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First Sermon, Hard Goodbyes, and a Lifetime of Preaching with H.B. Charles Jr.

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Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

With a heart of gold, H.B. got up early in the morning from a hotel room in L.A. to talk to Kevin about preaching. If you want to know what H.B. stands for, or what he preached for his first sermon as an 11-year-old boy, or what the hardest in his life was, you won't want to miss this episode. Get to know H.B. and learn from one of the great preachers of our day.

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Transcript

(music) Greetings and salutations. Welcome to Life and Books and Everything. I'm Kevin DeYoung.

Glad to be with you again. I will introduce our special guest in just a moment. Very

excited to have my friend H.B. Charles Jr. Esquire, right honorable friend and brother, and we're going to find out what H.B. means.

We'll bring on H.B. in just a moment. I just want to thank Crossway again for sponsoring L.B.E. I want to mention today the book by Andreas Kostenberger and Gregory Goswell, Biblical Theology, a canonical thematic and ethical approach. Biblical Theology, as our listeners probably know, is theology that instead of arranged by specific topics is often arranged book by book from Old Testament, through New Testament, tracing the land or the temple or something through the canonical scripture.

How does this theme or idea trace through the storyline of scripture? And they do this in this book and then also looking at the ethical component and how God seeks to transform the lives of his people through the text of scripture. So pick up a copy, Biblical Theology, A canonical thematic, ethical approach. You can go to crossway.org/plus and find out how you can get 30% off with a free crossway account.

Our guest today, as I mentioned, is H.B. Charles Jr. We're going to hear a little bit about him and we're going to talk mostly about preaching. He is the pastor teacher at the Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida, where he has served since the fall of 2008. Prior to that, he led Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, where he succeeded his father, pastoring there.

Going to hear about that story. He's author of a number of books. In particular, there's this trilogy all published, I think, H.B. by Moody on preaching on pastoring and on worship.

Really good short chapters. You could read it informatively or devotionally. And we're going to think in particular about preaching.

And he has a podcast where he talks about preaching. He has a radio program where he does preaching and I love H.B.'s preaching and talk to him about preaching. So, H.B. welcome.

So glad to have you here. Thanks Kevin. It's a joy.

I am an avid listener to the podcast and it's not going to be our voice. Oh wow. Well, thank you.

All right, first question. You get this all the time. I know the answer to it.

And it's on your website, which tells us everyone asks you this. But tell us, what does the H and the B stand for? H.B. stands for absolutely nothing. Oh man.

As I regularly say, my father did it to me and I did it to my son. And there is not a week in my life literally where that question is not asked in one way or the other. And I have to

give that explanation.

I have found that succinct way to explain it. And mostly I'm told that, oh, that was cool. But it wasn't cool growing up.

B.A.T. is probably having any issues. What did they come up with to call you? You was H.B. Anything they could fill in. I was called everything.

And everything. Yep. Well, now you could say it stands for high Baptist or something.

Yeah, sure. That would fit. Alistair Begg now famously calls me like he the cus Bartholomew.

He thinks it should be something profound or something deep. Oh yeah, that's really good. Very deep.

Yeah. Oh, that's great. So tell us, you grew up in Los Angeles.

You're actually recording this in Los Angeles. And I'm recording this at a reasonable time on the East Coast. And you're up very early in the West Coast.

So thank you for doing that even with your family in the room and you're flying back home soon. I am. Okay.

But you're from LA. So where did you grow up? LA is a big place. Did your girl, your father was a pastor.

So you grew up a Christian. Just tell us a little bit. I want a little bit HB until 17.

Sure. So I grew up in a pastor's home here in Los Angeles. I grew up in Inglewood, California.

My elementary school is right across the street from the forum where the I was going to ask how close you were to the forum. Wow. Yeah.

And the big highlight is every year they would come some of the players would come over and do a thing for the students. That was always a big thing. My father, I'm a third generation pastor.

So his father was a pastor. He served in the heart of Los Angeles, headed downtown area, midtown area, you would call it. And he served that church for 40 years.

My father was the pastor. My mother was the secretary, minister of music. You name it.

The first lady. You name it. She served every role possible.

And we were, if not in church every day, members were at a house every day. And yeah,

I heard the gospel early and often. And I trusted as a child.

Personally, one night, I just really was consumed by the story that I had been hearing of the message of Jesus Christ. And trusted Christ as a boy, but not long after I was called, I felt a call to preach. And I just had the privilege of basically hanging out with my father who was always with preachers talking about preaching.

He had a Tuesday night class in our home every night where the associate ministers and local pastors would come and they would just talk about preaching for two hours. I would sit in the back of that session. Yeah.

