

131 - Praying for the Preacher - Ephesians 6:19-20 - 2017-03-12

Call to Worship: Psalm 61:1-2

Scripture Reading: Exodus 17:8-12

Sermon: "Praying for the Preacher" Ephesians 6:19-20

Benediction: Psalm 61:3-4

INTRODUCTION

As we considered last time, among the Lord's disciples there must be all praying and watching
-praying not just with the mouth, but with the spirit, and watching to that end
-praying at all times, on all occasions, and a watching to that with all perseverance
-praying with all prayer and supplication, and a watching to that for all the saints

Now, Paul himself, and all who are preachers, are, of course, included in "all the saints." But Paul still adds that the church in Ephesus should pray for him as a preacher.

The saints in Ephesus surely must have done just that, and God must have answered those prayers, because years after this, near the end of his life, Paul was able to write

2 Timothy 4:6-7 I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

So now there is no more need for us to pray for Paul. He is beyond needing it.

But in Paul's urging the Ephesians in the first century to pray for him as a preacher, the Lord Jesus has taught us that as we pray with all prayer and supplication, watching for all the saints, we are particularly to pray for the preacher.

TEXT

Ephesians 6:18-20

praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- (19) and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, (20) for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

BODY

I. There Is Something the Preacher Ought to Do

A. The preacher is an ambassador (verse 20)

1. when a king has something for people to know, so he sends an ambassador to those people

2. the Lord Jesus Christ has something for people to know, so he sends a preacher to those people, as an ambassador
 3. Q: To whom is the preacher sent as an ambassador? Unlike a political ambassador, who is the king's ambassador to a certain country, the preacher is Christ's ambassador to all nations
 - a) Mt 28:19 "make disciples of all nations"
 - b) Luke 24:47 "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations"
 - c) I don't mean that every preacher is to go preach in every country; but the preacher, generically, is sent an ambassador to preach in every nation
 - (1) here is a preacher in this small city in Texas
 - (2) over there is another preacher in this same area
 - (3) over there is a preacher in South America
 - (4) over there is a preacher in Asia
 - d) the preacher is sent an ambassador to all nations
- B. The preacher, because he is an ambassador, ought to open his mouth
1. an ambassador, sent by the king, obviously ought to open his mouth to speak to those people to whom the king sent him as ambassador
 2. likewise, the preacher, sent by the Lord Jesus Christ, ought to open his mouth to those people to whom the Lord Jesus has sent him as a preacher
- C. The preacher, because he is an ambassador, when he opens his mouth, ought to proclaim the mystery of the gospel
1. a king has a certain message for his ambassador to tell people
 - a) the ambassador is not sent to say what he wants to say, but what the king wants him to say
 - b) the ambassador has a certain latitude in exactly how he says it
 - c) but he ought to make known the king's message, not something else
 2. the message the Lord Jesus Christ has for people to know is the mystery of the gospel
 - a) the preacher has a certain latitude in exactly how he says it
 - (1) you can see it in comparing how Paul spoke to the religious Jews in the synagogues with how he spoke to the pagan philosophers in Athens
 - b) but the preacher, when he opens his mouth, ought to proclaim that message the Lord Jesus gave him to make known, the mystery of the gospel
 - c) hear the King commissioning His ambassadors to give His message: Luke 24:44-47
 - (1) as the scriptures foretold, Christ had to die and rise from the dead

- (2) there is now remission of sins, forgiveness of sins, in His name for those who repent
- d) hear the ambassador giving that message: Acts 2:22-41
 - (1) as the scriptures foretold, Christ had to die and rise from the dead
 - (2) there is now remission of sins, forgiveness of sins, in His name for those who repent
- D. The preacher, because he is an ambassador, when he opens his mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ought to speak it boldly
 - 1. this is the message of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords
 - 2. this is the message lost sinners most need to hear
 - 3. this is the message that is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes

There is something the preacher ought to do: the preacher ought to open his mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, and speak it boldly. But . . .

- II. The Preacher Is Just an Imperfect Man, Tempted Not to Do This Thing That He Ought to Do
 - A. He is tempted not to open his mouth
 - 1. to be worldly: to love the things of this world, like Demas
 - 2. to be sinful: to disqualify himself by sinful living
 - 3. to be lazy, slothful
 - 4. to be distracted: to busy himself with too many things that although they are wholesome things, distract him from opening his mouth to preach
 - 5. to be fearful
 - B. He is tempted to open his mouth and proclaim something other than the mystery of the gospel
 - 1. some message that is not the gospel at all
 - a) some religious or philosophical message that really doesn't bear more than a superficial resemblance to the gospel
 - 2. another gospel, which is not truly another gospel
 - a) a message that talks about Jesus Christ, but ultimately instructs the sinner to save himself by his own works
 - 3. the law without the gospel
 - 4. part of the gospel
 - C. He is tempted to open his mouth and proclaim the mystery of the gospel, but not to speak boldly
 - 1. as if he has no authority to command sinners to repent
 - 2. as if it isn't right to be dogmatic
 - 3. as if it isn't urgent
 - 4. as if the gospel isn't really something all that great
 - 5. as if just doing what he is expected to do

- D. Sometimes these temptations not to do this thing he ought to do come in the form of actual persecution by the government
 - 1. as was Paul's case multiple times, including when he wrote this letter
 - 2. which was the occasion of Paul calling himself an "ambassador in chain"

There is something the preacher ought to do: the preacher ought to open his mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, and speak it boldly. But the preacher is just an imperfect man, tempted not to do this thing that he ought to do. So . . .

