

Edmund Clowney is this generation's patriarch of redemptive-historical preaching. For decades he was the voice crying in the wilderness to encourage evangelical preachers to make Christ the focus of all their messages, since he is the aim of all the Scriptures. Now, many others have joined Clowney's gospel chorus, but none with greater mastery than he of the harmonies that weave the symphony of grace throughout the Bible. As Clowney shares with us the jewels of his research, message, and heart, we discern ever more clearly how to make the Pearl of Great Price shine through all the treasures of Scripture.

—BRYAN CHAPELL

President and Professor of Practical Theology
Covenant Seminary

Edmund Clowney has given a wonderful gift to the church in general and to preachers in particular. *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* is the kind of book that isn't just about preaching. It's about Christ and the call on all believers to see him and his glory in all of God's Word. Preachers can rejoice and profit from the practical and profound teaching, and all believers can rejoice in the awesome reality of Jesus as Lord.

—STEPHEN W. BROWN

Professor of Preaching
Reformed Theological Seminary

Here is instruction from a master Bible teacher on how to preach God-honoring, Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered sermons. Edmund Clowney's classes at Westminster Seminary transformed my understanding of how the whole Bible fits together, and I expect this book will do the same for all who read it.

—WAYNE GRUDEM

Research Professor of Bible and Theology
Phoenix Seminary

Ed Clowney taught me how to preach the gospel to postmodern people. To anyone who wants to learn how to do so as well, these sermons are priceless.

—TIM KELLER
Senior Pastor
Redeemer Presbyterian Church of New York City

Christians must learn again to read the whole Bible as a testimony to Jesus Christ. Dr. Edmund Clowney shows the way to a truly Christian interpretation of the Bible in *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*. This book is urgently needed in today's church, for too many preachers seem to be at a loss in dealing with the Old Testament. Dr. Clowney shows us how the Old Testament reveals Christ in its great themes and in its rich details. Edmund Clowney is one of the great Christian leaders and pastoral theologians of our time. Do not miss this book.

—R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR., PRESIDENT
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

PREACHING
CHRIST
IN ALL OF
SCRIPTURE

EDMUND P. CLOWNEY

CROSSWAY BOOKS

A DIVISION OF
GOOD NEWS PUBLISHERS
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Preaching Christ in All of Scripture

Copyright © 2003 by Edmund P. Clowney

Published by Crossway Books,
a division of Good News Publishers,
1300 Crescent Street,
Wheaton, Illinois 60187.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Cover design: Josh Dennis

Cover photo: David Alan Wolters

First printing 2003

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture references marked ASV are from the American Standard Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture references marked NKJV are from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

Scripture references marked NIV are from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*.[®] Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society.

Use of either trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.

Scripture references marked KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture references marked JPS are from *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Clowney, Edmund P.

Preaching Christ in all of Scripture / Edmund P. Clowney.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-58134-452-X (tpb. : alk. paper)

1. Jesus Christ—Person and offices—Sermons. 2. Bible—Sermons.
3. Sermons, American. 4. Reformed Church—Sermons. 5. Bible—
Homiletical use. 6. Preaching. I. Title.

BT203.C57 2003

251—dc21

2002154807

BP 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

PREFACE

BIBLE READERS AND TEACHERS know that the Bible is a storybook. My Sunday school teacher in the primary department recommended the Bible to me, and I began to read it. At a crisis in my college days I knew that my one hope was to read the Bible. I read it, not in snatches, but in hours and days out of desperation. I started in Genesis chapter 1. When I reached the book of Jonah, I came upon the verse, "Salvation is of the Lord!" I realized then that the Bible did not give a full history of Israel, but a history of God's work of saving his chosen people. It is all about what God did. He who holds the worlds in his hand came down to save us. The Bible is the story of how God came down to be born of the Virgin Mary, to live and die for us, and to rise in triumph from the tomb. It was not my grip on God that was my hope, but his grip on me.

As I continued to study and teach the Bible, I saw increasingly that God's promise in the Old Testament was kept in the New Testament. It was kept in the coming of God the Son. John's Gospel witnesses to the deity of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Jesus, John tells us, is the one whom Isaiah saw in his vision of God seated on his throne between the cherubim (John 12:41).

The Angel who appeared to Moses at the burning bush in the desert identified himself as the "I AM" God. Not only do the four Gospels tell the story of Jesus. So do the five books of Moses, who gave God's promise of the Prophet to come. So does the rest of the Old Testament. Remember that the apostle Paul, preaching in every synagogue from the Scriptures, was preaching from the scrolls of the Old Testament. Paul gave the apostolic witness to Jesus in whom all the Old Testament Scripture is fulfilled.