So I preached my first sermon as a boy, 11 years old. Listen, our family is in love with us. No first sermon is good.

Yeah. Well yours might have been. So I got something.

My family is in Los Angeles. We were all here for my daughter's 15th birthday. And I preached at my home church yesterday.

And afterward, a member handed me this, which is a cassette of my first sermon. Wow. August 26, 1984.

I was 11 years old. This is like gold. The message was entitled Jesus is passing by.

Oh, so was that walking on the water, the storm? The blind men. Jesus was a person. Okay, another passing by.

So are you going to listen to it? Yeah. But let me tell you, let me tell you, my father had a stipulation that a new preacher preaching what was called the trial sermon needed to preach something out of the gospels. I wanted to preach three, the three Hebrew boys in the fire.

I've been working on that story. I felt a new story. And my dad and I went back and forth.

I'm 11 years old. And time is getting close to the sermon. He does not feel like I'm preparing this sermon on a New Testament.

So he wrote a sermon on this text. He wrote Jesus is passing by. So he gave me the manuscript and said, just read this.

So I start out with the introduction. And man, I'm like three paragraphs, four paragraphs into this introduction. And I said, you know, so Jesus is passing by.

And the church was so packed. Hey, man, it was just so encouraging. And they say there's a roar of amen.

And when I, um, I pause and then it comes to my mind and I say, you know, he passed

by for the three Hebrew boys one day in the fire and I went on it. My sermon on it. What did your dad say? I didn't get a chance to preach again for quite a long time.

I did his introduction and preach the sermon that I prepared. So if I could, if I could get digitized, that'll be something to hear. No, you should put it.

I mean, put it on some website somewhere, at least some, you know, some dark recesses of the internet. We want to hear that. That's amazing.

Now, was this, was this on you? This had to be unusual. 11. And then, you know, get to your story.

You, you become a full-time preacher at 17. So I know you're humble and you don't want to talk about yourself, but people must have recognized a unique gift at a young age. How did it happen that, even though, I mean, it was your dad, I get it, but that you preached your first trial sermon at 11 and you start regularly preaching to a congregation at 17.

So two things I would say there. I, um, I have never had any desire, interest, or thought that I would do anything else in my life at that point beyond preaching. I didn't know what that would look like.

So as a boy, I start studying, preaching, and studying preachers. And then, of course, studying, reading the Bible as best I could. I just, I remember sitting in school reading the book of Revelation through.

I, I was consumed with the scriptures and the desire to preach it. Secondly, my father was a friend of preachers in the city. And most Sundays, we had a three o'clock afternoon service where my dad would go to another church and preach something and take our church to fellowship with another congregation.

And we usually went to a smaller church where he said, you can't, you know, they can't repay the favor. And when I started preaching, those men found a way to repay my dad. And so really not long after I started preaching, I preached at two churches yesterday.

And the afternoon I did preach at a church. I preached that as a boy in Pasadena, where a friend of my father just put me in a chair and let me speak to his congregation briefly on a Sunday morning. So I was getting a lot of opportunities.

And by the time I was in my mid teens, I'm preaching a Sunday school program here, a youth service there. They're putting me at the end of a children's choir for 15 minutes. So I'm having a lot of opportunities, whatever they think is about to happen though.

In my mind, I'm coming to preach. I'm taking this absolutely seriously. And so as the those years, early teens years, I am preaching much more regularly.

And when my father suddenly passed at 16, between 16 and a year and a half later, when I was called to the church there, there might have been two Sundays in that year and a half that I was not preaching somewhere. I was regularly preaching. And yeah, that's just what you're done.

Did you realize at the time this is unique? I mean, you're still finishing your high school classes preaching every week? Yeah, so I mean, like I met my wife, Crystal, in high school. We, she was a year or so behind me. And we shared coach Williams, world history class, coach Williams, world history class was the favorite class in Los Angeles High School.

He was the football coach. Imagine the football coach teaching a world history class. No homework, no assignments.

But stories. Yeah. Yeah.

So when she talks to somebody, when she like reconnects with somebody from high school, and they're like, you're married with children, she's like, yeah, I married HB. He went to school with us HB. They may remember the name.

And then they're like, help me. And here's how she'd say the boy that wore suits to school every day. You married that.

You married, it has funny. Yeah. So I mean, I was wearing suits at school every day.

If it was, if it was odd, I'm sure it was. And there was a sense in which, you know, I felt being in some settings, they viewed me like a circus freak. But I was not ashamed and embarrassed.

I wore, I was eager, I had sermon and was ready to travel. I wanted to travel. That's right.

