr*).

The author’s brilliant rhetoric is not limited to Hebrews 1, of course.

Alliteration exists in other places (D. Black points out, for example, 2:1–2, 3:1, 4:3), and the author of Hebrews deliberately evidences “an extraordinary sensitivity to the choice of individual words,” employing a larger vocabulary than any other book in the NT, as well as many more *hapax legomena* (words that do not occur anywhere else in the NT) compared to any other book.¹³ Hebrews even uses puns, of a sort (3:13, *parakaleite* [“exhort”] . . . *kaleitai* [“called”]), albeit sparingly, though this should hardly be considered an encouragement for those of us that have a tendency to overdo it!¹⁴

Finally, the preacher should be aware of Hebrews’ excellent use of vivid imagery.

The picture of a race in Heb 12:1–2 is well known, of course, and would have resonated well within an empire that celebrated foot racing. Yet less familiar to us is the nautical imagery at the beginning of the first exhortational section, 2:1–“. . . lest at any time we should let them slip.” The Greek verb *parrareō* has a specific connection to water: “The danger is of ‘drifting away,’ an unusual word that means more literally, ‘to flow by,’ as of a river (or perhaps a drifting boat) effortlessly slipping past—not primarily doing something they should not, so much as failing to take positive action and merely allowing things to slide.”¹⁵

Another interesting homiletical and rhetorical technique in Hebrews is the switch between 1st person plural and 2nd person plural in exhortation. **The author of Hebrews has no reticence about directly confronting the readers,** as we see especially in Heb 5:11-12 (“. . . ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again . . .”). At other times, however, the author softens the blow a bit: the very first warning passage, for example, does not read “Therefore you ought to give the more earnest heed . . . how will you escape,” but rather, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed . . . How shall we escape, . . .” (Heb 2:1-3). At the beginning, the inspired author does not want to turn his audience away with his supposed superiority, but lumps himself in with them, humbly, to encourage them that they are all in this together.

Fascinatingly, however, in the midst of the harshest language in the entire epistle, a warning that speaks of the “impossibility” of somebody being renewed again to repentance, of the “cursing” and “burning” that awaits the one rejecting Christ (6:4-6, 8), the author uses neither 1st person nor 2nd person, but switches to 3rd person: “For it is impossible for those [v. 4] . . . if they shall fall away . . . seeing they crucify [v. 6] . . . but that which beareth thorns and briers . . . whose end is to be burned [v. 8].”¹⁶

This is all the more striking since in vv. 1-3 the author uses the 1st person plural to express confidence that he and his audience will indeed “go on to perfection,” and in verse 9 the author uses both 1st person plural (“we are persuaded better things”) and 2nd person plural (“of you”) to express the strong confidence that his audience consists of those who have truly experienced salvation, unlike the 3rd person hypothetical apostates in vv. 4-8.¹⁷ This shows us how to avoid the Arminian error, since the content of vv. 4-8 is strongly contrasted with “things that accompany salvation” in v. 9, implying that Hebrews’ audience (at least generally) is born-again and those who “fall away” never were born again. The same principle may apply to the switch from 1st person plural in 10:26 to third person singular in 10:29 (“shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, . . . wherewith he was sanctified . . .”).¹⁹

In other words, even the author’s use of pronouns (“we” “you,” “he/they”) is calculated and deliberate, designed to progress the author’s argument and win over his audience.

Jesus Christ is the Whole Point of Rhetoric

Why, then, does the supernaturally inspired author of Hebrews use all this fancy rhetoric and homiletical technique. Is it merely to show off? *Mē genoito!*²⁰ “Perish the thought!”

The author of Hebrews has but one desire, to point his audience to Jesus Christ. **From the beginning of the epistle to the end, Jesus is the focus and object of all the author’s rhetorical techniques.**

“The presentation of Christ in the highly rhetorical exordium (1:3b) sets the scene for what follows. . . . This strikingly succinct statement, in which the writer moves from Christ’s cosmic role to his redeeming work, alerts us to what we shall find is [sic] a characteristic feature of great importance, viz. the juxtaposition of Christ’s death and his exaltation.”²¹ The author’s fervent fixation with Christ and his work continues unto the end, where the final doxology (13:18-21) focuses on Jesus Christ as our great shepherd, whose blood is the means by which we please God and do His will (vv. 20-21).

In between these two poles of 1:3 and 13:21, all the author’s rhetorical techniques are marshalled to trumpet one overriding message: Christ is superior to all, so why would anybody wish to turn their back on Him? **The author is devoted to the task of attempting to persuade his audience to seize upon the substance of the greater things, not linger with the shadows of the past.**

Conclusion

What does all this teach us as preachers of the Word?

I'd like to mention two key principles. First, we should always create a structure for our sermon. This is not a principle evidenced only by the more complicated parts of Scripture, but by the simpler parts as well. Even 1 John and James have structure; they are not random collections of theological odds and ends. The preacher who fails to provide a structure to his sermon, whether simple or complex, as opposed to simply rambling from one topic to another, is denying himself one of the greatest tools to keep his audience engaged with his message.

