

“Prayer and the Ministry of the Word”  
1 Samuel 12:23  
(Preached at Trinity, January 15, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered **Chapter 12** we found Samuel giving his farewell address. He reminds Israel of his faithfulness as their leader. He charges them to examine his record. He tells them, **Verses 12:2-3** - "I have walked before you from my youth even to this day.<sup>3</sup> "Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD"
2. Samuel also reminds them of God's covenant faithfulness throughout their history: **Verse 7** "So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers."
3. This is against the backdrop of their unfaithfulness.  
**1 Samuel 12:9 NAU** - "But they forgot the LORD their God"  
Samuel's point was to press upon them their wickedness in seeking a king to rule over them. They had no right to reject the leadership of Samuel. But much more significant, they had no right to reject God's dominion over them.
4. They were being granted the king they've requested.  
**Verse 1** - "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me and I have appointed a king over you."  
**Verse 13** - "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you."
5. Samuel makes it clear, however, that this in no ways absolves them of their duty towards God. **1 Samuel 12:15 NAU** - "If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers."
6. Samuel was giving them an ultimatum. They had foolishly asked for a king like the nations. But they would not be able to divest themselves of their responsibility towards God. God still demanded that they follow Him exclusively.  
In order to declare God's dominion over them Samuel announced a sign.  
**1 Samuel 12:16-17 NAU** - "Even now, take your stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. <sup>17</sup> "Is it not the wheat harvest today?"
  - A. He is asking them this simple question. What time of year is it? The wheat harvest came during the driest time of the year. They were not expecting rain.
  - B. Not only did God send rain. It was a deluge with thunder and lightning.  
**1 Samuel 12:17 NAU** - "I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king."

7. This was terrifying for Israel to observe. They knew clearly that God was displeased with them. In an outward show of repentance they cried out to Samuel and pleaded with him to pray for them.  
**1 Samuel 12:19 NAU** - "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins *this* evil by asking for ourselves a king."
8. Samuel repeated his charge from **Verse 14**  
**1 Samuel 12:20 NAU** - "Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart."
9. Then Samuel makes a wonderful statement to them. They had requested Samuel to pray for them but Samuel declares to them that it was his duty to pray. In fact, if he did not pray he would be in sin. Samuel declares the two primary duties of the shepherds of God's people – to pray and instruct.  
**1 Samuel 12:23 NAU** - "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way."
10. I want to set this before you tonight, but I want us to see that there are two aspects of it. First, the duty of pastors to pray and teach. This continues to be the duty of the shepherds of God's people.  
 Second, the duty of every believer to pray and teach
- I. The duty of pastors
- A. The Bible emphasizes prayer as one of the important labors of those God calls to minister to His people.
1. This is Samuel's point in **Verse 23** - far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you"
  2. We find this consistently throughout the OT
    - a. Abraham interceded for the saints in Sodom  
**Genesis 18:23-25 NAU** - "Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?  
<sup>24</sup> "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep *it* away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? <sup>25</sup> "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"
    - b. Moses continually interceded on behalf of Israel  
**Exodus 32:31-32 NAU** - "Moses returned to the LORD, and said, "Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. <sup>32</sup> "But now, if You will, forgive their sin-- and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"

3. We find it as the model of the Apostles
    - a. The Apostles stressed this when division arose in the church that threatened to draw them from their duty  
**Acts 6:2-4 NAU** - "So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. <sup>3</sup> "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. <sup>4</sup> "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."
    - b. Paul continually demonstrated this in his own ministry.
      - He is telling the Christians in **Ephesus 1:16**, "I do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of *you* in my prayers"
      - We read in **Colossians 1:9** - "we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding"
  4. Pastors have a duty to pray
    - a. Samuel calls the neglect of prayer sin
    - b. Satan is always on the prowl. Pastors must pray in defense of their flock.
    - c. They must pray that the Holy Spirit would strengthen the congregation.  
**Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU** - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, <sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,"
    - d. Preaching depends on prayer. Preaching is a supernatural activity. An old Scotch pastor described it:  
 "There is somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord."
    - e. There is an unction in preaching that must come from God. We must plead with Him for it.
- B. The Bible also makes preaching and teaching inseparable to the pastoral ministry
1. Samuel saw his duty to instruct the people in the way of God  
**1 Samuel 12:23** - "I will instruct you in the good and right way."  
    - a. Samuel was burdened that the people walk in the way of God
    - b. God's ways are absolute
    - c. The world will always say, "no body's perfect" "we're only human." God says, "Be perfect!"  
**Matthew 5:48-6:1 NAU** - "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. "
    - d. God's leaders continually push God's people towards perfection – and to be satisfied with nothing less

