

Why Pray for Preaching

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Should I tell the same one again?

Okay. Okay. There was this little baby that had come into this family, and Johnny was just not entirely ready to kind of adapt to this little baby.

And the thing that was really just irking him was that the baby, when the baby was dirty or the baby was hungry, the baby would just, you know, bellow all the time. And one day when the baby was just carrying on like whoever, you know, Johnny says to Mom, where did he come from?

Mom says, well, heaven, of course. And he says, well, I can understand why they kicked him out. Okay. There's a third joke.

[1 : 40] Pastors don't tell jokes. And that's not an accident. I have a couple kids that are supposed to come up on cue, and they're kind of stunned by the drum roll.

Doug, we should have practiced that a little bit more. Push it out. Right over here.

Go slowly. Don't tip it over. I'll be in trouble with the sound guys. Thank you. Truth of the matter is, I didn't know if I could pull it off.

But I did want you to remember it. I never want you to forget it.

It's not an accident that the pulpit is in the center of this room. And regardless of the man that stands at it, what you hear from it must be the same.

[3 : 21] And the day will come that I am no longer here. And you must guard the pulpit. I think there's a place for humor.

I enjoy a good laugh. And thankfully, progressive sanctification has kind of narrowed the circle of things that I laugh about and brought some of the things that I think are humorous into a more focused text or context.

But I have to tell you, when I come to the pulpit or when I see a man come to the pulpit, I understand that he is coming to that place to preach.

And truthfully, preaching is not an exercise in entertainment. Preaching is really nothing other than a call to worship.

I want you to have that fixed in your mind. Preaching is nothing other than a call to worship. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who I have to confess has become one of my favorite authors, was asked, he preached, he actually was a surgeon that went into ministry.

[4 : 56] He resigned to his ministry. He died.

from perhaps one of the finest of interest in interest in interest of interest in interest interest interest
Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And second is the place and work of the Holy Spirit in preaching. I want us to stop for a moment and ask God's help yet again.

[7 : 37] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. that the preaching of the Word of God would be marked by the evidence of the Spirit of God's presence and enabling, that Jesus Christ might reign supreme in the hearts of His children, and that those who do not know Christ would be drawn from the desperation of their sinful state to become worshipers of the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

We ask this in Your precious name. Amen. Well, context is important, so I want to begin by looking at this passage and recognizing the context of Paul's lesson that we are looking at, and we mark there in 19, that he is actually very, very close to the very end of a book.

And sometimes when we come towards the end of the book, the tendency we have is to kind of, okay, fast forward, get it done, move on, we've got it covered. And I have to tell you that being as

redundant as I am to always say this is the best text, it is, I will say, a very, very important text, and it's important for us to pay attention and not blow past it.

I want you to understand that what Paul does in this case is he pled with people that they would pray for his preaching. That's what this is all about.

He's bringing the letter to the Ephesian church to a close, and he says, and by the way, in addition to praying for all these other people, I want you to do this for me. I want you to pray for my preaching of the Word of God.

[10:00] Now stop and think with me just for a moment of where Paul was at that time. He was in prison. And we're not talking about club fed. We're talking about a miserable, despicable condition in which he was waiting for all practical purposes for execution because, for the most part, prisons were not used for incarceration on long-term basis.

They were simply used to kind of keep a person in a holding cell until the time of execution. And so here was Paul in prison, miserably treated, and yet he didn't say to people when he had an opportunity to write, would you please pray about me getting out of this mess that I'm in?

We also know that Paul's health was not very good. And yet when the opportunity came for asking for prayer, he didn't say anything about the condition he was in, nor did he ask people to pray about his physical condition.

What he said is this, there's the one thing I want, there's one thing I'm interested, there's one thing that I want you to keep before the Lord. It is this, that in those opportunities that God would give me, that I would preach the Word of God clearly, according to his direction and his will.

And so when you stop and look at this passage, you have to recognize that the apostle is making something rather clear here, that we have a tendency to overlook.

[11:41] Believers should pray incessantly for the preaching of the Word of God. And I want that anchored in your mind, regardless of who comes to this pulpit. One of the things that should be fixed in your heart as a believer is that the Holy Spirit calls you to an awesome task of doing something while the preacher is preaching, and it's praying.

