

The Theological Foundation For Expository Preaching

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I want to talk about “The Theological Foundation For Expository Preaching.” I want to start by teeing off on 1 Timothy 4:13, just that one verse. I want you to get your Bible open and look at that, 1 Timothy 4:13. Paul said to Timothy, “Till I come, give attendance”—or attention—“to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” I’m convinced that for many years that the greatest need in the church is for expository preaching. I believe that if all the churches, evangelical churches in our nation, had expositional preachers in the pulpit, we would see a revival like never before in America. We’re kind of running around the barn chasing all the issues, and I understand that, but if we would just turn the pulpits into expository preaching pulpits, the churches of America would be revival.

Henrietta Mears, who wrote the excellent book, *What The Bible Is All About*, said, “If you want a revival in America, we need a re-Bible in America.” We need to get back to the Word of God. You may say, “Well, there’s a lot of guys preaching the Word,” but are they truly doing expositional preaching. It’s one thing to read a text and then depart from the text and give a little pep talk; it’s another thing to truly do expositional preaching.

What is expositional preaching? We’re going to be going over definition day, after day, after day. We’re going to hit ‘repeat’ sometimes a definition and hit it from all different angles. But in this text that we just read from 1 Timothy 4:13, I think there’s a threefold outline for expositional preaching, “Till I come, give attendance to reading,”—that’s, read the text. If you don’t do anything but just read the text, they’re hearing God speak. God speaks through what He has spoken, so I think you should read the text. We’ll talk more about that when we talk more about picking a text in the development of a sermon, when you read it in your sermon. I like to read it very first thing because I want that to be central, that my message is based on a text. I’m a textual preacher. I’m not going to talk for 20 minutes and go, “Oh, I forgot! This is supposed to be a Bible message,” so throw a verse in there to justify that. So, reading the text.

Then, we have the doctrine, which means to explain the text. That’s the exposition—teaching. The word “doctrine” is teaching. We’re to teach the text or explain the text. So, you read it, you explain it, and then, thirdly, you apply it—exhortation. You have those three categories, and Paul wants Timothy to give attention to this, make it a priority of your ministry—reading the text, explaining the text, and applying the text.

Just out of curiosity, I looked up the word “expositional” in just a dictionary, and it means to explain. It’s that simple. It seems like a big, fancy word, “Like, what does it mean?” It means to explain. You explain the text in its historical, grammatical, theological context. This is what expository preaching is.

As preachers and teachers of God’s Word, our general aim should be threefold. If you’re taking notes, write them down. The threefold aim is first, preach God’s Word faithfully. Write down 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. I plan on, and I’m not sure, but I plan on doing a session I think tomorrow on

the subject of being a steward of God's Word, so I won't go into much depth here now. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, I want you to write this down, and for that matter that whole first part of that chapter, Paul says, "Let a man so account of us,"—Paul is talking about us apostles, us ministers of the gospel; this is how you should view us—"as ministers"—that word 'minister' means slaves or underrowers—"of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." That verse is packed with information of what it means to be a faithful expository preacher. You are a servant of Christ, a minister servant—"of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,"—that's the Word of God that is entrusted to you.

The key word there is "steward." It's not our message—we don't create it, we don't invent it—but it's given to us to be faithfully preached to God's people, or dispensing the goods to the household of God. But notice the thing that is required in a "steward," which a preacher is to be, faithfulness—not creativity, not genius, not good looks, not dynamics, but faithfulness.

Secondly, we want to preach the Word powerfully, not just faithfully, but powerfully. Paul says, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy [Spirit], and in much assurance." I love that. If we're going to preach God's Word, we want to rely on the Holy Spirit. Spurgeon, when he would walk up to his pulpit, would actually say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit." Sometimes when I'm coming down from my office upstairs between services down to preach, as I'm headed down the steps I'm praying at each step saying, "Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. Lord, fill me with Your Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit." So, we want to preach powerfully the gospel of Christ.