Yeah. So what was it like this past weekend, going back and preaching, that must have been a sweet occasion. You get a lot of Amen, brother, so good to have you back.

What was it like? Yeah. So, and it's, it's, it's an amazing experience. I, there are people there who still in that church, who literally raised me.

They, they watched me. So it is a joy and is a great encouragement. People who don't know my story, kind of don't know the, my father's legacy.

But I mean, I remind them, after all these years, you know, I got compliments this weekend. You sound just like your dad. I don't think that's the case, but it's the best compliment that you can give.

And so then if it's not that generation of who raised me, it's a younger generation. When

I was serving there and younger, those my age who grew up there who are now married with children and our children kind of grew up together in those early years. So it's, it's a wonderful, wonderful experience.

It is. I just went back a month ago and preached at University Reform Church in Michigan, which is where I served for 13 years. And I hadn't, I hadn't been, I mean, I go back to Michigan because I have family and friends there, but I hadn't really been back to the church since I left.

I've been six years and I certainly hadn't been back to preach. So it is. It's a really sweet occasion.

It's, it's, it's pretty emotionally overwhelming even for, you know, a cold heart of Dutchman like myself, but he just got all these, all these memories and all these, and there's a lot of new people of course. And my successor, Jason Hlopp, was my good friend, is doing a great, great job. So it's just a thrill to see, but lots of memories come back and lots of people, of course, I'm like, you, you know, you don't look any older.

And then some people are like, yeah, okay, you're, but I look older and it's a sweet thing that, that connection and listeners here who are pastors will understand, but you really, you can't describe it as a really unique thing in the world. The, the preacher to people, the pastor to, to flock relationship. And it's often, you know, akin to a marriage.

It's not quite like that because you leave and you go elsewhere, but it has that kind of sweetness when things go well. I mean, it must have been HB when you, when you left, I mean, you left your, your father's church, you were there, L.A. grew up and moved across a continent to Jacksonville. How did you come to that decision? How hard was that? How did the people respond? Yeah, so I didn't yesterday, but most every year I've been gone, except for COVID, I've been back home to preach every year.

So it's the kindness of my successor to invite me back every year. He served with me. I recommended him when I left.

But when I usually when I come home, I tell the church, thank you. And I'm sorry. I thank them for all that they have contributed to my life and ministry.

But now at this stage, I have like notes from all of these sermons that I preached over those 18 years as a young pastor learning. And I just like, I'm sorry, y'all. Yeah, that's right.

Hour-long sermons. They were terrible sermons in some instances where I was learning and they, they encouraged me along the way. I would say over the years that the hardest day in my life was the day my dad died.

At this point, harder than that day was the day I had to go in there and tell that church to

give my resignation and tell them I was moving to Jacksonville. We had two Sunday services and I was fine. And I walked into the church lobby to walk into the sanctuary to tell them.

And I just fell apart. And I went and locked myself in the nursery and missed basically the entire first service. I just could not stop crying.

And my wife came in and the pastors came in and they are delaying the service. They're like, pastor, you have to tell the church. So we're holding them.

So I come in and it is just and it was just, it was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. And the church was in total shock. And after that second service, maybe for like an hour and a half, I just stood there.

No one said much to me. They just came up in lines and hugged me. And maybe the last person to hug me was my first secretary when I was like 18 years old.

And I just collapsed again and they was like, that's enough for the day. So it was just the Lord drug me kicking an agreement from that church as I often say. All of my roots were in that church.

And so that was a difficult, difficult time. Yeah. And when you have two services and you got to do it twice or people at the first service of hurt all the words getting out, then you have to do it.

I mean, I'm not a prolific crier. I can go years without. I'm not bragging.

I'm just, that's the way I'm wired. But when it came to months leading up to the whole process of leaving the church, or just a thought, a memory, a something, and I would start tearing up. So it was, yeah, it was very hard.

It's just what you said, HB, people, they're sad. Maybe some of them are angry initially. They also love you and they're happy for, okay, we want to trust the Lord that this is for his kingdom.

But they just don't know what to say. And some of them already, just to protect their own heart, sort of, they've already said goodbye. And some of them will come around in the next few months and they'll have it.

But it really is hard. And especially for you, having, you know, boy preacher there for all those years growing up there, I mean, just doubly hard. And how sweet that I'm sure it means a lot to you and to them that you can come back.

What were you sensing the call to go to Jacksonville to uproot and leave all of that? What was it that the Lord prompted you to move across the country? I often say I was the last person to know the Lord was sending me to Jacksonville. Everyone who I love, trust and

respect, was confirming that they believed this was what was going to happen. I just, I just did not.

And I actually flew there. I asked the men to take my name out of consideration. And the men were like, it was a game like a game of chicken, Kevin.

