

Acts 20: 25-27; “Preaching the Kingdom of God”, Sermon # 75 in the series –
“Laying the Foundations”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 3rd, 2022, in the Morning Worship Service.

As I have said to you in past messages, the Holy Spirit as the 3rd Person of the Divine Trinity was the One who was leading Paul into all the situations in which he would go to preach and minister, including all of the difficulties and trials that he faced in doing so. We should understand that this is the case for every man who would be faithful in ministry and every Christian who would be faithful in their service to Christ.

Paul is here reminding the elders at Ephesus that he had made it his object in ministering the word to do 2 things. 1st – He went about preaching the kingdom of God. And 2nd – He consciously declared the whole counsel of God. These are the two truths that I want to open up for you now so that you will better understand what a faithful gospel minister looks like, and so that you will pray for my ministry among you, that I will do the same thing.

1st of all – Paul reminded the elders at Ephesus that is important for a minister to preach the Kingdom of God, as he did.

Verse 25 – “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.” Now this was a very sad statement to the elders of Ephesus, for they loved the apostle Paul. They very much valued his labors as an apostle to them. They no doubt thought of him as “their” apostle. The thought that this wonderful apostolic relationship and ministry was coming to an end, and that they would never see him again, was very hard for them to bear. But Paul knew that what he had given them in truth would be sufficient for them when he was no longer with them.

For he says here, that among all of them, he gone about preaching the kingdom of God. What does Paul mean by this saying, that he had gone about to preach the kingdom of God to them? Well, I think that this saying is not well understood even by Christians in our own day. There is some very important truth here for us to consider together, for it is the same truth that Christ passed down to all of His disciples before He ascended to heaven.

Turn back with me to Acts chapter 1, verses 1-4. “The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”

You will notice here that the resurrected Lord Jesus Himself had given commandments to the His apostles whom he had chosen. He presented Himself alive to them after His suffering and His dying on the cross. He was raised from the dead, and He proved Himself to be alive from the dead. It says here that He was seen by them during the 40 days following His resurrection, and during that time He had spoken to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Here is the same statement that Paul gave to the Ephesian elders in our text.

Both our Lord and the apostle Paul must have thought it to be very important to speak of the things pertaining the kingdom of God. This was the essential teaching given by Christ to His apostles before He ascended to heaven. And now it is the essential teaching given by Paul to the elders of Ephesus. It was that which they must understand this truth of the kingdom of God in

order for them to fulfill their ministry in that day. And I hope that you will understand that it is also essential for any minister in our own day to understand this truth if he would see the people in his church grow up into Christ. Now, I think that many people when they hear the words, the Kingdom of God, they think of eternal life, and what we wait for by hope. It is something, they think, which is coming in the future. But I believe that in both these passages, that Luke and the apostle Paul would have us to understand more about the spiritual government of Christ in our lives.

I am speaking about that spiritual government by which Christ brings us to greater obedience to Himself, until He has entirely transformed us to His image. This is why Paul preached the kingdom of God. He wanted the elders at Ephesus to understand that Christ's work in us is sure, according to His purpose. Once He has taught us what He wants us to learn, then it is He Himself who brings us to heaven. The kingdom of God is that spiritual kingdom over which Christ rules, having conquered sin and death. He, by His grace, makes us subjects of His kingdom through God's having mercy upon us, through our being given the gospel, and our having believed it by grace.

Once we have believed in the gospel, and have been born again spiritually by the Spirit of God, we are able to both see and to enter the kingdom of God spiritually. Christ then rules over us from that time forward to make us profitable to God. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, what is it that He has called us to expect from Him? And what is it that He calls us to do, when we become united to Him by faith? He has taken us out of our captivity to sin, and we now have the liberty to do what we truly want to do. But He wants us to understand that our entrance upon this life of being a New Creature in Christ is just the beginning of a closer walk with Him!

We are justified by faith in Christ, but there is so much more for us to learn in order to become conformed to Christ's blessed image. And so, each of us must understand better, our spiritual union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Our awareness of God's Kingdom in us needs to increase. Our realization of His actual everyday rule over our heart and soul and life needs to increase! Christ is watching over you personally, every day, to see if you will obey Him. He says – If you love Me, keep My commandments.

When you come to realize that He is personally supervising your growth in grace, and our part and place in His kingdom; that you are His subject, His servant, His brother and His friend, this will help you in terms of your sanctification. It will help you in your mortification of sin. It will help you to come to a greater realization of His good work of imparting His grace to you. He has sent His Spirit into your heart to work this work within you. And your realization of this personal relationship is a very necessary part of your living your life to God. It is essential to the formation of Christ in you.

If you have believed in Christ, God has given you this new life in Him. He is always urging you on toward the perfection which is in Himself. So Christ sent His apostles to teach us our need to receive the things which they wrote down for us in the word of God. He sent His Holy Spirit to them on the Day of Pentecost in order that they might lay the foundation of the New Testament Church. The apostles grew to understand that they needed power in order to fulfill their individual ministries. Every minister and every Christian will need that same help and power of the Spirit so that they will become conformed to Christ, and be transformed into His blessed image and likeness.