Thirdly, our faithful preaching should be marked by skillfully. We should preach faithfully, we should preach powerfully the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and we should preach the Word of God skillfully. For that, 2 Timothy 2:15. We all know it, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We could do a whole class on that verse.

"Study" means to be eager, to be excited, to be devoted, be zealous. It doesn't mean, get your books out, get your commentaries out, get your dictionaries out. It means to be eager, to be amped, to be ready to go, to get into the Word of God. "Rightly dividing" literally means to cut it straight. So, your number one goal in preaching the Word is cutting it straight, make a straight cut. Maybe Paul was thinking of stone masons cutting the stones straight so they fit together. Maybe he was thinking of cutting a robe, cutting it straight. Maybe he was thinking of making a tent, taking the skins, cutting them straight to put them together. He wanted them to divide the Word rightly. Why? " . . . that"—we—"needeth not to be ashamed." So, we want to preach faithfully, powerfully, and skillfully.

Unfortunately, faithful, powerful, skillful expository preaching is very rare in the church today. Thank God it's in the church, but it's rare. Like I said, if every pulpit in America preached expositional sermons, we would see a revival in America. It would transform our nation. I

believe it with all my heart. Expository preaching is very rare. Preaching from the Bible, using the Bible, many times just as a pretext or doing eisegesis rather than exegesis is more common—the dumbing down of churches today where we have the main sanctuary is turned into a youth group kind of a mentality instead of serious, in-depth expository preaching.

One of the reasons why that is is because they lack theological foundation which forms a conviction of preaching's importance. I believe that a lot of guys aren't preaching expository sermons because they lack the theological foundation, which is the motivation, for expository preaching. What we have in a lot of cases today is preaching that's pragmatic. They're trying to preach sermons in a way that will build the church instead of being obedient and faithful to God who's commissioned them to preach. Now, we want to build the church, and the best way to do that is preaching expository sermons, but what they're looking for is success, pragmatic results, and so they adopt all these other methods. I think it's rare because men lack that foundation.

I want to cover the theological reasons or foundations for expository preaching. John R.W. Stott, in his excellent book, *Between Two Worlds*, said, "The essential secret is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions." I love that. In other words, theology is more important than methodology. Theology is more important than methodology. If you come to the class on expository preaching and say, "I just want to know what's going to work," or be pragmatic, you're lacking the foundation. A lot of times I think guys, I used to think it in terms of a light going on, the light doesn't go on in their mind of what it really means to be faithful to the text and preaching the text and being an expository preacher, so becoming an expository preacher is more caught than taught. Becoming an expository preacher is more caught than taught.

One of the benefits, I hope we can go over some list about benefits of expository preaching, is for the congregation learns how to preach the Bible. You are training men in your church to be preachers, if you model for them expository preaching. One of the ways I caught that vision is listening to Chuck Smith on Sunday night go through the Bible, just verse by verse, chapter by chapter—reading the text, explaining the text, applying the text. They maybe didn't have sermonic form because it was Sunday night running commentary, but it was expository teaching and so the catching of that vision I think so very important. You'll raise up preachers within your own congregation because you're modeling that for them. So, becoming an expository preacher is caught. You need the light to go on to realize that it is the biblical way to preach or what is Christian preaching is expository preaching.

John Stott, again, says, "That there are five theologic convictions which should undergird the practice of expository preaching." It's so very, very important. Now, you might want to write them down. The first is a conviction about God. Each one of these points could be a whole teaching in itself, and I did teach this at the last "Nuts and Bolts" so I won't tarry on it, but we start with a conviction about God—that God reveals Himself, that God speaks, that God is light; that God is not hidden, God is not unknown, God reveals Himself. This is the doctrine of revelation, the doctrine of revelation.