They were like, look, the church is going to call you. It's going to be on you to decide what you do with that. But this train is already a motion the church is going to call you.

Oh, you can't get out of the way. It's going to come and get you. And then you got to decide.

And I told them, I mean, they had a vote and then they posted on their website. Congratulations to our new pastor elect. And I told, I called us, you have to take that off the website.

I'm not coming. And I know this is going to sound crazy. The men said, we need you.

Would you come and tell the church yourself? Oh boy. They said, this church, because I was not a part of the process. They had been going on and within a three month period, the church was like, go get that young man from Los Angeles.

And they said, if we tell the church you're not coming, they're going to think it's something that we did and we'll never be able to lead this church forward. As weird as that sounded, it makes sense to me. And I said, sure, I'll come.

And so all of the elders and stuff here who knew everything that was going on just knew I was flying there to tell these people, no, the night I flew to Jacksonville. My wife dropped me off at LAX and we prayed and she kissed me. And as I'm getting out the car, she said, you have my full support, whatever you decide.

Wait, whatever you decide. And I'm running late for the flight. We had already agreed.

And I could not sleep. The whole flight I prayed. And I just had a strong conviction at that point flying there.

And I just thought it was terrible. It was a church in trouble. It was not.

I didn't have any desire to leave. I passed to the smaller church, but I would tell everyone, you know, in sports, jargon, pound for pound, I passed to the best church anywhere, you know, there was no reason for me to go anywhere. And yeah, I felt convicted that I was to go.

And I asked the Lord in prayer that night, what did I do wrong? I thought it was punishment that he was sending me away. I just couldn't understand but in God's sweet providence, he blessed me to go to a wonderful congregation. That's amazing.

I mean, is that a normal process? And I'm just thinking good press materials, we get a committee appointed to appoint another committee to appoint a third committee, maybe, and investigate it. We're going to take a lot of time and we're going to do all this due diligence and men get into the process and they need to fill out paperwork and do this. It's just all it's slow.

It's all it's a big word. I mean, it was just strange to us that you would just find out, hey, you weren't in the process, but we're calling you. Is this this happened in your circles? No, I think it's in in my circles, it is a usually much slower process.

Yeah, right. The chairman was saying to the church, he called me and told me, I've been saying to the church, pray that when the Lord sends the pastor, the next pastor, it would just be obvious to the whole congregation. And they preached me on Memorial Day weekend.

The church was half empty. I tell them, I think they were in their beds. You know, I wonder to be there.

And he called me the next week. And I was not who the chairman wanted. They had they had vetted and found and he called me and told me he says this next Sunday, he says, I've been telling the church to pray that it would be obvious when the Lord sends the next pastor.

And he said to me, members keep coming up to me saying, we're not praying anymore, go get the boy from Los Angeles. And I don't think it happens that way. And that process moved along pretty quickly after that.

Yeah. And how many years you've been now at Shiloh? I am in my 15th year there now. Wow, wow.

So I want to talk about preaching sort of segue here. And, you know, feel free to drop into any of those stories and anecdotes. I love it.

We're going to talk about preaching. I want to mention just scriptura. One of the other sponsors here, I actually do have several scripture of Bibles.

They craft heirloom quality Bibles. They also restore old Bibles. I just mentioned to someone in my church who said, I love my Bible.

I got all my notes in here. I've had this forever, but it's falling apart. Scriptura restores those.

So you can go look at scriptura's website and LBE listeners and get 15% off with their code LBE15. So thank you scriptura. HB, I've had the privilege of being at conferences with you a number of times and love your preaching.

I really do. I mean that. And you're kind enough.

You're going to come here for the Quorum Dayo Pastors Conference. We're going to host at Christ Covenant Church here next March, 2024. Any pastors out there, church leaders, if you haven't looked at that, go find Quorum Dayo Pastors Conference here in Matthews, North Carolina, HB's preaching, John Piper, Carl Truman's given a lecture.

There's 10 or 11 different folks speaking. So thank you for coming to that. Let's get to some nuts and bolts.

HB, how do you give us the insight? How do you prepare your sermons? What are you bringing up to the pulpit? No notes, a few notes, manuscript. What does it look like from the study to the point where you're standing behind the pulpit getting ready to preach? What do you do? So I'll give you briefly and then you just kind of dig in and yeah, where you want me to elaborate. I'm going to start with prayer, reading the scripture regularly.

I print out a type out the text and put it on card stock and it's going with me everywhere and I'm marking it. That's a constant part of the entire week. I start with just the observations and usually I'm going to have the starting outline and ideas of the structure of the text where I'm going from there.