Second, we should not be afraid to use rhetorical tools to help persuade our audience. Naturally all man's intellect and wisdom will fail if the Holy Spirit is not involved; we should assume this at the outset and pray accordingly.

Yet this should be no excuse for not spending time meditating on how to make our sermons attractive. Any technique that assists the Holy Spirit's work should be considered. We must not employ alliteration for its own sake, hoping that we'll become a "household name" alongside of C. H. Spurgeon or John R. Rice; nor should we attempt a rhetoric trick just because all the "cool" preachers are doing so. Rather, we should seriously consider how our words, properly ornamented, can lead people to Jesus Christ and overcome their objections to him.

As G. Campbell Morgan once emphasized, preaching a sermon is the act of "storm[ing] the citadel of the human will."²³ Only the Holy Spirit can sound the charge and lead our assault; in the process, though, let's give Him all the weapons we can to use at His disposal.

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¹"Parable in F," in *The World's Greatest Collection of Church Jokes*, edited and compiled by Paul M. Miller (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 2003), KindleLoc 1725–1738.

²C. Clifton Black, who has specialized in the rhetoric of the New Testament, writes, "Although it is impossible (and needless) to demonstrate that Jesus, the earliest apostles, or the authors of the Gospels received formal education in rhetoric, indisputably they lived in a culture whose everyday modes of oral and written discourse were saturated with a rhetorical tradition mediated by such practitioners and theoreticians as Caecilius (a Sicilian Jew of the late first century BCE), Cicero (106–43 BCE), and Quintilian (ca. 40–95 CE)" (C. Clifton Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel: Theological Artistry in the Gospels and Acts*, 2nd ed. [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013], 3).

³See Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 391.

⁴James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1924), lxiv.

⁵The book has been traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul. Indeed, this was generally the position of the substantial part of the early church that recognized Hebrews' canonicity. At a minimum, the author was somebody who knew Timothy (Heb 13:23). For some of us, however, the statement in Heb 2:3 does not sound like something the Apostle Paul would have written, since Paul considered himself among the category of those that heard the Lord directly (Gal 1:11–12), rather than one of those that learned from the apostles. Consequently, Barnabas, Apollos, and Luke all remain popular, alternative suggestions for authorship. This writer very tentatively believes Apollos wrote it, because Hebrews is a great sermon that seems to be reacting to Alexandrian theology, and Apollos was a great preacher from Alexandria (Acts 18:24). The weakness of this position is that apparently nobody ever suggested Apollos as the author until Martin Luther.

⁶George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, *NovTSup* 73 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 50 and 54.

⁷Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 79–82.

⁸William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8*, *WBC 47A* (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 139.

⁹Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *NIGTC* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 521.

¹⁰David Alan Black, "Literary Artistry in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 7 (1994): 45v.

¹¹Carl Joachim Classen, *Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 45.

¹²For a discussion of the role of alliteration in linking together sounds, words, and concepts, see Theodore W. Hunt, *The Principles of Written Discourse*, 3rd ed. (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1891), 345; Royv E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "Wordplay in 1 Corinthians," *JTS* 74, no. 2 (2023), 607–635.

¹³Black, "Literary Artistry," 46.

¹⁴See D. Black, "Literary Artistry," 47, for a discussion of "wordplay" in Hebrews; I am indebted to Black for the example of 3:13.

¹⁵R. T. France, "Hebrews," in *Hebrews—Revelation*, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., vol. 13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2006), 47.

¹⁶In verse 8, "that which beareth" is a feminine participle, and "whose" is a feminine relative pronoun, both referring back to "earth" (gr̄) in v. 7. According to the inspired author's logic here, there are two kinds of soil, that which brings forth herbs and that which brings forth thorns and briars. Clearly the latter, as an analogy, refers back to those who "fall away" in v. 6. In the analogy of v. 8, the earth ("that which bears") represents this type of evil person, and the thorns and briars represent that which comes forth from them, namely the open mockery of the Son of God, to whom they were once attracted.

¹⁷As O'Brien notes, "While vv. 1–3 are in the first person (we, us) this section (vv. 4–6) is expressed in the third person (those who). The change is significant: our author does not explicitly identify those who have fallen away with the listeners of Hebrews" (Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, *PNTC* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 219).

¹⁸The English translation reflects the definite article with the participle, ho . . . katapatr̄saw."

¹⁹Clearly Hebrews 10:29, along with 2 Pet 2:1, teaches Jesus' unlimited atonement, that Jesus died for all, even those who never believed and are thus eternally condemned.

²⁰This means "May it never be!" It is a literal translation of the expression Paul uses in such places as Rom 6:15 and many other places.

²¹R. J. McKeveey, *Pioneer and Priest: Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 21.

²²G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018; reprint), 83.

PULPITS OF THE FUTURE

Preacher training and opportunities at the Nelson Center



Both spring and fall semesters held incredible opportunities for preachers of all ages through the Nelson Center. In April, Kevin Folger and Mark Irmmler partnered to present a module on Church Planting. Dr. Jim Van Gelderen and Pastor Dean Miller also teamed up for a module titled "Serving Side by Side," covering important topics such as equipping all members of the church to serve alongside their pastor, inspiring young people with a vision for evangelism, and expounding upon how the evangelist can strengthen the local church.