Now, in speaking about theological foundations and the doctrine of revelation in the Scriptures that I share, this is the book I recommend you get and you read. Now, there's a lot of theologies out there, there's a lot of options out there, and this is not the only book on theology I have in my library, but it's been my favorite, it's been the one I use the most, and I actually use it as a reference tool. It's right near my desk, so when I'm expounding a text that might deal with a touch on a doctrinal issue, I'll pull it out and I'll find the section on that, and I'll read the doctrinal information about that position. But I love Ryrie's, Basic Theology, so this is the book I recommend that you get to fill your sermons full of biblical truth and theological meat.

So, the conviction is that God reveals Himself to us. How does God reveal Himself to us? There are many different ways, but write down Psalm 19. I'd like to have done a whole session on that Psalm, but Psalm 19 is a great Psalm when it describes the two categories of God's self-revelation: general, in creation, Psalm 19:1-6; and then specific revelation in God's Word. So, God's revealed Himself in creation, "The heavens declare the glory of God . . . Day unto day uttereth speech. Their line is gone out through all the earth." " . . . where their voice is not heard," so God reveals Himself in creation.

There's also special revelation where God reveals Himself in His Word, the Bible, Scripture. He also revealed Himself through dreams, by speaking through prophets, through visions, through sending angels, but God primarily reveals Himself in Scripture. You want to read Psalm 19:7-11 where it says, "The law of the LORD is perfect,"—it speaks of—" . . . the testimony of the LORD." Notice that phrase, "testimony of the LORD." This is God's self-disclosure. This is God's testimony. So, revelation, that doctrine that God speaks, that God reveals...now, I love the concept that God cannot be known apart from revelation. You can't find God by searching on your own, God must come to us. God chooses to reveal Himself to us in His Word.

If I really believe that, and I really am going to be motivated by that, I want the people in my church to hear the Word more because God reveals Himself in His Word. We're not going to find Him anywhere else. We don't go back and sit around on the grass looking at butterflies and flowers and see how God reveals—that's creation, that's good—we open the Word, which is really an in-depth disclosure of God in the Scriptures. So, read Psalm 19:7-11 where it talks about " . . . the testimony of the LORD The statutes of the LORD," and all that God does to reveal Himself, " . . . sure . . . wise,"—and—"simple."

God's self-revelation described in the initiative God took place, God unveils or discloses Himself. So, it's a humbling truth because it presupposes that God is infinite and His perfections are beyond the reach of our finite minds, but without God's self-revelation in Scripture, we would be like the Athenians on the altars ascribed, " . . . TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." The only way to really fully know God is as He's revealed Himself in His Word. Carl F. Henry said, "Revelation is a divinely initiated activity, God's free communication by which He alone turns His personal privacy into a deliberate disclosure of His reality." I love that. God chooses to reveal Himself. Albert Mohler said, "All Christian preaching springs from the truth that God has spoken in word and deed, and that He has chosen human vessels to bear witness to Himself and His gospel."

We speak because we cannot be silent. We speak because God has spoken. I love that prayer, “Lord, speak through what You have spoken,” and Jesus Christ is the central theme of Scripture. When we’re preaching Christ, Christ is the revelation of God. In John 1:18 it says, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him,”—exegeted Him, explained Him, revealed Him. Jesus Christ reveals God to us. He’s the central theme of Scripture, so we preach the Word because we’re preaching Christ.

Secondly, the conviction about Scripture. We move from the doctrine of revelation to the doctrine of inspiration. We believe that the Bible “. . . is given by inspiration of God.” Inspiration describes the means God chose by which to reveal Himself, namely by speaking to and through the biblical authors. Write down 2 Timothy 3:16-17. What preacher worth his salt doesn’t have this verse memorized, right? By the way, you ought to memorize Scripture so that you can preach it without reading it, and you can look at people when you’re quoting it. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,”—there it is—“and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

