

“Prayer and the Gospel”  
Ephesians 6:19-20  
(Preached at Trinity, May 1, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We've spent much time with our hearts and minds fixed upon Paul's instruction on the spiritual warfare of the Christian.  
Paul admonishes us:  
**Ephesians 6:11 NAU** - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."
2. He describes our armor and our powerful weapon, a mighty two-edged sword which is the Word of God. Finally, he stresses the importance of prayer on the battleground. Our armor is of little value without the power of God. We must continually go before the throne of God, the source of our power.  
**Ephesians 6:18 NAU** - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints"
3. After admonishing us to all prayer for all the saints Paul brings it home to the reality of the war in his own life and ministry.
  - a. It's one thing to talk about a war in another country. War "over there" is quite different from war in our own backyard. It seems distant from our own experience. We hear of thousands fleeing from their homes in Syria but we wake up and go about our day unaffected.
  - b. But what if the war was here? What if the fighting was in our very streets? What if the night skies were ablaze with flashes light and the sound of exploding bombs?
4. It's one thing to talk about spiritual warfare in the abstract, like reading about Sauron leading his fiendish Orcs against Middle Earth. It's another to know the reality of the war raging daily in our own lives.  
This was the reality of Paul's life. He fought this battle every day of his Christian life. So after instructing the church to pray in **Verse 18**—all prayer at all times for all the saints, he then pleads in **Verse 19**,  
"and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel"
5. Paul understood well how this terrible spiritual warfare often has its focus upon the Gospel. Satan has his fiery arrows directed at our hearts. His arsenal of arrows comes in many different shapes and forms.  
This morning I want us to focus on the flaming arrows of Satan's attack upon the Gospel. He is unrelenting as he seeks to hinder the advance of the Gospel. Satan hinders both the messenger and the message.
6. The Gospel is powerful, unstoppable. But this in no way diminishes the reality of the warfare.

- I. Satan hinders the messenger  
(What are some of the ways he does this?)
- A. Satan hinders the messenger by blinding us to the duty of the work
1. He convinces us that others are more equipped for the work of evangelism than we are. This is an effective arrow.
    - a. He'll convince you that you are poorly equipped – others seem more gifted
    - b. He'll whisper that this is pastoral work—they are the professionals
  2. He'll supply us with endless reasons to excuse us from evangelism. Satan has an endless bag of excuses to keep us from our duty of service and obedience. He knows just the one you need.
    - a. This is effective to keep us from service. It also works well with tithing, attendance, Bible study, and on and on.
    - b. He'll supply you with convincing reasons why you are excused from evangelism.
  3. Satan hinders the messenger by filling our lives with distractions
    - a. This is true of every area of our Christian life
    - b. He'll distract us with the many cares and enticements of this world. Satan deceives us into believing we are just too busy for evangelism. This arrow keeps many from the work.
    - c. We have our jobs and family duties. We have homes to maintain. And of course, countless activities and worldly pleasures.
- B. Satan hinders the messenger by interfering with his movement
1. This is mysterious—we don't know all the ways at his disposal but most often Satan works through other men
  2. Paul recognized Satan's hand in hindering his progress  
**1 Thessalonians 2:18 NAU** - "For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan hindered us."  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; <sup>2</sup> and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."
  3. There are governments today who will not allow missionaries in their countries. Islamic countries do not permit proselytizing. This is the work of Satan.
  4. Sometimes the Gospel labors of churches are restricted by a few members who resist the work or seek to refocus the attention of the congregation. This too is the work of Satan
- C. Satan hinders the messenger by sowing seeds of fear
1. Paul pleads that they would pray that God would give him boldness in the Gospel.  
**Ephesians 6:19 NAU** - "to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,"  
**Ephesians 6:19 NIV** - "so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,"  
**Ephesians 6:20 NAU** - "that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

- a. This wasn't a selfish prayer for any self-serving end. Paul's great interest was always directed towards the Gospel.
  - b. He knew the fear that could so easily rise in his heart  
**1 Corinthians 2:3 NAU** - "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling"
  - c. Paul faced unbelievable dangers and hardships. He pleads, "Pray for me my brother and sisters."
2. One of Satan's most effective arrows to keep us from evangelism is fear. Why are we not more valiant in evangelism and bold in the Gospel? It is because we are smitten with fear.
    - a. We are afraid of rejection
    - b. In some seasons we are afraid of suffering.