Later in the fall, Dr. Jim Schettler offered well-developed, practical material on Biblical counseling, benefiting many different believers along with aspiring preachers. Not only did he invest in the cause of preaching through this seminar, but spent one-on-one time with the young men of Baptist College of Ministry and Falls Baptist Academy, helping them individually to improve in the preparation and delivery of messages.

"There are so many hurting people today with complex and difficult challenges. Pastors and Christians have the important responsibility of lovingly helping these precious people navigate or overcome these issues. We were regularly challenged and shown how to counsel people depending on the power of the Word of God. The class was very helpful in giving a Biblical framework from which to counsel; that helps me as the counselor get to the real root of the matter. This allows for real transformation and deliverance. The lecture entitled "Guilt: a Gift from God," is a lesson every believer ought to hear, the class was extremely practical and helpful."

Pastor Philip Rains
Mukwonago Baptist Church
Participant in Counseling Course

This summer, the Nelson Center provided a unique chance for young "preacher boys" to receive specialized mentorship from experienced preachers. During the Spectacular Strings Music Festival, participants of various ages were involved in several sessions covering a variety of topics from exegesis to delivery. These sessions inspired young preachers to begin serious preparation for God's calling early in their life.

"At the Spectacular Music Festival, we had the unique opportunity to hear from four seasoned preachers who not only gave us practical tips on developing and delivering messages but also challenged us to cultivate a personal walk with the Lord. Personally, I was helped by feedback on a message I was preparing for an upcoming youth service, and the chance to receive guidance in this way was a great blessing to me"

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CHURCH PLANTING UPDATE

testimonies of God's working in Manitowoc, Wisconsin



"Maritime Baptist Church began meeting in a senior center in December of 2025. Falls Baptist Church signed a two-year lease on a building and we began meeting in the new location in January. We have been averaging forty to fifty people weekly. Many of the attendees are former members or associates of two Baptist churches that have recently dissolved. We have been encouraged with their faithfulness and growth during these initial months. We've also been encouraged with the regular visitors God has brought our way. There is much yet to do physically and spiritually, but we have been encouraged with how God has been helping one step at a time."

Pastor Chris and Laura Sanderlin



"It has been such an incredible privilege to be a part of what God is doing in Manitowoc. As we have taken steps of faith—sensing God at work and His leading—He has given wisdom, opened countless doors, and is truly blessing the work. I believe the number one thing God has blessed in this endeavor, and has used as an encouragement to me, is the time we have spent together in prayer. Prayer is everything. The first time we went door knocking, we didn't have the name of the church, an address, or a timeframe of when we would be starting but we began knocking doors in faith. God immediately began blessing and we were able to start Bible studies. From that point on, God has continued to show us that He is at work."

Lauren Senior from Arkansas



"Helping at Maritime Baptist has been a great experience! I've been amazed to see God work in the church, outreach, and in our own hearts! I've been encouraged by the love of God and see the difference this makes in ministering to people! A man named Steve we have been praying for attended church this last Sunday! Please pray that we continue to live in the love of God and share that love with Steve and others who do not know His love."

Sam Seminary student from Pennsylvania



"Through the last few months it has been amazing to slowly watch God build His church in the Manitowoc area. Seeing people reaching out in the church and pouring into the lives of others has been an encouragement and blessing. I love to see God work every week as souls are given the gospel. God has taught me to completely rely on Him in every area of this ministry. I have been encouraged to see how people respond to the truths of the Bible about how God wants His church to be established. I am thankful how God has worked in my heart to see more churches established across our country. I have enjoyed being part of this ministry and seeing God build His church, and I know He will continue to grow this ministry in the coming years."

Hannah Senior from Florida

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FOREWORD BY DR. RICK FLANDERS

JOHN R. RICE

*The Last Revivalist
of the 20th Century*

A Biography by
JOHN R. HIMES
Grandson of John R. Rice

JOHN R. RICE was an evangelist in the mode of the great revivalists of the past: Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and Billy Sunday. As a young man he held tent revivals, which resulted in souls saved and churches planted. He went on to hold local church revivals as well as great citywide campaigns and saw hundreds saved and revived that way. His *Sword of the Lord* newspaper eventually became his main revival tool and was influential not only in Baptist circles, but across the evangelical spectrum.

As an author, Rice wrote books that were printed in the hundreds of thousands and that blessed both laymen and preachers. His little book on Heaven sold over 700,000 copies, and his book on prayer, *Prayer: Asking and Receiving*, was similarly used of God and is still in print. His most famous tract, "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" saw over forty million copies printed in many different languages.

A cowboy preacher from Texas who was criticized by some for his boldness and unpopular positions, but beloved of many for his courage and unswerving loyalty to Christ, Rice broke the mold. His simple but deep faith in God allowed him to see tens of thousands of souls saved. You will be encouraged by this book and will see that you too can be greatly used by God!

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