2. One of the qualifications of a pastor is he must be an able teacher.  
**1 Timothy 3:2 NAU** - "able to teach,"  
**2 Timothy 2:2 NAU** - "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."  
**Titus 1:9 NAU** - "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."
3. Paul stressed this over and over  
**1 Timothy 6:2 NAU** - "Teach and preach these *principles*."  
**2 Timothy 4:2 NAU** - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."  
**1 Timothy 4:11 KJV** - "These things command and teach."
4. This is of such importance that a church must make it a high priority, if at all possible, to support at least one of their elders with full-time support.  
**1 Timothy 5:17-18 NAS** - "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup> For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

- II. There is a sense, however, in which these duties are pressed upon every believer
- A. All of us have a duty to build our Lord's church
    1. We all have a responsibility to give ourselves to mutual ministry. Paul admonishes the brethren in the church to comfort themselves together and edify one another.
    2. Our church covenant is excellent on this  
 "I promise, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together with this assembly in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality . . ."  
 "I further promise, therefore, to watch over my brothers and sisters in Christ in brotherly love, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish them as occasion may require . . ."
  - B. First of all, every believer has a duty to pray
    1. It is sinful to be negligent in prayer. In the imperative Paul writes:  
**1 Thessalonians 5:17 NAU** - "pray without ceasing"
    2. You have a duty to pray for your pastors in their work  
**Hebrews 13:17-18 NAU** - "Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. <sup>18</sup> Pray for us"

- a. Paul continually sought the prayers of the brethren  
**Ephesians 6:19-20 NAU** - "and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."
  - b. Preaching depends on prayer.  
 Churches must pray for the preaching of their church – for the preacher, for themselves, for each other.
3. Prayer is Essential to the advancement of the Gospel.  
 The Gospel depends on prayer. When the people of God cease praying the Gospel is greatly hindered.
- a. But you say, I thought salvation is a work of God. How can God be hindered from saving His elect people? Yes, salvation is a monergistic work of God's grace. But God has ordained all of the means to bring about the salvation of the lost. God is sovereign but the Gospel must be preached. And God's people must pray.
  - b. The Gospel demands prayer for laborers  
**Matthew 9:38 NAU** - "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
  - c. The Gospel demands prayer for opportunities  
**Colossians 4:2-3 NAU** - "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of thanksgiving*; <sup>3</sup> praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word"
  - d. The Gospel demands prayer since there is a natural hatred of it by the men of this world.  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; <sup>2</sup> and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."
4. You also have a duty to pray for one another.
- a. We are affected greatly by the hyper-individualism of our day. We forget we are united as a part of a body. That which affects one of us affects the whole.
  - b. After admonishing these Christians to put on the whole armor of God and the shield of faith with the sword of the Spirit they were commanded to pray.  
**Ephesians 6:18 NAU** - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,"

- B. Every believer also has a duty to teach one another
1. The writer of Hebrews made the assumption that every Christian should be growing in maturity that we might teach one another—he rebukes them for not maturing  
**Hebrews 5:12 NAU** - "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."
  2. The Word of God must be a part of our lives  
**Colossians 3:16 NAU** - "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."
  3. In Ephesians 4 Paul says Pastors equip the church that the members might build up one another  
**Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU** - "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

#### Conclusion:

1. Why do people neglect the Word of God and prayer? Is it because they don't really believe in the sufficiency and authority of Scripture? Is it because they don't really believe that God answers prayer?. They don't believe in the importance of prayer. They don't understand all that is lost by their prayerlessness.
2. Do we really believe that the Word of God is the means whereby we will grow in knowledge and holiness?
3. The greatest model of prayer and teaching is our Lord Jesus Christ who forever makes intercession for us and forever serves as our great Prophet to teach us the Word of God.
4. May we be a church that maintains a high emphasis on the Word of God and prayer. We must pray for and teach one another, but oh how the world needs our intercession and the Word of God.