

Preaching Advice from the 'Sermon' to the Hebrews

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My pastoral library includes an entire section of books on preaching. Most of these books were written either to help teach seminary students how to preach or to assist seasoned pastors improve their preaching. I must confess: there is no part of my pastoral library I have found less useful than these 'how-to' guides on preaching. The weakness of these books is the fact that they take a preaching methodology which works for one individual preacher and attempt to universalize it by offering it as *the* methodology for all preachers. It is, however, very difficult to universalize one's own preaching methodology. I have witnessed too many pastors make the mistake of attempting to force young men into their particular mould of preaching. Nevertheless, I fully comprehend the desire expressed by young men, entering the ministry, to find some helpful guidance regarding how to preach. Therefore, I began to search the only truly universal source of information, the Scriptures, to see if it yielded principles regarding preaching. My search was richly rewarded, although I was surprised at where I found this information. When I first thought about searching the Scriptures for principles on preaching I considered looking in the Pastoral Epistles and Acts. There is much helpful material in these books, but what my study revealed is that the most illuminating book in the New Testament regarding how to preach is the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Why is the Epistle to the Hebrews so helpful to modern preachers? It is because this epistle is really not an epistle at all, but rather, it is an expository sermon, or a collection of expository sermons. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to refer to this epistle as a sermon and its author as a preacher. While there is some scholarly disagreement regarding the literary genre of Hebrews, most evangelical scholars agree that

Hebrews is sermonic in nature. For example, William Lane writes: 'Hebrews is a sermon rooted in actual life. It is addressed to a local gathering of men and women'.¹ Similarly, R. T. France writes: 'There is, however, one book of the New Testament which seems to offer a closer analogy to modern expository preaching than the rest; that is, the Letter to the Hebrews.'² In addition to scholarly opinion, we also have the author's own testimony regarding the nature of his correspondence. For instance, in Hebrews 13:22 the author refers to his letter as a 'word of exhortation' (λόγου της παρακλήσεως). Evidence that this phrase refers to a sermon is the fact that a similar phrase (λόγος παρακλήσεως) is used by Paul to describe his sermon at the Synagogue in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:15). This epistle, therefore, is really an inspired sermon.

However, what makes Hebrews uniquely helpful in instructing modern pastors about preaching is not only the fact that it is a sermon, but that it is the *only* sermon in the New Testament which is preached to an established congregation. Hebrews was preached to second generation believers (see Hebrews 2:1–4) who were at risk of relinquishing their faith in Christ. It is not an evangelistic sermon, like the sermons in Acts, but rather a sermon to saints. Because Hebrews is the only inspired example of preaching to an established church it is particularly useful in instructing modern preachers regarding how to preach in the context of today's established congregations. So what type of advice does the sermon to the Hebrews yield regarding preaching? I gleaned the following seven principles on preaching from the sermon to the Hebrews.

1: Biblical preaching is expository

This may seem so obvious that it does not warrant mentioning. One of the unfortunate characteristics, however, of much of modern evangelical preaching is the tendency among some preachers to replace the centrality of the Word of God with the centrality of the felt needs of the hearers. In other words, much modern preaching exegetes the human rather than the divine. The preacher to the Hebrews does not engage in this error. The preacher to the Hebrews is devoted to expositing the Word of God.

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- 1 William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8: Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 47A (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1991), xlvii.
 - 2 R. T. France, 'The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor', *Tyndale Bulletin* 47:2 (1996), 246.