I'm going to do the, I'm going to read some comparative translations. I'm going to get into word studies. I'm going to spend some time in some study Bibles which I find helpful personally.

Just this succinct explanations. And I'm going to kind of move into commentary work from there. This process is slower for me because I am typing recording and writing notes on everything.

It's not just a finished manuscript. I'm keeping files on the study material that I'm working for. Did you go back and use that later? You're back years later.

So that's useful to you down the road. Absolutely. I'm also like reading commentary work.

I find quotes and illustration in some commentary and I'm making records of that. So as I'm thinking about text and themes, I'm going back to those files. That process ends with me developing a sermon skeleton.

So when I write the sermon skeleton, what I'm calling is the homoletical outline, the theme of the message, transitional ideas. When I get that done, I feel like I am ready to preach. But I'm going on to write a full sermon manuscript.

And it depends at this point. There are any given Sunday you come to Shiloh now, I may have printed out the full manuscript. I may have nothing but my Bible.

Or I have a little journal where I just kind of write a few notes to myself. Most often now, I'm preaching with that little journal of a few notes to myself. But you've already written a manuscript and then come with the few notes.

Okay. I always wish I had the discipline to do that because once you get the manuscript, that's gold. To have that, to save that, to get your thoughts clear, and then go the extra step, which is sometimes, I don't need to read it.

I got to hear a note. So you, I remember you saying before when we were on a preaching panel that you often do that. That seems pretty unique.

Most guys just lock into no notes, few notes, manuscripts, but yours varies a bit. Yeah, I, and I'm not sure, I could tell you the primary reason why that is. Why is that? At this stage writing a manuscript that I want to be about 2,500 words.

And I'm trying to be more conscious about my time because on Sunday mornings, I can just, in my head, I preach 35 minutes every week. No one in my church will tell you I've ever preached 30 minutes. So I'm writing for the sake of time and for the sake of clarity.

I do not feel like I am good on my feet. I don't feel like I have any natural eloquence. I feel like I am prone to run on sentences in my normal conversation.

I'm prone to pause and think about what I want to say next. So I just want to flesh all that out in that, in that manuscript. And once I kind of parodown, it's just kind of getting it in, in my system.

So at this point, I have no, I'm trying to be conscious, more conscious of time. It just never works. I've parodown and I still go 50 minutes.

50 minutes. I know I feel like I'll tell the other pastors on our staff, you know, be sure, make sure you do it. And then physician healed myself.

I don't, I don't often do it. And I'm like you, so I'm preaching through Leviticus right now. And I preached to Leviticus one time before in 2009 at my old church.

So I'm looking at those notes from before. And you know, I'm using the exegetical stuff. I'm not preaching the same sermon at all.

But I look at some of those and today I usually use three, four pages of outline. And back there, I had seven pages. These were some long, long sermons.

I feel like you man this congregation. They were, they were gracious to listen to some sermons. What is it? Don't give them the whole elephant.

I mean, I was giving them three elephants sometimes. Yeah. And I hopefully have learned something.

Who are some of your preaching influences past or present who are some of the guys either in writing or in person that you feel like shaped you and you maybe still listen to? So my dad was a big influence on my dad turned sick and was sick for two weeks and the Lord took him. And up until those last two weeks, my father was writing sermons at the end of a 40 year ministry. And he's very disciplined in his prayer life and in his preparation.

He was more of the orator type. My dad like was really his hero was Charles Virgin. And I never heard my dad preach a series every Sunday morning gets up one or two verses.

And he's going to kind of turn the text to get the gospel implications out of it. He was an evangelist at heart and he just all of that had a he was a storytelling preacher. I don't think I'd do that well, but that wasn't influenced on me.

I started reading as a teenager about expository preaching. So I'm reading Jerry Vines and others, but I wasn't seeing that it formally done in my setting. Bible preaching, faithful preaching, not expositional preaching.

I heard E.K. Bailey from Dallas, Texas. And it was the week I turned 18 years old and someone invited me to a service where he was preaching locally. And I just I didn't know what to call what I had just heard.

All I could say is he spent the sermon explaining the text. Right. And I just said, whatever that is, I want to spend my life doing that.

Then early on, I was introduced to John MacArthur's preaching. And for extended period of time on Sunday nights, I would go sit in the back of Grace Community Church and listen to John MacArthur. Yeah, that had a real I remember one of the first times I went, he stood up and said, Well, we're going our series in Romans chapter eight.

I'm sitting in the back and he says, and as you know, Rome is eight is about the eternal security of the believer. He could have hit me in the jaw. At that point, I had at least half of that chapter personally memorized.