## II. Satan hinders the message

- A. He greatly affects the minds of the lost
  1. Paul says he blinds their minds  
**2 Corinthians 4:2-4 NAU** - "but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
  2. The word for "world" is αἰών which refers to a space of time. It refers to this present age. In other words this is the age of Satan's work. In this age while God's mercy is being offered to the lost Satan is at work blinding their eyes
  3. We need to pray diligently that the Gospel might go forth unhindered
- B. How does Satan blind the lost?
  1. He convinces the hearer of his self-righteousness  
He deceives the sinner into trusting good works – in thinking he can earn his way to eternal life.
  2. Satan creates suspicion towards the Gospel  
He sows seeds of misunderstanding and confusion.  
**Matthew 13:19 NAU** - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart."
  3. He holds before their eyes all that they will lose by coming to Christ.  
The love of this world crowds out any love for Christ.
- C. One of the terrible tools of Satan in hindering the Gospel is keeping God's people from prayer
  1. This seems to be Paul's emphasis here. After describing the enemy and our defense against the enemy's attacks he says, "Pray!"  
**Ephesians 6:18 NAU** - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints"

2. And the greatest arena of prayer is in the work of the Gospel.  
**Ephesians 6:19-20 NAU** - "and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."
3. Prayer is Essential to the advancement of the Gospel.  
 The Gospel depends on prayer. When the people of God cease praying the Gospel is greatly hindered.
  - a. But you say, I thought salvation is a work of God. How can God be hindered from saving His elect people? Yes, salvation is a monergistic work of God's grace. But God has ordained all of the means to bring about the salvation of the lost. God is sovereign but the Gospel must be preached. And God's people must pray.
  - b. The Gospel demands prayer for laborers  
**Matthew 9:38 NAU** - "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
  - c. The Gospel demands prayer for opportunities  
**Colossians 4:2-3 NAU** - "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an *attitude of thanksgiving*; <sup>3</sup> praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word"
  - d. The Gospel demands prayer for unction – for God's power upon it.
  - e. The Gospel demands prayer since there is a natural hatred of it by the men of this world.  
**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 NAU** - "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; <sup>2</sup> and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith."
  - f. Every great revival has been preceded by much prayer
4. Preaching depends on prayer
  - a. Vocational pastors must devote themselves primarily to two things: Prayer and the ministry of the Word
  - b. Preaching rests upon the pillar of prayer. Preaching is a supernatural activity. An old Scotch pastor described it: "There is somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Lord."
5. The unction of preaching must come from God. We must plead with Him for it.  
**Ephesians 6:19 NAU** - "and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth"

6. Churches must pray for the preaching of their church – for the preacher, for themselves, for each other.  
E.M. Bounds: “Salvation never finds its way to a prayerless heart. The Holy Spirit never abides in a prayerless spirit. Preaching never edifies a prayerless soul. Christ knows nothing of prayerless Christians. The gospel cannot be projected by a prayerless preacher.”
7. Everything we do as Christians depends on prayer.  
Paul is urging these Christians to pray, pray, pray.  
He needed prayer that God would bless his labors; that the wickedness of the hearts of men would not hinder the Gospel.  
That his labor in the Gospel might prove beneficial and acceptable to the saints; that God would protect him from discouragement. That he might labor in joy

#### Conclusion:

1. While Satan is effective in blinding individuals to the glories of the Gospel he no longer has the ability to deceive the nations
  - A. Through the cross Satan is now defeated and bound  
**Revelation 20:1-3 NAU** - "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time."
  - B. In the Old Covenant the entire world was held in bondage by the lying schemes of Satan. While he still holds the world in darkness the Gospel is marching forth with great power.
2. But we are in the midst of a war. Prayer is essential in this war. This is the reality of the Christian life. This isn't a war "over there." This isn't a war spoken of in the abstract. This is war raging in our own town. It is all around us.
3. But we have the mighty weapon of prayer.  
Satan's attacks here are great but he knows how devastating are the prayers of the faithful saints.  
In response to Knox's imprecatory prayers, Mary Queen of Scots is reputed to have said: "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe."
4. Many times a congregation fails to recognize how important prayer is for the success of the pulpit ministry. Would we see more power if we were more faithful in prayer?  
Our prayers are powerful in the ongoing progress of the Gospel.