It's praying. We're going to consider two reasons why that is so important. One would be that preaching is important.

As we take up verse 19, you would have to recognize that in 19, there is no real indication of the word preaching. And I have taken, to a certain degree, an amount of liberty in putting together what Paul is saying with other places where he says similar things, when he says there in verse 19, and also for me that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel we understand from other places, that what he's referencing is not just his having little anecdotal conversations with the guards, but he's talking about those moments where he has the opportunity of proclaiming the glory of Christ and the supremacy of God.

The word preach is one that today actually has fallen to a certain amount of disfavor. It's amazing how easily we take something that the Spirit of God sees as supremely important, and we kind of relegate it to something less than it should be.

And here is Paul referring to this work that God has appointed him to do of being a preacher of righteousness, and he asks that those who care for him and are interested in his effect in doing so, he says, I want you to pray for me.

[13:59] Now, I actually understand that this word preach is a word that in the ancient world referred to someone who was a herald. And a herald was someone who, prior to having a lot of written communication, and they certainly didn't have Facebook or whatever else to rely upon, when you wanted a message communicated accurately and carefully, you would hire someone to go into the center of the town, and he would blow a trumpet or he would beat a drum, and he would say, hear ye, hear ye, thus saith the king, right?

He was a herald. And as a general rule, heralds were hired because they had clear voices. But they were also hired with the expectation that they would communicate passionately, and they would communicate with energy and enthusiasm the message of the king.

I have always kind of Jim Carney. How many of you know who Jim Carney is? He was the press secretary for President Obama. And I have to tell you, I have, with mixed adoration, appreciated the fact that he is such an adept prevaricator.

Do you understand what I mean? He, everything he says, he can say with sincerity and with enthusiasm and with passion, like it is the gospel truth.

A herald had the responsibility of communicating both authoritatively and passionately. And so I want you to understand that preaching is important because it is the passionate heralding of the king's message.

[15 : 53] And if you would turn to a passage where I want to kind of flesh this out a little bit further, I want you to take the time to turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 17 through 23.

Let me explain to you as you are going there that actually a fair part of 1 Corinthians is taken up with this business of Paul explaining his ministry to a people that were not overly persuaded.

Paul, for one thing, was not a Joel Osteen handsome or slick.

Do you follow that? I seriously thought about coming out here and saying, Hi, how y'all are you doing today? And I thought, I can't pull it off. You know, I was like, okay, don't do that.

But Paul was kind of a dumpy little guy. He had bad eyesight, probably squinted. And while he was a profoundly educated man, and he could have wowed the crowd with his brilliance and his logic, he relied upon simplicity and clarity in announcing the truth of God with the power of the Spirit.

[17 : 11] And we're looking here at 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 17, where he explains his ministry. He says, For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to what?

Preach the gospel. And not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it's the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe?

Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we, what's the next word?

Preach to save those who believe. And so as Paul, over in Ephesians chapter 6, says, Hey, listen, I want you to pray for me, that the words may be given to me.

[18 : 24] He is referencing the issue of preaching, and he's saying, I want you to have a part in what I do in proclaiming with authority and with passion the express word of God.

There are several different passages that my heart is drawn to this morning, and over the years of ministry have been framed clearly in my mind in relationship to the sober responsibility of coming to stand here in front of God's people and proclaim the word of God.

One is Malachi chapter 2, verse 7. Now I want you to turn back to that passage, if you would, please. Malachi chapter 2, verse 7. For the lips of the priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

The priest's lips should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

The second passage that comes to mind is over in 2 Timothy. And I want you to look, if you will, at what we find at the very conclusion of 2 Timothy, and let me give you a broad meta-picture of this.

[19 : 58] You'll remember that 1 Timothy is written predominantly to Timothy regarding what needs to take place in the church. 2 Timothy is written with a focus on what needs to take place in the pastor.

And in that context, towards the very end of the book, we come to this absolutely sober charge that is given. And it is given in a series of imperatives.

The word imperative means commands. It's given in a series of this you must do. Listen to the windup. I charge you in the presence of God in Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word.

