



## Privileges of Preaching the Gospel

Notice, first and foremost, what a Master you serve! It is a privilege to preach such a wonderful Master. This was not always the case. You were in the world serving sin, self and Satan. You were not different from others. You may have been more moral or outwardly upright but in essence you were not different. You may have enjoyed Gospel privileges and ordinances but you can testify to the fact that you were a Christ rejecter! But by the grace of God you were transformed and taken out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light. A day came in your experience when the Lord Jesus Christ became a reality to you and your life was changed. As the Psalmist says, *'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill'* (Ps. 113:7). You can say with joy and gratefulness you now serve another Master. Your days of unbelief should make you sympathetic towards those who are still in their sins, without God and without hope in the world.

As you make your way in the Gospel ministry it is good to remember your ordination vows. Many here will have an FCC background and will have taken the same ordination vows that I took, whilst others not from our background will have taken similar vows. Our ordination vow No. 7 says: *'Are not zeal for the honour of God, love to Jesus Christ, and desire of saving souls, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the function of the holy ministry, and not worldly designs and interests?'*

It is good to remember you were once an unbeliever and to remember you entered into the holy ministry to see men saved. This really is the whole ethos and purpose of the School in Theology, is it not? Is it not to make you better fishers of men? To be soul winners after the pattern of Christ? You do want to know your Bibles and your theology better, but only in order that you might be more useful in soul winning.

### 1. An Adorable Person

When considering the privileges of preaching the gospel remember Christ's adorable Person. He has come from heaven. He is the eternal Son of God. He is the Creator of the sun, the moon and the stars. He is the one who has put all things in place. This is the Son of God who became the Son of Man and came to earth taking upon Himself human nature. Since He is the One who came from heaven can He not speak infallibly about heaven? *'To whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life'*, says Peter. Peter at this time in his experience was ignorant of many things but he knew that Christ and Christ alone has the words of eternal life. This is what we must dogmatically assert in our preaching.

You preach and serve the Lord Jesus Christ who is perfect God and perfect man. As Paul says, *'For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily'* (Col. 2:9). Can you understand this person who came to this sin-sick world and humbled Himself and suffered and died for unworthy sinners? Can you explain why He should do this? You cannot, but it should cause us to worship Him and serve Him and prostrate ourselves before Him and pray that others might come unto Him also. Oh! That many would say like Thomas: *'My Lord and my God'*. What do all His miracles teach us? Surely they clearly demonstrate His deity. This is the One who can read your thoughts. What a humbling experience for you and your hearers to grasp that Christ reads thoughts!

He raised the dead — none could do this but God in the flesh. No wonder His disciples exclaimed on one occasion, *'What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey'*

him'. You are to be taken up with this person so that you love Him. This will come across to your congregation.

You have a warning that Christ will not share His glory with you: *'I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images'* (Is. 42:8). You must be careful when preaching the gospel that you do not seek glory for yourself but for Christ and Christ alone.

Sin is serious. The Son of God had to come down from heaven to rescue us. We could not do this ourselves. Mankind had plenty of opportunities from the Fall to the coming of Christ to rectify the problem between God and man but to no avail. History describes to us the pitiful plight of the Jewish and Gentile world at the time of Christ. He came and dealt with this so-serious problem. This must be impressed upon your congregations today; the seriousness of their sin.

Our Saviour is gracious. As you look at the life of Christ as depicted in the Gospels, you see the graciousness of the Master. See how He treated His disciples who were slow to learn. Was it not line upon line and precept upon precept with the Lord? Did He not explain and re-explain things to his disciples? He dealt lovingly and graciously with all. What were the disciples doing just before Christ was crucified? They were debating who would be the greatest! How did Jesus deal with them? Did He rebuke them or scold them? No, he dealt with them graciously. How did Jesus deal with His mother when suffering on the cross? He said to John, *'Behold thy mother'*. How did he treat the little children when their parents brought them forward to be blessed and the disciples sought to remove them? *'Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'*. Brethren, in your preaching set forth a gracious Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, He is almighty and powerful but is He not gracious? Is He not the friend of sinners and have you not known that in your own experience? Have you not failed Him on many occasions and has He not remained gracious? Let your hearers know for certain that Christ is gracious! *'Father forgive them for they know not what they do'*. The thief on the cross prayed, *'Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom'*. Others were railing against Christ and He ignored them but He heard the voice of the penitent and what a message the thief received in return, *'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise'*, something away beyond his expectations. He asked to be remembered and was granted a place in paradise. You can preach to those who have lived all their life in sin or who are on the brink of eternity and tell them to turn to Christ who will deal with them graciously. Is this not a privilege above all privileges?

