

## Sermon Introduction and Conclusion: Barth

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Interestingly, K. Barth said we don't need sermon introduction! To preachers who think we should always have introduction of sermon this sounds awkward. Some of homiletic professors were irritated by what K. Barth said about sermon introduction. But in a way I agree with K. Barth. Do we really need sermon introduction always?

I believe there is no rule. Who made that rule that preachers should use introduction? Sermon structure of introduction, body and conclusion comes from argumentative rhetoric. Also when we preach verse by verse, expository preaching, we also don't need introduction. Speaking differently We can't use introduction for expository sermon because expository sermon has many different topic to deal with following each verse by verse exposition. There is no one main idea or main topic to deal with.

Now we can better understand why K. Barth said we don't need sermon introduction, when we realize that for K. Barth, sermon should be exposition of the word of God, not manipulation of the word of God. For Barth, introduction is dangerous attempt to connect between God and sinners, God and world. There is no direct analogy and connection other than revelation and redemption.

“Basically the sermon should not have an introduction. Only one kind of legitimate introduction is conceivable. When a scripture reading precedes the sermon, a link can be made with this, so that in some sense the sermon proper begins with a pre-sermon consisting of a brief analysis of the lesson that leads up to the real sermon. This is the only possible form of introduction. All others are to be rejected in principle. Certain practical or if one will, psychological reasons may be advanced against introductions. Why do we come to church? We want to hear the Word of God that comes to us in the sermon, which as explication of the text is also application. The course of worship itself is the introduction to the sermon, its climax. The act of proclamation should begin at once. Any additional introduction is a waste of time.” (Karl Barth, *Homiletic*, Westminster/John Know Press, Louisville, 1991, pp.121-122)

For K. Barth, worship service before preaching is introduction. In the worship, audience is ready to listen to the word of God by praying confessing their sin, and focusing on the Word of God. Argumentative speech introduced Christian preaching this introduction-body-conclusion structure. But like prophet in the old testament and Jesus in the synagogue we need to hear this voice to go back to Hebraic rhetoric not to Greek rhetoric. Also Bonheoffer mentioned about sermon introduction and conclusion in his homiletic lecture:

“The text gives the sermon its form. Artificial organizational schemes and sermons produce pulpit orators. We don’t need model sermons; sermons that are according to the text are model sermons. Introduction and conclusions are separate sermon parts are particularly to be avoided.” ( Dieftrich Bohnhoeffer, *Worldy Preaching: Lectures on Homiletics*, The Crossroad/NewYork, 1991, p.129.)

This is very interesting about sermon form, not only introduction and conclusion. Bonheoffer had organic view of preaching. He refused to imitate artificial models of sermon. He taught that sermon text produce its own organic sermon form. Therefore introduction and conclusion should be rejected because they are not organic form different to each text and each sermon.

However, traditionally, preachers have been trained to have introduction and conclusion. Then what should we do? My answer is open the door! It depends. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. If you think necessary do it, but if you think unnecessary don’t do it. That’s why I taught you in my Flower Preaching lectures, leave blank for the possible introduction and conclusion until the end. Later you can decide it whether you will make introduction or conclusion. For my experience, sometimes yes and sometimes no for introduction. But for conclusion I normally make summary what I preached.