His commitment to expositing the Word is evidenced by the fact that his entire sermon is based on a main biblical text. As many scholars have noted, the entire epistle may be considered as an exposition of Psalm 110, particularly Psalm 110:4; for example, this psalm is alluded to or explicitly referred to in nearly every chapter of this book. In addition to his exposition of Psalm 110, the author also exposit a major Old Testament text in each of the major subsections of his sermon (e.g. 1:4–2:8 = Psalm 8:5–7; 3:1–4:14 = Psalm 95:7–11; 4:14 – 7:28 = Psalm 110:4; 8:1 – 10:31 = Jeremiah 31:31–34; 10:32 – 12:3 = Habakkuk 2:3c – 4; 12:4–13 = Proverbs 3:11–12; 12:18–29 = Exodus 19–20).³ Clearly, this preacher exposit the word; his entire sermon is grounded in and supported by the text of Holy Scripture. R. T. France comments as follows on the deep exegetical commitment of the preacher to the Hebrews:

It seems to be the instinct of this writer to have recourse to Scripture as the basis for each succeeding phase of his writing, whether its tone is primarily doctrinal or primarily hortatory. With the notable exception of the first chapter, the texts which form the basis of the letter are not merely quoted as proofs for an argument set up on other grounds, but are examined often at some length both in terms of their relevance as a whole to the new situation to which he is now applying them and in some cases with regard to the significance of individual words and phrases which can be explored to fill out and sharpen that application.⁴

The preacher to the Hebrews is concerned about grounding his theological arguments and practical applications in the exposition of the Word of God. Modern preachers would benefit from following his example.

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- 3 Richard N. Longenecker notes that Hebrews contains a total of thirty-eight references to the Old Testament, with twenty-seven different passages being quoted in the letter. Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, (2nd Ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 147.
 - 4 R. T. France, 'The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor', 272–73.

2: Biblical preaching requires application

The writer to the Hebrews is not delivering a speech or a theological lecture. His purpose is to move the minds and wills of his congregation by means of a 'word of exhortation', (Hebrews 13:22). He is attempting to persuade them into taking action. Therefore, while the preacher engages in deep redemptive-historical theological reflection, he also applies the Word of God directly to the lives of his hearers. He displays his commitment to applying the Word of God in two ways.

First: his commitment to application is revealed by the fact that his application is not slapped haphazardly on to the end of his sermon. It is interspersed at significant moments throughout his discourse. It is woven carefully and purposefully into the very fabric of his message, for example, there is a hortatory emphasis following every major exegetical section of the sermon (e.g. 2:1–4, 3:7 – 4:13, 5:11 – 6:12, 10:19–31, 12:1–3, 12:25–29, and 13:1–17). This preacher sees no conflict between exegesis and application, but rather he sees them as inherently interrelated. The imperatives contained in these hortatory sections flow directly from the indicative expounded in the sections which immediately precede them. In other words, the application is related to the exegesis.

Second: the preacher also indicates the importance of application in preaching by employing Old Testament saints as both positive and negative examples. He displays no qualms about using Old Testament saints in an exemplary fashion. For instance, in Hebrews 3–4 the author uses the generation which died in the wilderness as a negative example for the congregation. Similarly, in Hebrews 12:16, he employs Esau as a negative example, 'See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.' On the positive side, in Hebrews 11, the author lists a series of Old Testament saints who exhibit the type of persevering faith that he desires his congregation to emulate. These Old Testament saints become part of the great cloud of witnesses which the author refers to in Hebrews 12:1.

Given the emphasis this preacher places on application, it is somewhat mind boggling that many preachers in the modern Reformed church blatantly deny the place of application in preaching. What is even more mind-boggling is that these preachers use the great Reformed biblical theologian, Geerhardus Vos, to support their views. This use of Vos seems somewhat ironic given what Vos himself stated about the epistle to the Hebrews in a sermon on Hebrews 12: 'There is perhaps no other book in the New Testament in which the two elements of theological exposition

and practical application are so clearly distinguishable and yet so organically united as in this epistle'.⁵ The preacher to the Hebrews provides a much needed reminder to modern preachers regarding the necessity of making relevant application of the Word of God to the hearts of their people.