I love Warren Wiersbe’s breakdown, “Doctrine is what is right, reproof is what is wrong, correction is how to get right, instruction in righteousness is how to stay right.” All that we need is in the Bible, which is the self-revelation of God. How we view Scripture determines how we preach the Scriptures. You can listen to a guy preach for a couple of minutes, and you can tell by the way he’s preaching, his view of Scripture. If he has a high view of Scripture, he will be in the text, explaining the text, applying the text, not departing from the text. He won’t springboard from a text and then go all over the place, he’ll take you into the text and get to the meaning of the text. “It is certain,” says, John Stott, “that we cannot handle Scripture adequately in the pulpit if our doctrine of Scripture is inadequate.” We cannot properly preach if our doctrine of Scripture is inadequate. In Titus, yesterday morning, we read in Titus 1:9 that a minister needs to hold to “. . . the faithful word as he hath been taught.” That’s number one.

Now, we have a high view of Scripture. There are four false views of Scripture that I’ll just mention real quick, and then we’ll go on: natural revelation, that they were just naturally inspired, not divine; dictation, or mechanical inspiration that God dictated Scripture; or fallible inspiration; conceptual inspiration, that just the concepts are inspired. I believe in what’s called verbal plenary inspiration; that “verbal” the words, and “plenary” all of them, are given by inspiration of God. So, get your theology books out, get your Scriptures out, study the doctrine of Scripture, study the doctrine of Scripture—inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, infallibility, authority, sufficiency. If you’re a preacher of the Word, you should believe in the Word and the power of the Word. You need to have an orthodox view. Jesus said in Matthew 5:18, “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” It’s so very important.

Now, I’m going to skip Ryrie’s definition of “inspiration,” but it’s so important that you study the doctrine of inspiration. If we’re going to preach, we have to have a conviction about Scripture.

Scripture is God's Word written. God still speaks through what He has spoken. J.I. Packer said, "The Bible is God preaching." I love that. The Bible is God preaching. It's the voice of God. This is why you want to get out of the way and let the text speak. It's the voice of God Himself speaking. I love that. It's so important.

J. Vernon McGee used to give the analogy of the train on the tracks and that the Holy Spirit has a track to run on to function, and that is the Word of God. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to transform the people of God into the image of the Son of God. The Bible is a hammer, it shatters the stone. The Bible is a fire, it burns away sin. The Bible is a lamp, it lights the path. The Bible is likened unto a mirror, it shows our sin. It's likened to seed, causing birth. It has life. It's likened unto milk, causing growth. It's likened unto honey, sweet to the taste. Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is"—alive—"and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." So, we have to have a high view of Scripture.

Thirdly, we have to have a conviction about the Church. We have to understand church. Again, get your systematic theology out and read the section on the doctrine of the Church. You'll have all that information in your brain. You get stuff that you won't find even in commentaries because you've stored all that in your heart—conviction about the Church. Now, I'll talk more about the Church in a little while, but Stott said, "The Word of God is the scepter by which Christ rules the Church and the food with which He nourishes it." Jesus said, ". . . I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In Acts 2, the Church was born, the Spirit came, Peter preached what? The Word. Peter preached in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost a biblical exposition of Scripture and three thousand souls were added to the Church. So, the Church is strengthened, the Church is sanctified, and the Church is equipped for service through the preaching of God's Word.

Here's the fourth, we need a conviction about the pastor, a conviction about the pastor. Again, get your theology out, and you read about the pastoral epistles—what a pastor's to be and to do. You find out that they're shepherds. In John 21, Peter was told, "Feed my sheep." The number one job of a shepherd is to feed sheep—feed, lead, and protect. But if you don't feed them, what good does it do to lead them? If you don't feed them, what good does it do to protect them? The number one job of a pastor is the preaching and teaching of God's Word.

