

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX -

PREACHERS AND PRAYER - CHURCHES AND PRAYER

Verses 18-24

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

I have been traveling as an evangelist for many years. I have learned many things that caused my heart to rejoice. I have learned many other things that caused me to be filled with sadness. One of the sad things I have learned is the fact that many churches have pastors who do not preach the Word in power and effectiveness.

Members of churches come to me, lamenting the fact that their pastor is weak and lacks power in the pulpit. His messages are anemic, and any high school boy could preach just as good sermons as he preaches on Sunday morning. But very few of these dear people who have brought their grievances to me have said, "Brother Greene, we have prayed earnestly for our pastor, that GOD would open his eyes and give him power."

No church member has any right to criticize his pastor until he has prayed earnestly for him, that GOD would endue him with power and lead him by The HOLY SPIRIT. I know that personal consecration and surrender is up to the pastor - but we need to pray for our pastors. Writing to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul said, "**And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you (your pastor, your spiritual leaders) and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves**" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13).

You believers who belong to a church where you do not receive the spiritual meat and milk that you need and desire, where the pastor only preaches on the surface, never launches out into the

deep things of GOD - you pray for GOD to stir him, or move him. If you pray earnestly in the Spirit and from the heart, and to the glory of GOD, He will either bless that pastor and stir him until he will preach as he should - or else remove him and lay him on the shelf or put him in the graveyard!

You must remember that JESUS died for the church. The church is the Bride of CHRIST. He loves the church, and the pastor is the overseer of the church. If he is not doing the kind of job he ought to be doing, you pray for him; and if he refuses to follow the leadership of the Spirit, GOD will remove him for the sake of the assembly of believers. Oh, yes! GOD CAN and GOD DOES move preachers.

In the church at Jerusalem, the first deacons were set aside and ordained, and the Bible reason for deacons is given in (Acts 6:3-4: "**Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of The HOLY GHOST and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves CONTINUALLY TO PRAYER, AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.**")

Some church people are responsible for the "leanness" of their minister, spiritually speaking. They run the pastor half to death, knocking on doors, ringing door bells, and correcting whims and grievances among members. Pastors are called of GOD to feed the flock . . . they are not called to take care of the secondary matters of the church. I know in this day and hour, preachers visit almost continually from morning until night - but I invite anyone to disprove the statement I have made, according to the Scriptures.

In the New Testament church, it is the responsibility of the deacons to visit the sick, the needy, the shut-ins, and to take care of the secondary matters of the church in order for the pastor to be continually in an attitude of prayer, studying the Word of GOD and preparing himself to deliver the message to the believers that will strengthen them in the inner man and cause them to be the kind of witnesses they ought to be.

I say this in love and tenderness: Many sermons on Sunday morning are second-hand sermons, copied from some outline book published by the denominational headquarters . . . and that ought not to be!

Studying is hard work - but it is profitable in the ministry.

Paul said, "**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth**" (II Timothy 2:15). I believe you will agree that Paul was a spiritual giant. Certainly he was well educated. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. But he asked the believers in the church at Ephesus to pray for him, that he might be enabled to "**make known the mystery of the Gospel.**"

The only way any minister can understand the mystery of the Gospel and the deep things of GOD, is to spend much time in study and prayer. Every member of the New Testament church should be a prayer partner with his preacher. He should watch and pray . . . "**Watch thereunto with all perseverance.**"

Paul's second request for prayer was that he might be a bold preacher, that he might "**speak the truth with boldness.**" Thank GOD for that prayer request! You should pray for your preacher, that GOD would give him holy boldness. We need more "dare saints" in the pulpits . . . men who will dare to follow GOD if they must risk their physical life in doing it. I know the church today has within its membership demon-possessed hypocrites, church members who have never been saved. They do not want the Gospel, they are not going to put up with it. When their sins are named, they become angry. They set about to get rid of GOD's preacher - but if GOD's saints will pray and trust as they should, GOD can get rid of the hypocrites. He has several ways of doing it.

Paul was in bonds, in chains . . . he was in prison; but he prayed and asked his fellow believers to pray that GOD would give him holy boldness.

I can truthfully say, "**God bears me record; I lie not,**" I have never withheld a statement in the pulpit to keep from offending some worldly-minded church member, some professing person who lives a hypocritical life. After all, GOD saved me from hell, called me to preach - and even gives me the air I breathe. In Him I live and move and have my being. Every good gift that I have comes from GOD . . . why should I fear man?

I can truthfully say I have never seen a man with a pocketbook or a bank account large enough - nor a fist broad enough - to frighten me in the pulpit. I am not a bully - but I am GOD's preacher. I have had some trying experiences in the years of my ministry. I have been threatened . . . a man once came into my pulpit with a gun. He had been sent by gamblers to shut my mouth. But the next day, GOD ground that man's arm off in an ice machine! The Bible says, "**Touch not mine anointed.**" I am not a fatalist - but I believe that as long as I live right and preach right, all hell cannot touch me! I pray daily for GOD to keep me bold . . . that He will never let me compromise, never let me soft-pedal. Oh, GOD! Never let me sell out!

May I ask every believer who reads these lines, to pray for me? As I speak to you through this printed page, I am forty-eight years old. I have been preaching the Gospel for twenty-eight years. These are troublesome days and perilous times. It is harder to preach the Gospel today than it has ever been. Pray that GOD will give me holy boldness and keep me true to His precious Word. Pray for your pastor . . . pray for all of GOD's ministers and missionaries, that GOD will keep us humble - yet bold and uncompromising in our ministry.

In closing, Paul briefly reminds the Ephesians that he has commissioned Tychicus to carry the letter to them, and that Tychicus will tell them fully concerning the affairs of Paul and his experiences in prison in Rome.

I had the privilege of visiting the dungeon where Paul was alleged to have been imprisoned in Rome, and I stood on the rock slab and saw the iron rings on the wall, fastened with a huge bar where Paul was chained to the wall in that dark dungeon. The missionary who was with me had a small flashlight, and he flashed the light on the rings through which Paul's hands were locked and handcuffed. As I stood there, the hot tears ran down my cheeks and dripped on the rock beneath my feet.

I felt as though I should remove my shoes from my feet, I because I felt that I was standing on

holy ground. To me, Paul was the greatest of the great. Aside from JESUS CHRIST, there has never been a greater man than the Apostle Paul!

Paul follows his instruction concerning Tychicus, with a twofold benediction. To the believers at Ephesus, he said, "**Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ .**" Then reaching out through the church age until the Bride is complete and all born again are caught up to meet the Lord JESUS in the clouds in the air, Paul says tenderly, "**Grace be with ALL them that love our Lord JESUS CHRIST in sincerity.**" That includes you and me.

This supernal, glorious, greatest of the great Epistles opens with "**Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**" It closes with "**Peace be to the brethren, grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.**" Yes, the Christian life begins in grace, we are kept in grace, and we will stand before GOD accepted in the Beloved . . . in Grace.

In closing, let me plead with every person who has read this book: Ask yourself the solemn question, "Am I saved by Grace?" That is the only way. This is the day of Grace - and if you step inside the Pearly Gates at the end of life' s journey, it will be because you received the Lord JESUS CHRIST by faith - and because you trust JESUS, GOD saves you for JESUS' sake.

Hear these clear, understandable words: "**For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of GOD, not of works, lest any man should boast**" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all**" until we meet - if not on this earth, then in the City of GOD. Amen.

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