3: Biblical preaching has a main point

While I have not received a great deal of helpful counsel regarding preaching, I do recall an incredibly helpful piece of advice given to me by a homiletics professor. He told me that if I was unable to articulate what my sermon was about then my congregation would certainly be unable to do so. This professor also told me that if my wife were to ask me, 'What's your sermon about?' I should be able to answer her question in one sentence. My professor's point was that good preaching has point! This is good advice. However, it is amazing the number of preachers who don't comprehend this simple rule of preaching. There is nothing more unhelpful than listening to a preacher who has no idea what his main point is. The preacher to the Hebrews does not suffer from this malady; he knows his main point and he states it clearly in Hebrews 8:1: 'Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens'.⁶ The preacher not only knows what his point is, but he communicates it clearly to his congregation. He doesn't leave them wondering. The preacher knows what his sermon is about, he knows his point, he knows where he is going, he is able to articulate it in one sentence and he communicates it to his listeners. Modern preachers would be wise to do the same.

5 Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, reprinted 1994), 124.

6 It should be noted that the preacher alludes to his main point in the opening verses of his sermon. For example, in Hebrews 1:3c the preacher notes that, after making purification for our sins, Jesus, 'sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high', (Hebrews 1:3c). This language is nearly identical to the language employed in Hebrews 8:1. Modern preachers could learn something from this technique because congregations find it helpful when the preacher gives some indication of the point of his sermon in his introduction.

4: Biblical preaching is an oral event

The idea that preaching is an oral event seems to be obvious, but unfortunately many preachers do not comprehend this reality. While they realize that preaching involves speaking to people, they approach preaching as a literary event. In essence, many preachers give little attention to crafting a sermon that is to be heard. Instead, they treat their sermons as something to be read. The preacher to the Hebrews does not display this fault. He is conscious that his sermon will be heard and he crafts it accordingly. He refers to the delivery of his correspondence as 'speaking' rather than 'writing' and to his audience as 'hearers' (or 'listeners') as opposed to 'readers' (see 2:5; 5:11; 6:9; 8:1; 9:15; and 11:32).⁷ William Lane comments as follows on the preacher's oral consciousness:

Hebrews was prepared for oral delivery to a specific community ... Hebrews is a sermon prepared to be read aloud to a group of auditors who will receive its message not primarily through reading and leisured reflection but orally. Reading the document aloud entails oral performance, providing oral clues to those who listen to the public reading of the sermon ... Hebrews was crafted to communicate its point as much aurally as logically.⁸

The aural awareness of the preacher to the Hebrews is revealed through his employment of a variety of oral devices which are meant to aid the hearer. For example, consider the following five oral devices employed in his sermon.

First: the preacher makes use of alliteration. For example, in the opening verse of the sermon the preacher chooses a series of five Greek words which share the 'p' ('π') sound: Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ πθεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράοιν ἐν τοῖς προφηταῖς.⁹

Second: he uses word-plays involving phonetically similar words. For example, note the word-play in Hebrews 5:8 καὶ περ ὦν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ('learned') ἀφ' ὧν ἔπαθεν ('suffered') τὴν ὑπακοήν. This word-play was particularly effective because his hearers were probably familiar with it as

7 Hywel R. Jones, *Let's Study Hebrews* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2002), xvii.

8 Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, lxxv.

9 The first four verses of Hebrews contain other rhetorical devices. See David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 37–38.

it was commonly employed in Greek literature and culture.¹⁰

Third: he makes frequent use of *inclusio* to provide oral boundaries to the subsections of his sermon. He repeats words and phrases at the beginning and at the end of particular sections to give his hearers a cue that a topic has ended and a new one is about to begin (e.g. 'angels' in 2:5 and 2:16; and 'Melchizedek' in 5:10 and 6:20).

Fourth: he repeats key terms as a means of emphasizing his point. For example, one of the main emphases of the preacher is the superiority of Christ, his sacrifice, the new covenant and the heavenly tabernacle. Therefore, he makes frequent use of the word 'better' (κρείττων) in his sermon (Hebrews 1:4; 6:9; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:4, 16, 35, 40; and 12:24). Another example of his effective use of repetition is found in Hebrews 11 where he repeats the phrase 'By faith' (Πίστει) as he refers to the list of faithful saints from the Old Testament. He repeats 'By faith' a total of eighteen times in this chapter. His repetitive use of this phrase is like a drumbeat calling his people to persevere. The preacher to the Hebrews is a master at the art of using repetition for emphasis.