In one sense, this passage makes it clear that the one audience that counts is not sitting here in front of me, but is unseen, and is the one who will someday call me to task for the fidelity of my preaching of the authoritative word of God, and doing so under the enabling and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do you understand that? Preach the word. So when a man comes to the pulpit, he really comes to speak as a herald or as an announcer of the king of kings, and he comes to passionately announce truths that are matters of life and death.

[21 : 37] So let me kind of summarize this for you a little bit by pointing out that the king's message, for one, is convicting. In Romans 3.23, a passage that many of you are familiar with, I want to remind you that Paul says this.

He says, All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Let me help you understand that in one sense, part of preaching is calling people to repentance.

And you can't call people to repentance so long as you're soft-pedaling the reality of the condition of their soul and the bankruptcy of their state and their desperate need for coming to grips with the heart that they have.

Do you follow that? I'm reminded of something that took place not too long ago. I had an individual come to me. He was in a spiritual kind of a fog and very, very kind of discouraged and brokenhearted.

And as we were kind of talking through things, he explained to me that he was deeply convicted because he was living with this woman. And practical question, you know, forget the fact that I'm a Baptist pastor.

[22 : 55] You know, I said, So why are you living with her? You know, without thinking, I thought, you know, the reasonable thing to do if you feel bad about living with her is what? Huh?

Move out, that would be one practical thing. But what would be another one? Well, marry her. And so I said, Well, why haven't you gotten married? He says, Well, my first two marriages ended in divorce.

Duh. And I figured that if I don't get married, I won't get divorced. Now, that is practical math. Do you understand that? I connect the dots.

It's like, duh. I shouldn't have asked. That was just absolutely brilliant logic. I remember subsequently as this man and his partner started coming sporadically to church, he made an insightful statement.

He says, I got to tell you, we started coming to church, but every time we left, we felt worse than when we came. I thought, really?

[24 : 01] I'm not trying. But when a person with the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ pleads with people to come to grips with the sin of their soul because heaven and hell is at risk, you can understand.

If he continued living in sin and didn't walk home feeling bad about it, then I failed. Do you understand that? So one is the king's message is convicting.

Number two, the king's message is converting. One of the things I love to say to people, not just in church.

You guys have heard me say this so many times here, but particularly when I am in my non-Baptist regalia. Do you know what regalia means? It's the robe I wear, you know.

It's the thing that when you look at me, you can say, he's a pastor. And when I am in shorts and a t-shirt and visiting at the nursing home with my dad and my mom, it's taken months for them to figure out that I am who I am.

[25 : 14] And in the meantime, I have been able to creep up on them and let them know the absolutely wonderful news that Jesus saves sinners, and I'm one of the examples.

Acts 16, verse 31, the apostle Paul said to the Philippian jailer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be what?

Saved. Does it get any better than that? And I got to tell you something. The truth of the matter is, is that apart from preaching, whether it is a mother sharing the gospel in simplicity at home, or Jonah stomping through a rebellious city, God has always used preaching to call broken-hearted people to repentance and to redemption.

The king's message is conforming. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, Paul says this, and I want you to look at it and let your heart just grasp and soak and enjoy the sweet truth that not only does preaching convict and not only does preaching convert, but preaching also is part of the work of God in helping the Lord Jesus' children conform.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed from the same image, from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

[27 : 15] Listen to me carefully. Preaching that is received with prayer and is empowered with prayer and that is governed by the authority of the Word of God does a work in the life of the believer.

And it brings about progressive sanctification. One of the blessings that I know to be true in my life is that because of His salvation, I am not obligated, nor can I stay the way I used to be.

The Spirit of God is at work and the way in which He works is principally through the preaching of the Word of God and the exposure of the heart of man to the authority and the supremacy of the glory of Christ.

Now, understanding the importance of preaching, we come to a truth that makes preaching difficult. God has chosen to use the voice of a man to touch the heart of men. Because God uses the voice of a man to touch the heart of men, He has ordained prayer for the preacher.

[28 : 41] And so, I want us to come secondly. First is, preaching is important. Secondly, your prayers are important to preaching. And I want you to understand as we look at this passage and break it down into practical statements, first of all, you understand here that it's the Holy Spirit that calls you to pray for preaching.

Don't miss the truth. The preacher may forget to remind you. The preacher may not necessarily be persuaded of the importance of praying in relationship to preaching.