Are you aware of your need, not only to be taught the doctrinal and practical truth of the Bible, the word of God, but also to be led and taught by the Holy Spirit how to follow Christ and keep His commandments? God the Holy Spirit works in such a way that you will learn to submit to

Christ and learn to do His will in a righteous and loving way. With the apostles this began on the Day of Pentecost. Christ had appointed that the apostles wait until the Promise of the Father had come upon them. They could have said – We have been appointed to this work. Why do we need to wait? Let’s just plunge ahead and go about to do it.

But Christ wanted them to wait until they were clothed with power from on high. You and I need to pray that we ourselves would be clothed with power divine in going about to do the work of God’s kingdom. Christ is our King. We are His soldiers and servants who promote His cause and His Kingdom. By the way, this is how we will be able to see and to recognize other men in this church, to be able to raise them up, to become elders and elders and deacons. It will be that those men who are being called to the work, will evidence to us that the Holy Spirit is with them in both their preaching and teaching, and also in the good works that they do.

Acts chapter 3, verse 3, when the early Church was looking for men to serve tables in the daily distribution to the widows, it says: “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.” This is how the Kingdom of God advances, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in a believer’s heart; leading them into greater obedience to Christ’s commandments. This is why Paul exhorted the elders at Ephesus to remember this important truth of preaching the kingdom of God.

2nd – Paul reminds them that it is important for a minister to be innocent of the blood of all men in relation to what he preaches.

Paul says in verses 26 and 27 – “Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.” “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” You will recall that when Paul first came to Ephesus, and entered the synagogue there, he had exhorted them and warned them faithfully, to flee from the wrath God by repentance from dead legal and ceremonial works. He preached to them Jesus, and the resurrection, and faith in Him. He taught them that knowing God only comes by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught them their need of His grace. He taught them that they could not trust in their own works of righteousness to save them.

You will recall that back in Acts chapter 18, verse 4, when Paul came from Athens to Corinth that he used these very words to some of the Jews who were opposing him. It says that “he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” “When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.” “But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean.’ “From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

These words – “Your blood be upon your own heads”, Paul took from the book of Ezekiel, chapter 33. God said to Ezekiel in verses 7-9 – “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me.” “When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.” “Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

Well, you can see, can’t you, that even as Ezekiel was appointed a watchman to the house of Israel, so was the apostle Paul in the days of the early Church. But I want you to understand that every man who would be a faithful minister of the truth of God’s word is also a watchman to the people who he preaches to and ministers to. He will warn them of spiritual danger. He will not

shun to declare any truth which would be profitable to them. He will exhort them, and teach them all the truth of the Bible. He will implore them, and beseech them to take heed to their own souls to obey the word of God.

The ministry of the word is to all in our church, but it is also offered to all in our community. It means that we will invite people to come and hear the whole counsel of God preached here in this place. And when the people come they will know over time that the minister will be continually preaching Christ in the messages that he brings every Sunday. The whole counsel of God begins with the minister's being faithful to preach, not himself, or even his own theological or ecclesiastical agenda, but Christ, first of all.

If the congregation that a man preaches to is continually impressed with the glory of Christ, and the strength of His grace, and the power of His Spirit, in relation to the word of God, then that man will be fulfilling the expectations of the Holy Spirit in regard to his particular ministry. Yes, it is true that there are many other things to inculcate in the preaching of the word, Sunday by Sunday, but preaching Christ in relation to all of them, is the main thing. A faithful minister's preaching, in this regard, will also include the opening up all of the doctrines of God's grace; not just some of them.

That is, he will not fear to preach concerning the depravity of man, or the absolute necessity of God's having taken the initiative to save a people for Himself since they cannot save themselves on their own, by their own works or by their own decision for Christ apart from being born again. It will include preaching concerning Divine election, as Paul did in Ephesians chapter 1. It will involve setting forth the particularism of God's grace in Christ, in that regard. A man who would be faithful to God to preach the whole counsel of God, will set forth the truth of the book of Romans, chapter 8, verse 32 – "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

There it is in a nutshell. God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; that is, all who would believe in Him, all who He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in the context. He delivered Him up, not just for the whole world in a general sense, although that is true. God does have a general love for all mankind in the gospel. But a man who would be faithful must not shun to declare the particular sense in which God will freely give to those whom He has chosen, all things.

Salvation is of the Lord. God does not freely give all things to all men in regard to salvation and the blessings of grace. He gives them to those whom He has set His love upon personally and particularly. A faithful man will also preach the doctrines of efficacious grace and the perseverance of the saints. He will not shun to declare God's sovereignty in salvation. And he will also demonstrate from the Scriptures that it is every believer's responsibility to continue in faith, hope, and love, doing good works to show forth the reality of Christ's grace in their life. In this way, a godly pastor will show from the Scriptures and convince men from the evidence of how he lives his own life before others, of the truth of the Bible, so that he will be free from the blood of all men.

Let me close by saying this. It has been my object in preaching to you over these past years to do this very thing; to preach the kingdom of God. To preach of God's sovereignty in salvation, to preach Christ and His grace as being powerful to save, powerful to keep His saints walking on the path of righteousness and to satisfy them with communion with Himself all through this life in the most difficult of situations, and finally bringing each one of us trusting in Him, to eternal glory. May it be the case for each one of us, that we will realize the truth of Romans 14: 17 – "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