I do want you to turn to Ephesians 4, if you haven't in your Bibles. I want to cover these verses again, Ephesians 4. Start at verse 10 with me in your Bibles, Ephesians 4:10, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things"—referring to Christ; and again referring to Christ—"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Now, why did God/Christ give to the Church pastor-teachers? First, "For the perfecting of the saints," that's right at the top of the list, to mature God's people. This text, by the way, was kind of like a master text for Chuck Smith at Pastor's Conferences. He immersed us in this text year after year after year because of its importance of modeling what a pastor-teacher was for, "For the perfecting"—or the maturing—"of the saints."

Why perfect and mature the saints? Secondly, “. . . for the work of the ministry.” They do the work of ministry. You’re raising up servants. You’ll have a church full of servants, a church full of pastors all serving and ministering. Thirdly, then “for the edifying of the body of Christ,” verse 12. So the body, the church, is built up and edified. Fourthly, verse 13, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith.” A church that’s taught the Word of God from the pulpit has unity and harmony. We’re all on the same page. They’re all grounded and submitted to the authority of Scripture. Fifthly, “. . . and of the knowledge of the Son of God,”—so they’re growing in their knowledge of Christ, who is the central theme of all Scripture. And then, “unto a perfect man, unto,”—sixthly—“the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” That’s your goal as a Bible teacher, to bring the people to “. . . the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Seventh, verse 14, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

That verse specifically, verse 14, has meant a lot to me over the years. My background in my early Christianity was Pentecostal theology. I grew up in a Pentecostal church, and I thank God for that. I thank God for the teaching I got. But there was very little Bible teaching and very little expository preaching in the churches I grew up in. What I saw among the congregation was a lack of maturity, a lack of maturity, and they were always under the influence of the last fad or fashion blowing through the church. They were blown about “. . . with every wind of doctrine,” and it broke my heart.

As I began to study the Word, and I began to sit under Chuck Smith and hear him teach the Bible and I began to grow, I began to realize that, “Gee, over here in this Pentecostal church, they’re not getting taught the Word, and these precious sheep, these precious people of God, are struggling and they’re being blown about,” verse 14, “. . . tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” Every new fad that came through the church, they would get caught up in. They were like tumbleweeds, not like oak trees. So, you want the people to be grounded in the Word, not being influenced by false teachers who, “. . . by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Look at verse 15, “But speaking the truth in love,”—which is the Word of God. “But speaking the truth,”—speaking God’s Word—“in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head.” Now, I know we can separate pastoral preaching from just teaching the Bible, but again, it all needs to be tied in together with the church. And pastors, as well, need to understand their priority is to be preaching and teaching the Word. If you’re a Bible teacher, I do not recommend you do it outside of the blessing of the local church. That means you do it with the blessing of your pastor and that you tie it in and connect it with and commit it to a local fellowship until the Lord perhaps calls you to pioneer a church or start a church, if that’s the calling on your life; but until then, you need to be submitted to your pastor, to the leadership of your church, and your teaching should be submitted to the leadership and the eldership of that congregation. So, it’s all about the church.

So, we have a high view of the church, and a high view of the pastorate, that he feeds the

sheep, he leads the sheep, he protects the sheep, and that he heals the sheep with the Word of God. It's amazing to me how a church can become so healthy, so vibrant, so alive when it's being fed the pure, unadulterated Word of God. God will use it to change lives.

Here's the fifth. I probably should just skim over this, because this is what we're going to be talking about the whole rest of the week, but it's a conviction about preaching. What is your conviction about preaching based on your conviction about God and Scripture, and the church, and the pastorate? Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, and I'll teach this tomorrow, is that we should "Preach the word,"—right? What are we to preach? The Word. We're to herald the Word. "Preach the word,"—how?—"be instant in season, out of season"—by—"reprove, rebuke, exhort will all longsuffering"—patience—"and doctrine."