I had never heard anyone say that sentence. Romans eight is about eternal security. And he began to explain the text and I just was I just kept coming back.

One of my first major dates with my wife, Crystal, was to go here, John MacArthur preaching on a Sunday night. Oh, good. Any men out there? A good first date is to go here.

Go here. Some good preaching. I agree.

So those were three major early influences on my preaching. And I just listened to a lot of preaching. I've read a lot of preaching.

My father's hero became my hero, Charles Spurgeon. Ralph Douglas Weston, Houston, Maurice Watson, who's now in Little Rock, Arkansas. John Piper was a big influence on me.

And friend, Ray Prichard, was a big influence on me. So let me ask you a maybe a hard question because mostly you mostly you hear yourself preach, right? That's what we have to deal with. And you go to conferences and when you go to conferences, you're probably often hearing good people also preach.

So we don't always have a good sense of what's out there. But I'm curious, what do you think if you do think there are differences? What are differences between Baptist preaching and Presbyterian preaching? And maybe more obvious, you're willing to give us what do you think are some differences between historically black preaching and preaching in most white churches? You want to venture and answer to those questions? I asked it. So you give it, you cut it straight just like you would.

Sure. I think the Presbyterian preaching that I hear and I have become friends with some good Presbyterian brothers. And there is a much more obvious doctrinal emphasis in the preaching.

And I'm just incredibly encouraged by that. I would say, I'm also a part of the Southern Baptist life. And I don't mean this.

I trust you'll get what I mean. I just feel like it's a lot of preaching out here. It's too much of a rush to get the application.

I'm not really sure what you are applying here. Yeah, it's the goal to be as practical as possible. And the Romans 12 and following is important, but it's great significance is that it follows the instruction in Romans 1 through 11.

So I would say that's a big distinction. I would say in terms of white and black preaching, I would just say, sometimes among the best of white preaching, I feel sometimes I'm hearing a lecture and not a sermon. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. And maybe that's sometimes.

Yeah. In in black preaching, I do think that it can be hurtful that there is this expectation of congregational response. And if you are not careful, it can shape the preaching.

When I was starting pastoring in my dad's first church, there was a Deaconess sister, Tibbs that was sit on the second row and she would just rock the whole sermon. And if I was preaching good, she'd say, help us, Lord, help us, Lord. And if I was struggling, she'd say, help him, Lord, help him, Lord.

So you're listening is who needs the help? Old church knew who needed the help. And,

you know, if you're not careful, you are just preaching to avoid the help him, Lord. Right.

And my dad pressed the putt me when I was a boy preacher, I would go to my dad and say, this actually happened. I said, dad, you know, I don't remember the text. What's that passage? Where's that passage? If my people were called by my name, where's that passage? And he said, well, I don't know, but, um, oh, my desk is a concordance.

And if you go get it, I'll show you how to use it. And you can find that in any verse you ever looking for. And I'm like, yeah, now can you just tell me the verse? My dad pushed me to books when I would ask for explanation with a text.

My dad, do you, are you familiar with the biblical illustrator commentary? He would, he would grab that and it just be pages and pages and pages, but he would tell me he wanted my preaching. He didn't want me to be a stereotype. He wanted me to be a preacher that could stand up anywhere.

And I think that's the best of preaching. Yeah. Besides your own book, what what preaching books do you recommend for for guys in the ministry? What are some of the the homiletics preaching books that you keep coming back to? Yeah.

So, um, I would say my favorite preaching book is a chapels Christ center preaching. I have read the, uh, hadn't Robinson. Yeah.

And the subject object was my, he was my, he was my professor at Gordon Conwell. Yeah. Um, I've had to read that, I've read that multiple times, but at this, and I know, uh, and a lot of circles, I mean, that's almost feels like that's the book you're supposed to say, but chapel has been a big for me.

Um, the early books I read by, um, our facial, I was a teenager when I read him, he was a homiletics prof at a South Western and Jerry Vines, those were introductory books that were introducing me to expositional preaching. And I still kind of cherish those books. Um, I, um, commend these days, um, Piper's book on preaching.

Um, and I just read the new book by Lawson. That's the book that I'm recommending to like new young preachers. It's just very, very practical.

And, uh, yeah, I appreciate books that are not on, that are not theories of homiletics, but just kind of helps the preacher get at it. Yeah, that's right. There, there, there are lots of different kinds.

You got the theologies, the sort of metaphysics of preaching that, that's a certain thing. You need some that just, you said, Lawson's book, you know, David Helms book, little book on expositional preaching is like that just how do I, how do I do this? I'm new at it, help me go at it. And then there are some that are, you know, Lloyd Jones, Stott that are a little more big picture sort of inspirational and they all, they all have their place in

helping us and at different times in ministry, what we need.

