

*Dying to Preach: Embracing the Cross in the Pulpit.* By Steven W. Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009, 175 pp., \$14.99 paper.

Steven W. Smith's *Dying to Preach* focuses on the heart of Christian ministry in general, and Christian preaching in particular. Smith calls the pastor to live out Paul's model of *dying that others may live* (2 Cor. 4:12). While other books rightly champion the need to preach the cross, Smith provides a wonderful contribution to the field by urging the preacher to take up the cross. In Smith's words, "The principle metaphor for the act of preaching the Gospel is the Gospel" (pg. 13). Therefore, while this is not a "how to" book on preaching, the nature of his subject does affect how one preaches (and lives). One's preaching is affected if his purpose is to make much of Jesus and His Word, instead of himself.

I would recommend this book to students and pastors for at least five reasons.

First, *Smith's work is thoroughly biblical, which makes it trustworthy.* Smith's primary focus of source material is Paul's words to the Corinthians. In chapter 1, Smith provides an excellent summary table of how the cross of Christ informed Paul's view of ministry. Smith records, "No less than twenty times in his two extant letters to Corinth, he [Paul] alludes to this idea of suffering for others" (pg. 28). In chapter 2, Smith expounds 1 Corinthians 2, and draws out implications for preaching. Chapters 3-6 make up Part 2 of the book, which deals with how the cross impacts preaching more practically. Chapter 3 is an exposition of 2 Corinthians 4; chapter 4, an exposition of Colossians 1:24; chapter 5, an exposition of Hebrews 13:11-14; and chapter 6, focuses on Philippians 2:5-7. Each of these chapters actually model faithful exposition.

Second, *Smith writes with pastoral vulnerability, which makes the book encouraging.* In other words, he is aware of the inner struggles of the pastor. For example, he identifies with the discouraged pastor saying, "We lay our guts out in the pulpit, and in response see stone-cold faces with no ambition toward godliness or motivation to change" (pg. 24). What pastor cannot identify with this struggle?

Third, *Smith reminds us of the theological underpinnings of preaching, which makes the book timeless.* For example, he reminds us that we should preach with a "healthy fear of God's judgment" instead of succumbing to the pressure to perform and entertain (pg. 47).

Fourth, *Smith includes some helpful reminders from the history of preaching (mainly Fenelon), which makes the book informative.* I always appreciate references to homileticians from former years.

Fifth, *Smith reminds us of the true essence of expository preaching, that is being surrendered to the text of Scripture (final three chapters 7-9) – which makes the book regularly useful for personal reflection.*