Preachers who ignore the history of redemption in their preaching are ignoring the witness of the Holy Spirit to Jesus in all the Scriptures.

This book begins with two chapters, then adds more than a dozen sermons that reflect the united witness of the Old and New Testaments to Christ. Chapter 1 seeks to show that Christ is presented in the whole Old Testament. Chapter 2 offers help in “Preparing a Sermon That Presents Christ.” The sermons that follow are given as examples of messages showing how particular texts, seen in their context, do present Christ. Other Bible passages alluded to in the sermons are not referenced, unless quoted. The sermons are offered as messages to be heard as preaching, not as footnoted theses for study.

I do pray that readers may be encouraged to turn to the Scriptures and know for themselves the joy of hearing Jesus, as they travel with him to Emmaus on Easter Morning.

—Edmund P. Clowney

SEE WHAT IT COSTS

(Genesis 22:1-19)

YOU PUT DOWN the fork as your phone rings: “Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Target! You have just been awarded an all-expense-paid cruise on the Caribbean!” Or was it \$10 million that was reserved for you according to yesterday’s junk mail? Do you read the fine print on those million-dollar offers? Of course not. You don’t need to.

Do you think the gospel offer is like that? Check out the experience of Abraham described in Genesis 22. God had promised Abraham more than a Caribbean cruise, or even \$10 million. God promised him a land, a nation, and blessing to share with all the families on the earth.

Yet some of God’s promises were long in coming. Ten years after reaching Canaan, Abraham had neither a land nor a nation. In fact, his wife Sarah did not even have a son. Desperate for descendants, Sarah gave her slave Hagar to Abraham, and Ishmael was born. The Lord, however, kept promising a son to Abraham and Sarah. Fifteen years later the Lord was still promising. At the advanced ages of 100 and 90 respectively, Abraham and Sarah found this absurd. Both laughed at God’s impossible promise. But Sarah laughed again; her little son was named Isaac, “He laughs.” The Lord had the last laugh.

Abraham was certainly blessed: he had wealth, two sons, and open pastures. What about the fine print? The cost of blessing didn’t come in fine print. It came in God’s command. “Abraham,” God called, “take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go

to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about” (Gen. 22:2, NIV).

The name “Moriah” already suggests that something will be “seen.” On that mountain the cost of God’s blessing will be seen. Abraham will see the cost in the experience of faith. There, too, God will show the cost that only he can meet: the cost of grace. Abraham will see that God is the Savior.

THE COST IN THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH (MORIAH)

The Cost Is Everything: Total Commitment of Faith

THE TEST: THE OFFERING OF FAITH

The beloved son, Isaac, the heir of the promise, was to be consecrated to God. The “whole burnt offering” was a gift of consecration. Abraham was to return to God what he had received from God.

For Abraham, the cost is everything. All that God has promised walks beside him in his son Isaac. If the price is Isaac, nothing else is left. “Laughter” is gone!

At God’s command, Abraham had sent Ishmael away, for he was not the son of promise. “Take your son, your *only* son, Isaac . . .” Without Isaac there is none to be heir of the land, none to found a great nation, none to be a blessing to the whole world.

God called, “Abraham!” God had given him that name: “father of a multitude.” How could he be “Abraham” without Isaac? Isaac is the seal of Abraham’s faith and the son of his love.

“Well,” you say, “I know this is one of those Bible-preaching churches, and you did read the story out of the Bible. But that’s why I have trouble believing the Bible—and especially the Old Testament. Here is a story where God commands a father to murder his son by slitting his throat. If Abraham were hauled into a court, he would say that a voice from heaven told him to do it. Do you want me to worship a God who commands human sacrifice?”

Actually this story would be as shocking to believing Israelites as it is to us today. One of the great differences between Israel and the heathen nations around them was that God forbade human sacrifice. In ancient

Canaan, Molech, the god of the Ammonites, was worshiped by offering children in the fire to him (2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 32:35; cf. 2 Kings 17:31). For that crime, capital punishment was the penalty (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5).

Why, then, do we have this strange exception to God's law? Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher/theologian, saw it as a divine command to commit murder. He explained it as the suspension of ethical laws for a higher purpose.

What we constantly forget is the justice of God. We are outraged by the racism of men who drag a black man to a horrible death behind their truck. He had done nothing to them. Yet the penalty they face at last is not before a human court but before the judgment seat of God. Jesus taught us that God is completely holy. We like to think that we are no worse than others, but we are all worse than Jesus, the only perfectly righteous man who ever lived. He is the only One who can stand in the judgment. We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no not one.