Fifth: he employs effective rhetorical tools such as the lesser to greater argument. For example, after displaying Jesus' superiority to the angels in chapter one, the preacher makes a lesser to greater argument in Hebrews 2:2–3. This involves comparing the punishment of those who rejected the message of the angels to those who reject the message of Christ: 'For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.' He increases the effectiveness of this form of argumentation by employing it at several other points in the sermon (e.g. Heb 9:13–14; 10:28–29; and 12:25).

The preacher to the Hebrews cared about orally communicating to people. His goal was to help them listen and he used rhetorical devices to achieve this end. William Lane writes, '[Rhetorical] devices ... are present in Hebrews because of the need to provide oral assistance to the listeners ... the written text was not crafted for the eye but for the ear, to convey a sense of structure and development.'¹¹ Modern preachers would be well-served by following the example of the preacher to the Hebrews by crafting their sermons for the ear.

10 Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 121.

11 Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, lxxvi.

5: Biblical preaching balances challenge and comfort

Good preaching is balanced preaching, but unfortunately many preachers, especially the inexperienced ones, are out of balance when it comes to their sermons. Generally, when preachers go awry in this area they do so by displaying one of the two following forms of imbalance. Some preachers, in an effort to establish their authority in the pulpit, make the mistake of overloading their sermons with harsh application. In effect, they browbeat their people week after week in their sermons. On the other end of the spectrum are the preachers who, out of a desire not to offend, utterly eviscerate their sermons of all poignancy and obligation. Both of these commonly made errors are equally deadly to a congregation. The first error leaves the congregation in despair, while the second lulls them into complacency and false assurance. The preacher to the Hebrews adeptly avoids these two common mistakes. His sermon displays a remarkable equilibrium. He balances challenge and comfort in his sermon.

The sermon to the Hebrews contains some of the most fearful admonishments and challenges of the entire Bible. This preacher is not afraid to challenge his people. For example, in Hebrews 3–4 the preacher compares the congregation to the generation which died in the wilderness due to their unfaithfulness. He effectively places his congregation in the shoes of that Old Testament generation and warns them that they are close to repeating the same deadly error: 'Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it', (Hebrews 4:1). However, after putting the fear of God in them for fourteen verses, after making them think they are on the precipice of apostasy, the preacher comforts them by reminding them that they have a Great High Priest: 'For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need,' (Hebrews 4:15–16). He balances his challenge with comfort.

Likewise, in Hebrews 6, the preacher warns the congregation once again regarding the threat of apostasy and goes so far as to tell them that it is impossible to recover from such apostasy (Hebrews 6:6). However, after giving this stern warning the preacher balances his challenge with these comforting words: 'But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way', (Hebrews 6:9).

The preacher to the Hebrews is neither a blustering legalist nor a facile man-pleaser. Instead, the preacher powerfully drives home the full force of his warnings while never allowing his people to fall into despair. He calls them to persevere, but he always reminds them that they can only do so by following Christ. He reminds them that God will never leave them nor forsake them (Hebrews 13:5). Modern preachers should take a cue from the preacher to the Hebrews by adopting his pattern of balancing challenge with comfort in their sermons.

6: Biblical preaching is congregationally contextualized

Many pastors make the mistake of disconnecting their preaching from the lives of the people in their congregations. They tend to conceive of preaching as something which occurs in vacuum. They devise and deliver their sermons with no regard for the specific context in which they are called to serve. In addition, I have also noted that some pastors, in an effort to exalt preaching, begin to neglect the lives of their people. They tend to view traditional shepherding tasks as inferior to the high calling of the pulpit. This mindset often means they become unaware of the spiritual needs and abilities of their people. The preacher to the Hebrews avoids this error. Even though he was geographically distant from his people when he crafted his sermon, he was not spiritually distant from their lives and struggles. He preached to people he knew and loved. He displays his understanding of his people and his connection to them in a variety of ways throughout his sermon.