He is resolute and determined. As you preach Christ in all His fulness make sure to bring to your congregation's attention that Christ was determined to do the will of God at all times. Though tempted He would not be distracted. We bless God that He did not and could not fall. On another occasion when He had fed thousands they wanted to make Him a king. The crowds were pleased to have their bellies filled and said to themselves, *'Here is the man who will save us from the Romans and be our king and make us into a powerful nation again. Come let us make Him king'*. But He would have nothing to do with their plan and dismissed the crowd. Why? Because it was not the will of God. He had to suffer and die. There was a cross before the crown. Does this not inform you of Christ's willingness to save all that will come to Him? Even His disciples sought to deter Him. Peter, after his wonderful confession, tried to keep Him from suffering and dying but was unsuccessful. You can tell all your hearers that Christ is willing to save them if they will but come to Him. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross. Does this not reinforce to you that it is a privilege to preach the gospel, to tell of this One who was so willing to die and who is so determined to save sinners? If your hearers perish it is because they will not come to Christ and not because Christ will not receive them!

## **2. A Glorious Calling**

You have received a glorious calling. As a gospel minister you have received the highest calling known to man. In and of yourself you are nothing, but to be a gospel preacher is everything. You stand between God and men and proclaim the only message of salvation. You are a herald of God and you have been set apart by the King and Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. You must preach the gospel. You have an inward call. It is hard to define but if we don't have this inward calling, or strong desire, or compulsion to preach, then we should not be in the gospel ministry. No seminary or presbytery can give this to you, only Christ. We do not despise other callings but we recognise the uniqueness and sacredness of the holy ministry. We are quick to acknowledge that we need bakers, builders, doctors, etc. You all need and value the doctor. You consult him and he prescribes some treatment for your ailment. You are happy when you recover. But you will consult him again and usually things get more serious as you get older. The medical profession do the best they can but it is a patch-up job. Eventually death overcomes. In short, all they do is of temporary benefit. Whatever medical care you get you will enter eternity and it will be heaven or hell. In contrast, the gospel minister is about eternal realities. Remind yourselves that in a very real sense your ministry will have an effect on the eternal well-being of your hearers. All your hearers shall stand before Christ's great white throne. In your gospel ministries you are trying to prepare your hearers for that day.

You have received a holy calling; therefore you are to be a holy man. When Jesus chose His Apostles from His disciples it was so that they would be with Him. The gospel minister must not only be united to Christ by faith but must in a very real sense spend time with Christ. It must be union and communion with Christ for the gospel preacher. You must be a spiritually-minded man. *'For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace'* (Rom. 8:6). Let all of you know what it is to have much secret time with Christ when you pour out your heart before Him in prayer seeking His blessing upon your labours. *'Who is sufficient for such things?'* You are not only responsible for your own souls but for the souls of others who have signed a call and asked you to leave whatever you were doing and minister unto them.

### **3. A Glorious Message**

You are entrusted with a glorious message. You are dealing with the most important subject which affects all mankind. I like to listen to the news and see what is going on in the world. But more and more the news bulletins have a sense of vanity about them. They will tell you about major, important world and national events one minute and then, the very next, they will focus on how the tennis star Andy Murray is faring! In the North there is a news programme where they have a break when the news stops and the viewer is informed about the latest Hollywood movie. Fact and fiction are presented side by side as if both were of equal importance. You have something much better and weightier — eternal truth which all need to hear. Therefore having this glorious calling and glorious message you are to devote yourself to its proclamation. You must study it to proclaim it. It must captivate you and dominate you. It will demand the bulk of your time and attention to prepare for the preaching of God's Word. You are to make sure that you do not get distracted. Paul said to Timothy, *'Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier'* (2 Tim. 2:3, 4).

Do not get involved in politics. One church recently made representations to the Scottish Government seeking to speed up making the A9 a dual carriageway to Inverness. Press releases contained emotive sentiments with which few of us would disagree, but is this the business of the gospel preacher? To our mind it is not, for we have politicians and councillors to deal with these matters. The early church had a problem when the Grecian widows were being overlooked in the distribution of food. The Apostles met and decided they would not get involved but instead they would delegate this matter to others. They would devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. The gospel preacher must prioritise his life so that he devotes the best of his time, energy and talents to the proclamation of God's Word.

This message will prevail and overcome for it is the power of God unto salvation. Despite what we see to the contrary the Lord Jesus Christ shall be victorious. Every knee shall bow before

Him and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever. Therefore, fellow-ministers, recognise your privileges and devote yourselves afresh to your calling.

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