I want to go back to something you said, H.B. about your dad. You said it was, it'd be more of a, an oratorical preacher and a storyteller. And it strikes me there are, there are lots of ways to skin that preaching cat.

There's a lot of ways to preach good sermons. And, you know, I sometimes say, you know, if I, if I was going off into battle and I need to be ready, you know, to die, I want Piper lining up. All right, come, go, go send me out.

I mean, Piper, for me is, is inspirational like that kind of get my head screwed on straight. You know, Tim Keller helps you see things and has that sort of advanced. You talked about E.K. Bailey just explaining the text and, but reaching a, you know, a flourish of rhetorical power and doing it.

I think of my preaching, I'm not, I'm not as gifted as those brothers. I think I'm probably the teacher preacher. I think people probably would say, I learned things.

You help me connect things in the passage. And I want to grow in other areas, but we're not all going to do everything. What, what kind of, I know you don't want to talk about yourself, but what kind of preacher is H.P. Charles? What, what do you think is your particular kind of gifting and what, what do people say when they're giving you preaching compliments that the Lord really uses you to do? What's your style and type? Sure.

So I feel that, I think that's a, maybe a little difficult to answer objectively, but to the best I can, I would say two things. I want my preaching to be text-driven and I want to stay very, very close to the text. And I think if most times you hear me, I'm analyzing and explaining the, the, the text.

My dad, by the time I came along, I think one of the weaknesses of my dad's church is that my generation, when we were kids, by that time, a lot was assumed and not taught if you understand what I mean. And when I became the pastor and a lot of young adults start coming back, it's a young adult pastor and, and I remember there's a sister who's still in the church now. She was a young adult that came to the church when I started and she said to me one day, H.P., you know, you preach and say, you remember this story and you remember in, in that story, she's like, I don't know any of those stories.

Yeah. And I don't want to take anything for granted. I want to, I want to be faithful.

I want to, I want people to learn. So I do feel like I want to be teaching the text and I'm striving for clarity. That's another reason I'm working through the manuscript so hard.

I want to be as clear as possible. So I describe my, my effort in preaching in terms of my desire to be faithful, clear and passionate. This is what I think effective reaching, you

know, should be faithfulness to the text, clarity in the message and passion in the present, in the presentation.

Yeah, that's really good. I was talking to a pastor friend of mine a while back and we're just noting there are some, there are some texts that they're familiar. They're obvious to most people in the congregation.

It's right there what this is about. God is love or John 3 16 or something people have heard of. They know.

And so your, your challenge as a pastor is to, to drive it home, to illustrate it, to do that. And then there's other passages that are obscure, they're hard to understand. They require an explanation.

And I just said, so my friend said, he, he loves the texts that are, they're there, they're, they're, they're obvious. And he gives you a chance to kind of ruminate and deepen them and explain and illustrate. And I said, I find those sermons harder.

For me, the sermons are easier where it's something like I'm going through Leviticus. And it's okay, this is weird for people, but I'm going to help explain it and, and then apply it. And the, you know, John 3 16 sermon feels like, oh man, what am I going to say? And I guess that probably shows I'm not great at illustrations and some of that.

What, which of those is easier and which of those is harder for you, H.B. I really enjoy going deep with a familiar text. Yeah. So here's, here's also a part of my tradition.

I grew up hearing multiple sermons, for instance, on Mark 4 35 to 41 Jesus, still in the store. And the sermons I would have heard coming up is, you know, and as they were sailing across the storm arose on the sea. And then I'm, I'm talking to somebody here, you in a store.

It may be a miracle store. It may be a marital store. And things are going wrong in your marriage.

And it may be a financial storm. Your money is funny and you change it. So it goes in to that.

And then the point is that Jesus can calm your storm and the church will go up on that. And the proof that he can do that is that one Friday he went to Calvary and died. And I mean, that's, but when I go back to, so I think, you know, there, I preach in a cultural setting where a lot of preaching was like that.

And then when you go to a text where everybody knows the text and present this as a declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ, his Lord of nature. You know, the point of the story is not the stealing of the storm. You don't get the point until the disciples are

saying, who then is this? That's right.

Yeah. So the wind and the waves obey him and you go back to the Psalms and what God did. That's right.

Yeah. Yeah. So I do feel like the, there's a lot of narrative preaching in the Black church experience where we quote unquote, tell the story.

It is not always expositional. It is not always doctrinal. And I'm trying, am I preaching to fill in those blanks? So when I preach in predominantly white settings, which I do often, I feel like am I being helpful because they, it may seem so surface that what I'm doing, nothing profound or deep, but I can tell you it's always helpful every time I've heard you preach.