God has every right to condemn sinners to death. Indeed, when God judged the land of Egypt before the Exodus, he required the life of the firstborn sons of Israel as well as of Egypt. The oldest son, as representing the family, was doomed, but the Lord provided the Passover lamb as a substitute, marked by the blood on the doorpost. Later, God continued to assert his claim on the firstborn (Ex. 13:15; Num. 8:17). The sacrifice of Isaac would have been like the later sacrifice of the Passover lamb. But the sacrifice of Isaac was not to be, for he was not a perfect offering, a lamb without spot; he could not pay the price of the sins of others. Abraham could not give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul.

THE TEST: THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

God could and did require the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham's firstborn, just as God later threatened the firstborn of all Israel along with the Egyptians in the last of the plagues he brought on Egypt.

Early the next morning, Abraham prepared for the journey. Abraham obeyed without delay, but his test was not over. It continued as he chopped the wood. There must be wood enough for the burnt

offering at the distant place he had not yet seen. Every blow of his axe prepared for the stroke of his knife. Two servants would go with him. He saddled his donkey, loaded the wood on the animal, but chose no sheep from his flock. He left Beersheba with the wood, a knife, and his beloved Isaac. Then, for three days his obedience paced on while Isaac walked beside him. Northward into the hill country they went. With every sunrise, Abraham believed and obeyed.

The Cost Is Nothing: Total Trust of Faith

FAITH CLINGS TO THE SON OF THE PROMISE

At last Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the very mount the Lord had identified. This was the place; this was the time. The servants must come no further. Abraham lifted the wood from the donkey. Isaac put his arms through the ropes that held the heavy burden. He settled it on his shoulders. Abraham carried a smoldering torch. They reached the hill in Moriah and began to climb the slope.

Isaac broke the silence: “Father?” he said. “Yes, my son?” answered Abraham. Their courteous form of address was measured against eternity. “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (Gen. 22:7, NIV).

“God will see for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son,” answered Abraham (v. 8, literal translation). In the agony of his testing, Abraham could only cling to God. He was on the mount he had seen, the mount of God, with the son God had given. God saw him there. God would see the offering that he would provide for himself. The verb for “see” in Hebrew also means “see to” or “provide.”

Abraham was not evading Isaac’s question. Beyond his own knowledge, he was prophesying. Abraham would pay the price, but God’s promise could not fail. Abraham had told the servants, “We will return to you.” If need be, God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19).

FAITH RECEIVES THE REDEEMED SON

They went, both of them together, father and son, to the crest of the hill. They gathered rocks and stones to build the altar. The obedience

of Abraham is matched by the faith of Isaac. He does not resist, but is led by his father as a sheep to the slaughter. He allows himself to be bound, hand and foot, and laid on the wood he has carried. Not till Abraham stretches out the knife does the Angel of the Lord call from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham . . ."

Abraham was ready to give everything in devoted obedience. Because he feared God, he would pay the price. The Angel stayed his hand. On the mount, Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. He took the ram and offered it in the place of his Isaac. Abraham called the place "The Lord Will See (to It)."

The cost to Abraham was everything, yet as he clung to the Lord in faith, the cost was nothing. He declared that the Lord would provide, and the Lord did provide. Abraham's obedience was the obedience of faith. Isaac was given to Abraham a second time. He was his by birth and his by redemption. The offering of the sheep symbolized not only consecration but atonement in the blood of a substitute.

In the total commitment of faith the cost is everything, but in the simple trust of faith, the cost is nothing. Abraham worshiped as God renewed his covenant with him.

The demand that the Lord made of Abraham is not unthinkable. He makes that same total demand of you. Jesus asks it of everyone who would follow him. Whoever loves father, mother, son, or daughter more than the Lord is not worthy of him. Indeed, only as we are ready to receive our own death sentence and take up our cross do we receive everlasting life (Matt. 10:37-39). Much as we need the power of his grace to deny ourselves and follow him, his demand has not changed. Look at the cost: it's everything.

IN THE REALITY OF GRACE

The Grace of God's Demand

TO STRENGTHEN FAITH BY TESTING

Not only in the experience of faith, but in the reality of grace, the price of redemption is revealed. In his goodness, God sends us times that try us. While Jesus was on trial before the high priest, Peter was

on trial in the priest's courtyard, before a servant girl. Jesus had prayed for Peter, that his faith would not fail. It failed. When Peter swore by God that he never knew Jesus, Jesus turned from his accusers to look at Peter. Weeping, Peter stumbled out into the night. Yet the testing did not come to destroy Peter, but to show him the cost. Later, at a resurrection breakfast by the lake Jesus restored Peter's faith.

