

**Ephesians 6: 19; “That Utterance May be Given”, Sermon # 14 in
the series – “To Be Strong in the Lord”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on December 30th, 2012,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The last time that I preached to you from this passage we were speaking of the importance of prayer in the life of the Christian. We saw that the good soldier of Christ Jesus must not only pray when he is doing battle with the evil one, but he must come to see prayer as the essential activity in his heart and mind for success in living all the Christian life. The Christian soldier may have on all the armor, and have his shield in one hand and the sword in the other, and yet not be effective because he lacks the wisdom, the skill, and the power that come from God alone. A church may have a preacher, or many preachers, and many persons who are gifted for ministry and yet no progress seems to be made; it does not appear that people are being reached with the gospel and it is a struggle to maintain a ministry in the community – a corporate witness for Christ. Why is this? Could it be that prayer is not regularly, fervently, and expectantly being offered up regarding these things? Let me assert to you this afternoon that it is not the preacher who builds the church, although he may be contributing greatly to its growth in maturity. It is the Lord who builds the church. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 16: 18 – “I will build My church, and the gates of Hell (all those forces of darkness) shall not prevail against it.” But we must ask ourselves a realistic question at the start of our study this afternoon. Where is your heart? Where is your mind? Is it engaged in holy communication with the Almighty in prayer? Or are you carnal, and only seeing things from a human perspective. The text that we are looking at this afternoon is clear. The Apostle Paul insists that regular prayer must be offered up for God’s preaching servants so that by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, they may boldly make known the mystery of the gospel. This afternoon we must see why it is necessary. It is necessary for these 3 reasons. 1st – Because utterance doesn’t come to preachers automatically. 2nd – Because true holy boldness is the work of God’s Spirit. And 3rd – Because the gospel has mysteries attached to it.

1st of all – Prayer for God’s preaching servants is necessary because utterance doesn’t come to preachers automatically.

Paul says, “Pray for me that utterance may be given to me.” Sometimes I do not believe that we sufficiently consider the truth of these words. We think of preachers as gifted men, and because they have a gift, or great gifts, that things will happen spiritually; that Christ’s kingdom will automatically be furthered through them and because of this, we do not pray for them as we ought. The that the Apostle Paul ask the believers at Ephesus to pray for this shows that it was something he needed the Lord to give him or bestow upon him. The words in the Greek are – “*ινα μοι δοτηε λογος*” – that utterance may be given to me. These

words mean that permission and power would be given to Paul to speak in such a way that he would have freedom and liberty to speak in the right way, when called upon to preach and present the gospel, when he was given opportunities which God had providentially ordered. This word “utterance” is only used five times in the New Testament. The first usage of the word in Acts 2: 4 says that the disciples and Apostles on the Day of Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The word utterance there is “*αποπητηεγγομαι*”, to enunciate plainly, to declare, to say, or to speak forth. The other four usages of the word are the word “*λογος*” (without the article, as in John 1: 1), meaning something said including the thoughts, the topic of discourse, the reasoning ability, and speaking from the right motives. In 1 Corinthians 1: 5, Paul says that they were “enriched in everything by Christ in all utterance and knowledge.”

In Colossians 4: 3, which I believe to be a parallel passage to our text, it says, “praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word (a door of utterance) to speak the mystery of Christ.” The Apostle longed for these divinely ordered appointments to speak; to present the case for faith in Christ, so that people hear the gospel preached in the power of the Holy Spirit and be saved. And yet, he is praying not only that he would have the right words and subjects, but also that the Lord would help him with his ability to speak. In 2nd Corinthians 10: 8-10, we find some verses that we should look at in this regard. “For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed—lest I seem to terrify you by letters.” “For his letters, they say, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” The Corinthians evidently thought that Paul’s letters were weighty and powerful. When they read them, they were made to feel the force of truth and God’s power working through those written words. They respected the Apostle’s authority when they read his letters, but when they met Paul and actually heard him speak, they evidently did not find him impressive. “His bodily presence is weak, and his speech is contemptible.” This was all the more reason for Paul to ask the believers at Ephesus to pray for him, that utterance would be given to him. Paul knew that utterance was not the same thing as great oratory.

In 2nd Corinthians 11: 5 he goes on to say, ‘For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent Apostles. Even though I am untrained in speech, yet I am not in knowledge.’ “But we have been thoroughly manifested among you in all things.” In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 1, Paul says this: “And I brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony (or mystery) of God.” In other words, utterance was very much needed by Paul. It did not come automatically. He greatly needed the Lord’s help in this way. He was to face many dangerous and difficult situations for the sake of the gospel. And he would face many unbelieving men and in those times he would

greatly desire God to give him utterance. In applying this, I need to state that it is not enough that the man who preaches has a speaking gift, or is a naturally gifted speaker, or even a trained orator. It is highly desirable for the advance of truth in the hearts and minds of the people who are being preached to, that actual wisdom and grace from God come to the preacher's mind so that his words would convince the hearers of the truth of the word. In Acts Chapter 14, verse 1, it says this concerning the preaching ministry of Paul and Barnabas. "Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed." The ESV says, "...they spoke in such a way that a great number believed." That was God giving them utterance.