I graduated from seminary before I came to understand fully how significant and important praying was to preaching.

I can tell you where I was sitting when I was first convicted of the importance of Tim Knoyer sitting way back there almost where Mark Holopeter is.

And Judith and I were sitting there back in 1980 when after Pastor Brock announced his resignation and that he would be leaving in two weeks or whatever it was, he then took time to preach on how people could help their next pastor whoever he would be.

[30 : 02] after a five-year hiatus. I remember Pastor Brock making it undeniably clear from the authority of Scripture that God's people had a responsibility to pray for the man who would preach the word of God.

I'm not sure what you will ultimately remember about me. but one of the things that I hope you have heard me say enough that it's somewhere high on the list is pray for me.

I have to confess that there are occasions where people who love me a great, great deal will let me know that I am overly redundant. Same, same.

Same, same. Do you follow that? But if there is anything that I have small hesitation about being redundant about it is about the importance of asking for prayer in the preaching of the word of God. I remember at one point where I was asked if I would consider being the president of a Bible college and as I deliberated and prayed about that the one thing that I wrestled with the most is if I do this who will pray for me?

[31 : 21] Do you follow that? Who would pray? And I couldn't come up with a clear answer. So we recognize that the Holy Spirit says hey pray for the man who's preaching.

Secondly just mark how often Paul asked people to pray about this thing. Let's do a little journey and I'm not going to touch on all of them but Colossians chapter 4 verse 3 just tag this.

And by the way I don't want to argue that in every case the amount of repetition is an automatic guarantee that it's oh so significant but it does teach us something. Chapter 4 verse 3 of Colossians at the same time pray also for us that God may open to us a door for the word to declare the mystery of Christ on account of which I'm in prison.

He says hey pray. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 25 and by the way the church at Thessalonica was a solid good group of believers and he says hey brothers pray for us.

2 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 1 and 2 perhaps the one that I have recited most often would be this brothers pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as happened among you.

[32 : 41] In other words pray that the word of God would bring life transforming change into the lives of those who hear it. And then verse 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men for not all have faith.

And I got to tell you some of the times where I have faced wicked evil men have been some who have sat in our congregation with a heart that is perverse and against God and have actively resisted the teaching and the preaching of the word of God and have let me know it.

Third your prayers respect the plan of God and the frailty of the instrument He has chosen.

Over in 1 Corinthians and also in 2 Corinthians Paul wrote about the fact that God had ordained to bring salvation through the perceived foolishness of preaching.

And can I tell you that if preaching was perceived as foolish back in the first century it is even perceived to be more foolish today.

[33 : 58] But when God wanted to touch the city of Nineveh He didn't send a band and He didn't send a drama team. He sent one crotchety low life to do one thing repent.

repent. Repent. Repent. And there's a reason why when you work your way through church history and mark this carefully if you sit here with a little bit of hesitation in your soul towards the truth there is no illustration there is no single illustration in all of recorded church history of over 2,000 years ago where anything but the authoritative preaching of the word of God ultimately bought transformation to the hearts of people and to nations and cultures families homes everything. But there is a problem with preaching because it has the treasure in an earthen vessel. I thought seriously about having a broken clay pot up here but I thought you'd had enough illustrations with the pulpit over to the side and that's probably unnerving for some of you and I thought the clay pot would just be over the top and so just forget it.

You see the clay pot. And here's what it says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 7 it says for we have this glory this treasure in an earthen vessel that the glory may be of God and not of us.

Now listen to me I don't go out of my way to look stupid or do things that are ill suited but you who know me know the clay earthy pot and one of the things that I pray I pray I pray would be that the thing that would stand out is the authority and the sufficiency and the supremacy of the word of God.

[36 : 13] Earthiness is not an excuse for persistent sin but it is a reflection of the temporal fragile nature of the messenger and the weakness of the vessel.

Fourth your prayers respect your own need. Why should you pray? Holy Spirit tells you to. Why should you pray?

Because Paul asks all the time. Why should you pray? Because the man who preaches the word of God is pretty frail. Why should you pray? Because you desperately need help. I can't tell you how often I have sat listening to another man preach and found that I had failed in that very fundamental exercise of asking the Spirit of God to do something with this crass surly judgmental dissatisfied moody spirit.