First: he reveals that he knew his people by referring explicitly to their history in the sermon. He understood what his people had already sacrificed on account of their faith in Christ. For example, note how the preacher refers to the history of his people (their 'former days') in Hebrews 10:32–34:

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one.

The preacher to the Hebrews uses his understanding of his congregation's history to both challenge and comfort them. His knowledge of his people contributed to the effectiveness and pertinence of his preaching.

Second: in addition to understanding their history, the preacher also understood the level of his congregation's spiritual maturity. For example, in Hebrews 5, after commencing a discourse on the relationship between Christ's priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek, he is aware that they are not ready to handle this material at this point in the sermon. Note how he refers to their lack of maturity in Hebrews 5:11–12:

Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

The preacher understood the spiritual maturity level of his people and he crafted his discourse accordingly.

Third: the preacher also understood the basic physical limitations of his hearers. One of the mistakes made by many preachers is to regurgitate everything they know about a given text or subject, even if it obscures their main point and reduces the effectiveness of the main thrust of their sermon. The preacher to the Hebrews does not make this mistake. For example, in Hebrews 9 he begins to describe the tabernacle and its contents, but after a brief description of its contents he pauses and states, 'but of these things we cannot now speak in detail', (Hebrews 9:5). The preacher was well acquainted with the tabernacle and could have impressed his congregation with the extent of his knowledge by entering into an elongated discourse on this topic, but this was not his point. His point was to show them the superiority of the heavenly tabernacle. Therefore, he simply laid a sufficient foundation regarding the old covenant tabernacle and moved on to his main point. The preacher does a similar thing in Hebrews 11.

In Hebrews 11, after citing numerous examples of persevering faith in the lives of various Old Testament saints, the preacher realizes that his time is short and that he has made his point so he quickly enumerates a few more names without adding comment: 'And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets', (Hebrews 11:32). The preacher to the Hebrews knew when he had made his point. He knew the extent of his time constraints and the extent of

his congregation's attention span. He gave his people a 'brief' word of exhortation (Hebrews 13:22). He understood what one of my seminary professors understood and continually reminded me of: the head can only comprehend what the seat of the pants can endure!

Fourth: the preacher to the Hebrews also displays his awareness of the needs of his people by identifying himself with them. The preacher to the Hebrews was not one of those preachers who points his finger at his people and refers to them exclusively as 'you'.¹² Instead, he identified with his congregation by employing the pronoun 'we'. The author uses 'we' fifty-three times in this epistle. He includes himself in both the applications and the encouragements of his sermon. He informs his people that he is with them in their struggles, that he also faces similar challenges and that he too requires grace. For example, in Hebrews 2:1 he uses the pronoun 'we' to include himself as one who is also at risk of apostasy, 'For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.' In Hebrews 10:10 the preacher uses 'we' to demonstrate that he also required the salvific work of Christ, 'By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'

In addition to using 'we' the preacher also identifies with his congregation by using the term 'brethren' (ἀδελφοί). He employs this word four times in his sermon to demonstrate his familial relationship with his people (3:1; 3:12; 10:19; and 13:22). Although some writers in the New Testament refer to their congregation as 'children', and properly so, the preacher to the Hebrews prefers to refer to them as 'brothers'. This preacher clearly identified with and loved the people to whom he preached. In fact, at the point of his most penetrating application in Hebrews 6, he makes use of a term of deep endearment to comfort his brothers. He refers to his congregation as 'beloved' (ἀγαπητοί), 'But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way', (Hebrews 6:9). This is the only use of this word in the entire sermon. It is as if he recognized that this term needed to be reserved for what he knew would be the most difficult word for them to hear. The preacher treated his congregation as 'we', and not 'you'.