Oh, very encouraging. Thank you, brother. Yeah.

So I don't feel like I'm as strong as I should be on application. I don't feel like I, my dad was a storytelling preacher. I retold one of his stories.

And I yesterday, I think the church loved it because they remembered that story. They remembered how my dad closed the stormers with stories that not as I was, I'm good at illustration. I prefer a good short quote, which can accomplish for me almost the same thing as a longer illustration that I need to set up.

Yeah. But I work hard. Oh, well, I have to work hard.

And, you know, application is where sometimes the most helpful stuff and the most heretical stuff comes in is with the application. Legalism comes in with application, heresy come, but it also connects the dots. And I think what you say is a very fair observation about Presbyterian reform preaching strong on doctrinal, often exegetical theological really plumb the the depths, try it.

But, you know, I could see a good Presbyterian sermon on say Mark four and say today three reasons we see in this text for the deity of Christ. And that's great. That's good.

And that's where we could use a little bit of, hey, when you get to the end, though, help this person in the pew, because white Presbyterians still have they got marriage problems and they got financial storms. And that's not, as you said, you know, the main exegetical takeaway. But that's a fair application is Jesus, if you'll have, if you'll wake him up, you know, and he's already awake, but he'll be in the boat with you.

And are you calling out to him? Are you crying out for him to help you right now? Or do you think, you know, and I do think there's a weakness of that kind of heart to heart, direct preaching in some of my circles. And even, you know, in my own preaching, it's what, you know, Lloyd Jones and other said the difference between preaching about the

gospel and preaching the gospel was sort of just off here. I'm going to explain if you just look at this whiteboard, this chalkboard, I'm going to explain to you how this whole thing works.

Oh, that's great. Versus turning to look at the people and speaking right to them. And here's why this Jesus, who's Lord over nature, is Lord over your life and the mess that you're going through right now.

I wonder, HB, and I told you I'd honor your time because you're you're flying back. Let me give you a two part final question. Okay.

So there's lots of people listening probably who aren't preachers, but let's just speak to preachers or students who are training to be preachers. Give a word of encouragement to the preacher out there who's, who's tired, who feels like he's not seen any fruit, and it's just a hard grind. So give it an encouraging word and give an exhortation and do whichever order you want, but an exhortation to, to the preacher who's maybe missing something, maybe needs to get his head screwed on straight, maybe needs to grow in some area.

Give us a closing word to the preacher because you love preachers and you're a preacher's preacher. By that, I mean a preacher that preachers love to listen to because they respect you and you, you give so much attention to the craft of it, but even more than that, because you love the text and you love the Lord of the text. So speak to some preachers here and give an exhortation and encouragement.

Sure. So in terms of the encouragement, I would just say, preach, preach the word and be aware that God is up to great things that you may not see or be aware of. Looking back, you know, visiting my home church, going back there, you know, it's not the real world because, you know, they love me because I come to town once a week and once a year and they hear me.

Yeah, yeah, when you were the pastor, you know, yeah, they didn't love me every week, but the that they remember messages that can mark the places in their life where they want you to know during this season, you minister to me. That word helped me. It is a reminder of things I would not know that I would not be able to see, but God was at work.

God was at work and it may look like that there is no fruit, but you don't know what God is doing underneath the soil. So I would just say, you know, keep preaching the word in season and out of season and trust the word to do its work. I just believe in the power of God's word, not necessarily the power of our eloquent source, wisdom or power in preaching, but God's word will not fail.

Good word. Second Timothy 2:15. There are three questions that I regularly ask out of

that verse, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.

A workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. Is God well pleased with me? Is my first question. Is my work well done? A worker who has no need to be ashamed? And is the word rightly handled? Or I think even in more succinct terms, I think of it in terms of first Timothy 4 and 16 to guard your life and guard your doctrine.

And in a real sense, he says, kind of push repeat on that, persevere in that, to ensure your salvation and the salvation of those who hear you. So I really think the next generation is very, very skeptical of the truth, of the church, of the Bible. I just think it's important for us to pass this passage to guard our lives and to guard our message.

And I think that's the whole ball game is first Timothy 4:16. We say good word, good word, HBO. I'd love to just keep talking about preaching.

So hopefully we'll be in the same place at the same time before too long. I appreciate your preaching, your books, your ministry, your leadership, and the chance we've had to grow as friends and colleagues. So thank you safe trip back across the country.

Thanks for being on life and books and everything. And for all of our listeners, hopefully you'll join us next time. And until then, glorify God and enjoy him forever and read a good book.

(dramatic music)

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