I can't tell you how many times that humility and prayer has brought fire down from heaven. Am I responsible to preach the word of God?

Yes I am. Should I preach it with the enabling of the Spirit of God? Yes I should. But not all the problems with the sermons that you have heard have had to do with me.

[37 : 53] Some of them have been you. And so it is appropriate for you as you come to listen to the preaching of the word of God to have the humility and brokenness that we find in Psalm 119 where the psalmist he says this he says bear with me King James here we go open thou mine eyes that I might behold wondrous truths out thy law.

there was a time in my life where my devotion for the most part were fairly methodic and kind of marked by grudging obedience.

Does anybody kind of feel my pain? You ever been there? Now it wasn't like I you know kept a check mark so I could say to people I had devotions for 17 minutes and I read nine verses and I prayed for four different people in the church and a changeover began to take place when Tim Kenoyer began praying almost every single time I sit down in my living room or actually family room to begin my time with God my prayer is Holy Spirit by the way I don't mind praying to the Holy Spirit I don't know if that bothers you but he is one of the triune God Holy Spirit would you help me this morning I gotta confess I would have liked to have slept a little longer but you know what I wanna have a heart that's tuned towards you and I need your help I gotta tell you he delights to answer that prayer he delights to answer that prayer and so

I have to say if you're gonna show up and sit here it's intelligent to pray for me right now by the way one of the things that we as Baptists don't do is we don't say amen out loud and I'm not bothered by that but you ought to be saying amen in your heart do you know what amen means does anybody know what amen means it means this is true it's like right on you know if you're from the 70s like I am preach it brother I gotta tell you some of the most fun I've ever had preaching was to a group of African Americans that were a little more enthusiastic than most of you I gotta tell you I probably played to the audience a little bit but I loved it now I love you too so it's alright you be who you are okay but here's the deal we need to hear from

God and we will not hear clearly if our hearts are sullied by the things of this world and if you sit there and struggle week after week with hearing much of anything it may be that part of the problem is your lack of prayer I love the quote that John Piper recites in his book on the sufficiency of God in

preaching and I'll tell you a little story on that book number of years ago I was in the midst of reading it any of you know me I hate to be late to an appointment and so I had I do I will sit near a driveway if I happen to be a little early so I don't show up too early and sometimes [41 : 51] I will drive around the block three or four times and park somewhere where I hope people won't! call the police at the Mansfield exit on 71 I was reading that book on preaching I sat there in McDonald's weeping not for sorrow but because of the significance of what a preacher does here's what John Piper recorded he said I wake up in the morning of the Lord's day and I can smell the sweet breezes of heaven and I can also catch the whiff of the sulfuric heat of hell and

I realize that with soberness I go to plead with men who are dying so you can understand why I cried right here's what he recited from Cotton Mather in some!

the office of a Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God to the souls of men a preacher announces our God reigns so here's the question how often do you plead with heaven that the man who stands before you appointed with the task of holding up the word of God who you know to be an earthen vessel would be enabled by the spirit of God that through his power and for the glory of Christ the word would have free course to bear fruit in your life how often as we have the invitation do you find yourself praying oh

Lord work in the lives of those that are here that do not know Christ that they would be terrified at the prospect of an eternal judgment that they would be overwhelmed with the sweetness of the offer of salvation through the finished work of Christ that they would be drawn by the spirit of God to plead with him to save them that Christ who enjoys the adoration of angels would be adored and worshipped in your life this morning let us pray father god i have no doubt that there are those who are here today that need the lord jesus christ and my plea would be this that while our conversation and our preaching has been predominantly to those who know the lord jesus christ and it has been the authoritative declaration that god wants people to pray for preaching that nevertheless your spirit would work to draw those people who are here that need christ as their savior to the cross and they would call upon the name of the lord and say i am a sinner who stands justly condemned and i need jesus to be my savior today now i pray also for those who are part of the family of god believers who have enjoyed the effect of the preaching of the word of god in their life but have allowed a loss of love and coldness of heart to distance themselves from the beauty of the lord jesus christ that this morning they would humble themselves yes be broken and restored and renewed and we ask this because of the lord jesus amen going to ask that as we sing this song in closing