Through Abraham's trial, his faith was confirmed, and the Lord confirmed his own promise with an oath. Indeed, the testing of Abraham was all about grace. God tested to bless. The Lord instructed Abraham's faith, even as he put it to the test.

TO INFORM FAITH BY SYMBOL: THAT ABRAHAM MIGHT
SEE CHRIST'S DAY

We are given two keys to the testing of Abraham. First, we are told that he was blessed for his obedience, since it showed that he feared God. The second key is found in the name Abraham gave to the place the Lord had shown him. We know it as "Jehovah Jireh" ("Yahweh-Yireh" would be better): "The Lord Will See (to It)." When God provided the ram, he not only spared Isaac (and Abraham!) but showed Abraham that the price of redemption was greater than he could pay. The Lord himself must provide the offering that brings salvation. That provision must be made at the place God showed Abraham. The Lord thus showed Abraham that after his descendants had gone to Egypt, and had been brought back, this would be the place where the promised nation would gather to worship God.

Isaac could not be the offering; neither could the real sacrifice be a sheep. The One descended from Abraham must come, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. "The Lord Will Provide" promises the coming of Christ. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day when Isaac was born, and rejoiced again when God provided the ram as a substitute for Isaac; but Abraham looked further (John 8:56). Not Isaac but the Lamb of God was the Sacrifice that the Father would provide. Abraham the prophet spoke words that endured, words that explained Jehovah Jireh: "In the mountain of the LORD he shall be seen" (Gen. 22:14, literal translation).

Who is the “he” that shall be seen? When Hagar, pregnant with Ishmael, fled from Sarah’s anger, the Angel of the Lord found her by a well, and she called the Lord *El Roi*, “The God Who Sees Me.” She called the well “The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me” (see Gen. 16:13-14, ESV margin).

Hagar saw the Angel of God’s presence, because the Angel first saw her. Does Abraham name the mountain the place where the *Lord* is seen? The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham from *heaven*. The Lord did not come down to the mountain to stay Abraham’s hand.

Abraham had looked up to see the mountain. He said that the Lord would see to the sacrifice. Abraham looked up again and saw the ram, caught by the horns. Who then is the “he” that, in the words attributed to Abraham, shall be seen? The simplest answer is: the ram that Abraham saw. (The “he” is masculine for the ram; see “offered him up,” v. 13.) In the mountain of the Lord, God’s provision, the ram that God “saw to,” was seen.

Well may we still hold to Abraham’s word. In the mountain of the Lord, the Lamb of God will be seen. A popular chorus sings, “Jehovah Jireh, the Lord provideth for me,” but misses the heart of the message. Jehovah Jireh: in the mountain of the Lord, Jesus Christ will be seen. What we see is Jesus Christ lifted up on Golgotha in that very place, the hills of Moriah.

The Grace of God’s Provision: God Sees the Lamb!

GOD’S POSSIBILITY: HE MUST COME

Abraham rejoiced to see the day of Jesus Christ. He rejoiced with Isaac in his arms. He rejoiced because God had seen the Lamb, and Abraham knew that no word of promise was too wonderful for God. With the eyes of faith, Abraham too saw that another Isaac must come, the Lamb of God, the Son of God.

GOD MEETS THE COST THROUGH SUBSTITUTION:
THE LORD SEES TO IT!

The cost to Abraham was everything. He must not spare his beloved son. But Isaac was spared. Yet if Isaac was spared, the Father’s Beloved

must be offered up. Paul tells us that the heavenly Father spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all (Rom. 8:32). God's revelation of the cost of redemption in the life of Abraham points us to the Lamb of God: the Lamb that God provides, that he offers for sinners. The Son paid the price on Calvary. So did the Father. In mystery beyond mystery, the eternal God was silent as the incarnate Son cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Not just at the Incarnation did God give his Son. He gave him also in the darkness, in the silence, as he forsook his Beloved. God commended his own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

The cost to Abraham was nothing, for God provided. The cost to God was infinite. He gave everything in the gift of his beloved Son. He paid the price. Yet, for the joy that was set before him, Christ endured the cross, despising that shame, and is enthroned with the Father (Heb. 12:2). The infinite price that was paid is met only by God's infinite love—for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

How dare we even speak of such wonders, wonders that angels cannot comprehend? But it is that love, that infinite love for us, that God pours out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). Can we endure such love without being consumed with the fire of his presence? Only his grace can enable us to receive it. God's fine print is bright with the glory of his love, love that draws us to love him and moves us to love others.

Thus might I hide my blushing face while his dear cross appears;
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt mine eyes to tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away—'tis all that I can do.¹

¹ Isaac Watts, "Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed," 1707.