John Stott says, quote, "It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching." Let me repeat that. "It is my contention that all true Christian preaching is expository preaching." Shouldn't we be pretty fanatic about that? True preaching is expositional preaching—nothing more, nothing less. Now, there can be a devotional sermon, there can be a topical sermon, there can be a textual sermon, there can be an evangelistic sermon, but true preaching is preaching the Word of God, not adding to it, not diluting it, not substituting it—the Word of God, nothing but the Word of God.

How do you define expository preaching? First and foremost the adjective "expository" describes the method by which the preacher decides what to say, not how to say it. Expository preaching is not how I say it, it's what I'm saying. I'm saying what the text actually says, and I'm preaching what the text actually means. A.T. Robertson said, "Never get out of a text what was never in the text." I love that. "Never get out of a text what was never in the text."

Have you ever heard a sermon, they read a text and they're preaching, and you're scratching your head, the whole time thinking, Is that what it really says? Is that what it really means? Or, have you ever been scratching your head thinking, Where'd the text go? What happened to your text? They use it as a springboard. They start with the text, BOING! and they spring off out here in Bongo-bongo Land and never the twain shall meet again. The sermon has nothing to do with the text. Why read the text? If you're not going to preach the text, why do you read the text? Why do you have a text? In expository preaching, the text is master. The text is master. It dictates your topic. It dictates the number of points. The text is master. We'll be breaking this down a lot for the next couple of days.

In 1 Timothy 4:13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." You read the text, explain the text, and apply the text. Here's Haddon Robinson's expository preaching definition. He said, "Expository preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through the preacher, applies to the hearers." Now, that's a definition of expository preaching.

Let me give you some reasons why we must preach expositional sermons. First, if we don't, there's no authority in what we preach. If we don't preach expositional sermons, there's no authority in what we preach. We can't say, "Thus saith the Lord," or "This is what the Apostle Paul said," and we have no authority because the authority is not us, the authority is the Bible. It's not the preacher. Secondly, we preach expository sermons so that we will not infringe upon Christ's headship of the Church. Christ is the head of the Church. We're undershepherds, so we want to be faithful to preach His Word.

Thirdly, so that I know—I love this—I'm ministering in concert with the Holy Spirit. When I preach expository sermons, I am so confident that I am preaching in concert with the Holy Spirit, especially in evangelism. When I quote Scripture and explain Scripture, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" "There is none righteous, no, not one," and we call for people to put their faith in Christ, and we read the Scripture, we quote Scripture, you are preaching with the authority of God's Word. The authority is the Scripture, not the word in you, and you're preaching in concert with the Holy Spirit. So, we must preach God's Word, not ours. Our aim should be Christ's glory, not ours. Our confidence must be the Holy Spirit's power, not ours.

So, a conviction about God—God reveals Himself, He's a God that reveals Himself—and He's revealed Himself primarily, chiefly in the Bible. Secondly, a conviction about Scripture, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." I believe in the authority, inerrancy, and infallibility, of Scripture. Thirdly, a conviction about the Church. The Church needs the Bible, the Bible needs the Church. The Church needs the Bible, and the Bible needs the Church. Fourthly, a conviction about the pastorate. The pastor's number one job is to faithfully, powerfully, accurately preach the Word—nothing more, nothing less. Fifthly, a conviction about preaching. Amen? That preaching is k 7 ýss ÒÀ proclaiming, heralding the Word—nothing more, nothing less. If I'm preaching what God says and what God means by what He said and how it applies, then I'm happy. Actually, application must be based on right interpretation. To properly apply God's Word in your sermon, you must properly interpret the text.

So, God help us to have a strong theological foundation. Again, I highly recommend Charles Ryrie's Basic Theology. Yes, it's pretribulational, it's premillennial, it's not five-point Calvinism. I will read Calvinistic theology. I'm not anti-Calvinist. I'm not opposed to Calvinist doctrine, and I do have commentaries and I do read theology that is done by Calvinist, but this is where I've kind of planted myself in this dispensation—premillennial, pretribulational theology—that you'll find in Charles Ryrie's Basic Theology.