The preacher to the Hebrews knew his people. He had been in their lives. He knew their sacrifices and struggles. He didn't treat his people as a mere audience, but rather as his brothers. He made certain to use his knowledge of his people to sculpt the content of his sermon. His preaching was intentionally aimed at intersecting with the real lives of real people. He was not giving them

12 There is certainly an appropriate role for the second person plural 'you' in preaching, but Scripture does not require that it be used exclusively.

an irrelevant abstract discourse, but rather he was preaching to *his* people. As R. T. France put it, 'Hebrews is not an abstract treatise, but a sustained piece of pastoral trouble-shooting, deliberately targeted at a congregation with a particular problem.'¹³ Biblical preaching is preaching which is congregationally contextualized. Modern preachers should emulate the preacher to the Hebrews by tailoring their preaching to the context of their congregation.

7: Biblical preaching is christocentric

Many modern scholars have spilled a great deal of ink over the exegetical method of the preacher to the Hebrews, particularly with regard to how he interprets the Old Testament. While scholars disagree regarding many of the fine points of his hermeneutical method, what is abundantly clear is that the preacher was concerned with interpreting the Old Testament in a Christocentric manner. For example, R. T. France comments as follows on the preacher's Christocentric hermeneutic:

Fundamental to his expositions is the conviction, so memorably set out at the opening of the letter, that in Jesus God has spoken his last and perfect word, and that all that was written in the Old Testament is to be understood in relation to its fulfillment in the Son. That being so, it is his duty and pleasure to search the Old Testament scriptures for indications of the fulfillment which was to come, and to draw out from those same scriptures in a varied and creative way for his readers how they should now think and live in the light of the coming of the Son.¹⁴

The preacher is unashamedly Christ-centred in his preaching. This preacher is not concerned with interpreting the Old Testament solely on the basis of an antecedent Hebrew understanding, but rather he is consumed with preaching the Old Testament entirely in light of Christ and the New Covenant. R. T. France notes that for the preacher to the Hebrews the significance of the Old Testament 'is found only with Christian hindsight'.¹⁵ The sermon to the Hebrews exhorts the church to hear the Word of Christ, trust in the person and work of Christ, hold fast to the confession of Christ and its culminating exhortation is for the church to fix

¹³ France, 'The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor', 249.

¹⁴ France, 'The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor', 268.

¹⁵ France, 'The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor', 274.

her eyes upon Christ. The preacher to the Hebrews calls his congregation to imitate the first martyr, Stephen. He urges them to look up into heaven, in the midst of their affliction, and behold Jesus at the right hand of God. Modern preachers should call their congregations to do the same by adopting and applying a similar Christocentric hermeneutic.

Summary and conclusion

In this paper we have seen that the sermon to the Hebrews reveals that biblical preaching is expository, includes application, has a main point, is an oral event, balances challenge and comfort, is congregationally contextualized, and is unapologetically Christocentric. The sermon to the Hebrews is of inestimable value for guiding today's preachers because it allows them to step back two thousand years and peer into the study of a pastor inspired by the Holy Spirit. R. T. France summarizes well the unique value of the sermon to the Hebrews to modern preachers:

What we have in Hebrews is a glimpse into the workshop of early Christian biblical interpretation, where those who came to the Jewish scriptures with a new christological perspective, while not turning away from their ancestral Jewish manner of arguing from Scripture, were learning and developing new interpretative approaches. Among these innovative but faithful Christian interpreters of Scripture, the writer of Hebrews, with his extended christological expositions of chosen Old Testament texts, stands out as one of the most effective, and one who, because of the form in which he has written his pastoral appeal, allows us a fuller insight into the hermeneutical workshop than any other. We may not feel that at every point we can preach just as he preached, but it will be a sadly defective form of Christian proclamation and exhortation which cannot incarnate appropriately for our day the hermeneutical principles and the expository insights which he has bequeathed to us.¹⁶

My advice to young ministers and seasoned pastors alike is to benefit from the pastoral legacy bequeathed to them by the preacher to the Hebrews.

16 France, 'The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor', 275–76.