Now 2ndly – Regular prayer for God's preaching servants is necessary because holy boldness in preaching is the work of God's Spirit.

Paul asks prayer, "...That he may open his mouth boldly." A minister or preacher who has been called to the gospel ministry ought to speak boldly. He ought to speak boldly because there is, after all, much opposition to the gospel and God's truth in the hearts of men. Turn with me over to Philippians 3: 1-7. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." "For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe." "Beware of dogs, beware of the mutilation!" "For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I might have confidence in the flesh." "If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ." There is a boldness which is exemplified in Paul before his conversion that was based upon his own passion for legal righteousness, a confidence in the flesh, a zeal for the law and ceremonial circumcision that led him to boldly oppose Jesus Christ. There is, in the hearts of some people, a boldness and confidence based upon the strength of their own fleshly observations; sometimes their own self-righteous observations. And this leads them to speak boldly against the preaching of the called servants of Christ. They are bold to attempt to state what they believe the truth is, even if the express words of Scripture are plainly saying otherwise. Sometimes, even Christians fall prey to this kind of self-assertiveness. But let's look at Paul once again. Turn with me to Acts Chapter 9, verse 1. "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." "As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven." "Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' "And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' "Then the

Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." "So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" "Then the Lord said to him, 'Arise and go to the city, and you will be told what you must do.'"

Now look down at verses 26-29. "And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple." "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles." "And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus." "So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out." "And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him." You can see here, that the Apostle Paul was bold both before and after he was converted. The origination of Saul's boldness was his own thoughts about what God was like and what true religion consisted of. He thought that if a person were a Jew and had a confidence in his knowledge of the law; if he had a confidence in his own righteousness and strength in regard to keeping the commandments of God, that that person knew God. But it was not so, and that is why he was so zealous to dispute and argue and persecute Christians. He thought that Christ's grace was not needed to know God or to serve God acceptably. He did not believe that conversion to Christ was necessary to know God, but it is.

You see how it was, that after Christ revealed Himself to Saul that the origination of his boldness changed as well as his name. the origin of his boldness was that He had received grace. The Light of Christ had shown into his dark heart, and even physically blinded Saul for 3 days as a sign to show him that spiritually he could not see anything correctly unless Christ gave him spiritual sight. When Ananias came and told Saul that he should arise and be baptized, washing away his sins, as he called upon the name of the Lord, these scales on his eyes fell off, and immediately he was bold to preach. His boldness came because he had received grace from Jesus Christ and a commission from Him as well. But most of all, it came from his having a changed and regenerate heart. When a man receives grace from Jesus Christ to preach, his boldness comes from knowing the truth that Jesus Christ is the salvation of the world, risen from the dead, and the righteousness of God. He thinks to himself, "Jesus has changed my sinful heart, and He can save and change yours." Suddenly the fear of man is gone. It is seen to be a snare. The one trusting in the Lord knows that it is the Lord who keeps him safe. Or, if the Lord brings him into danger in regard to preaching the word, he can accept that. Proverbs 28: 1 says, "The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

And yet, even though this is true, the great Apostle Paul still felt the need to request prayer that he might "open his mouth boldly to make known the gospel". We must remember that the letter of Ephesians was written from prison and his

letter to the Philippians was from there as well. In Philippians 1: 19 Paul says this: “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus., according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or death.” “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” He had boldness even while in chains in a prison. He was not ashamed of the gospel because of the prayers of God’s people for him. In relation to these prayers, the supply of the Spirit was sufficient. I would urge you to pray regularly for the boldness of Christ’s preaching servants.

3rd – Regular prayer for God’s preaching servants is to be offered because the gospel has mystery attached to it.

Paul says, “That I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel...” The word “mystery” is a word which stumbles some people. A mystery is a truth which cannot be discovered without revelation from God being given to understand it. God revealed many things about the Christ, the promised Messiah and Deliverer of His people, in the Old Testament Scriptures. The many prophecies of His Incarnation and His glorious spiritual kingdom; what it would be like, and what He would do by His grace and word of truth, are mentioned there. But it was hard for many to understand how the salvation of men would come through the suffering of the Lord of glory. Many were looking for a political and military leader to be their Messiah. He would deliver them from Roman tyranny, they thought. He would establish an earthly kingdom, they thought. The mystery of the gospel, however, is that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead; a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to Greeks. This is why Paul needed other Christians to pray for him; so that he would have boldness to preach and utterance to convince the hearers that it is by believing in a crucified Savior that people come to know God. The mystery of the gospel is the mystery of Christ Himself; Christ’s having to suffer in order to save men, and rise from the dead and ascend to heaven so that they might be given the gift of the Holy Spirit; He who would come into their heart and help to transform them into the likeness of Christ. It is the mystery of the gospel, how Christ’s sufferings can save everyone who will believe in Him who is the Hope of glory. In Colossians 1: 25-29 Paul says, “I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.” “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.” “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” “To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” Therefore, brethren, remember to pray for the preaching servants of the Lord, so that they might be given utterance, and so

that they might speak the word with boldness, and open up the mysteries of Christ's powerful word.