III. For the Preacher to Do This Thing He Ought to Do, Utterance Must Be Given to Him By God

- A. He needs God to help him live the blameless life that makes and keeps him qualified
- B. He needs God to help his wife, if he has one, to be a godly woman, who will be a help to him and a credit to the message he preaches
- C. He needs God to help him with his children, so he can train them to be obedient, so they will not be open to a charge of being unruly
- D. He needs God to provide him with enough money to pay his family's expenses, so he does not entangle himself in secular affairs
- E. He needs God to help him learn and understand the Gospel, and all that the Lord Jesus commands His disciples
- F. He needs God to help him study in general preparation for preaching
- G. He needs God to help him study in particular for each opportunity to preach
- H. He needs God to grant him and preserve in him enough physical health to be able to preach
- I. He needs God to keep him in the faith, to keep him faithful to the end
- J. He needs God to make him courageous, fearless, and then to keep him from becoming discouraged or fearful
- K. He needs God to grant him a hearing, whether in the assembly of the church or elsewhere
- L. And He needs God to help him immediately, as he is preaching, granting to him what has sometimes been called "unction" --- freedom of expression, and ability to speak well and boldly as he is speaking

There is something the preacher ought to do: the preacher ought to open his mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, and speak it boldly. But the preacher is just an imperfect man, tempted not to do this thing that he ought to do. So, for the preacher to do this thing he ought to do, utterance must be given to him by God. Therefore . . .

IV. Let the People of God Pray for the Preacher, That God Will Give Him That Utterance, So That He Will Do As He Ought to Do

- A. That
 - 1. he will open his mouth

2. when he opens his mouth, he will proclaim the mystery of the gospel
 3. when he opens his mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, he will speak boldly, as he ought to speak
- B. This is not the easier or more natural thing
1. easier to grumble
 2. easier to complain
 3. easier to point out faults
 4. easier not to go listen to the preacher
 5. easier to go look for a better preacher
- C. Why?
1. Because this is what our Lord has taught us
 2. Because this is what sinners need
 - a) even our own children
 3. Because this is for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ
- D. Let the church pray for
1. the preacher who is trying to make himself ready, the one who is in college or seminary or reading early in the morning and late at night in his bedroom
 2. the preacher who is new, inexperienced, struggling forward with difficulty at the new task
 3. the preacher who is old, having served long, and struggling with pain in the body and maybe discouragement in the work
 4. the preacher who is overseas, far from home
 5. the preacher who is being persecuted
- E. Let the church pray for this preacher!
1. pray with all prayer and supplication, watching for all the saints
 2. and pray for me, also!

CONCLUSION

There is something the preacher ought to do: the preacher ought to open his mouth to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, and speak it boldly. But the preacher is just an imperfect man, tempted not to do this thing that he ought to do. So, for the preacher to do this thing he ought to do, utterance must be given to him by God. Therefore let the people of God pray for the preacher, that God will give him that utterance, so that he will do as he ought to do.

Ferguson:

especially ministers should crave the assistance of their prayers who are committed to his charge

so much is there of unmortified fear of flesh, even in the best of ministers . . . that there is need of special assistance and present influence from God, to make a minister open his mouth boldly . . . fearing no flesh

As Christ's ministers do in a singular manner represent his person, and being clothed with authority from him, are sent to treat and transact about the greatest matters on earth in his name, even the making up of peace and friendship betwixt God and sinners . . . speaking nothing but what they have a commission for from Christ their master

though this title of ambassador for Christ, did belong to the apostles in all respects chiefly, and in some respects to them only . . . yet as to many other respects . . . it doth belong to all sent ministers; and therefore they are called the angels of the churches

Trapp:

Ministers must be especially prayed for, that they may have a door not only of utterance, but of entrance to men's hearts, and so be able to save themselves and those that hear them. In praying for such, we pray for ourselves.

Gill:

This shows the great humility of the apostle, and the sense he had of the greatness of the work of the ministry; and that it is the duty of people to pray for their ministers; and that no man is perfect in this life; and that the more superior members need the assistance of the inferior ones; for this request is made by the apostle not in dissimulation, or as feigning humility and modesty; but in the sincerity of his heart, and from a real sense of his need of fresh supplies of gifts and grace, to fit him for the work and service of Christ:

EB:

We should pray for Christ's ambassadors, and especially for the more public and eloquent pleaders of the Christian cause

JRY:

more directly applicable toward those preachers whose ministry takes them into such trouble as arrest by the authorities

What kind of things do preachers sometimes do?

2 Timothy 4:10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

1 Timothy 1:18-20 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, (19) having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, (20) of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. Elijah became afraid of Jezebel's threats, and ran out into the wilderness, wishing to die.