

Aaron E. Lavender. *Enduring Truth: Restoring Sound Theology and Relevance to African-American Preaching*. Nashville: B & H Academic, 2016. 128 pages. \$24.99.

Aaron E. Lavender is the vice president, professor of pastoral ministries, and director of seminary studies at Carver Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. Lavender is also the pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, and serves as Vice President of Church Development for the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship Association.

In the Introduction of his book, *Enduring Truth*, Lavender immediately states his purpose for writing this book. He argues that on any given Sunday, there are preachers in pulpits across the nation opening their bibles and mouths, muting God's words and inserting their own. These preachers, notes Lavender, have been fooled into believing that what they preached is God's Word when in reality they are the preacher's personal thoughts and opinions. He further argues that the need to restore textual accuracy and relevance to biblical preaching is urgent, particularly in African American pulpits (2).

Enduring Truth consists of four practical chapters revealing the author's conservative view of Scripture, belief in complementarianism, and appreciation for expository preaching. Each chapter concludes with at least six discussion questions to help readers think through what the author has written. Throughout chapter one, "The Crisis: Erosion of Biblical Preaching in African American Pulpits," Lavender contends that segregation, black liberation theology and prosperity theology are the three factors that precipitated the decline of biblical preaching in black churches. The first factor segregation, made alleviating racism, sexism, and poverty the main focus. This, however, was at the expense of traditional Christian teaching about repentance and faith in Christ (11).

The second factor, black liberation theology, has at least three problems, according to Lavender; it is a threat to biblical Christianity, it deemphasizes the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it contributes to the segregation of Christian churches alienating black Christians from their white brothers and sisters.

The final factor Lavender believes precipitated the decline of biblical preaching in black churches is what he calls the heretical teaching known as "prosperity theology." This teaching states God rewards faithfulness with good health and material wealth (22). The three factors Lavender refers to are viewed as satanic plans to water down God's truth. He refers to black preachers who preach the social gospel, black liberation theology, and the prosperity gospel as false preachers.

In Chapter Two, "The Importance of Biblical Exegesis," Lavender warns preachers against reading their personal biases and presuppositions into a text. He argues that the text should speak for itself, and then offers a definition of exegesis as expressed by white conservatives, noting how many black theologians read their own biases into a text, which affects their understanding of the text's meaning. Next he provides three reasons why biblical exegesis is important; the divine origin of the Bible necessitate it, God commands it, and because of the rejection of truth. Lavender uses his complementarian view to validate his case by arguing that reading personal opinions into a biblical text has led to an influx of women being ordained into pastoral ministries in urban churches, which is not biblical (50).

In Chapter Three, "A Theology of Preaching," Lavender offers a definition of biblical preaching. Though the book is specifically about African American preaching he references Euro-American publishers as he works towards this definition. He then discusses the ethos of

preaching in the African American context and claims expository preaching as the best preaching method. Lavender uses two conservative expository preachers to define, illustrate, and explain why this method is so effective.

The last chapter, "Relevance in Biblical Preaching," analyzes postmodernism and its effect on biblical preaching. It further discusses what it means to preach contextually and then five seasoned pastors are asked to and answer six questions pertaining to the relevance and practice of preaching. The book concludes with Lavender stating that African American pulpits are in desperate need of a spiritual makeover and that it is incumbent upon black preachers to preach God's Word because most problems faced by the black community relate to its deficiencies in understanding the Bible (96).

Lavender seeks to recover what he defines as biblical preaching, biblical accuracy and relevance to preaching. This book is challenging to those steeped in the African American preaching tradition. In many ways it rejects a long-tenured, venerable preaching tradition in basing the future credibility of the tradition on a conservative perspective established and verified by Euro-American males. Those who know and cherish the distinct history and practice of African American preaching will certainly question Lavender's homiletical critique.

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