

HM 4.1 – Puritan Perspectives on Ministry

Puritan Preaching

From Ryken:

- Richard Baxter: “I preached ... as a dying man to dying men.”
- William Ames, “The receiving of the Word consists of two parts: attention of mind and intention of will.”
- William Perkins, “It is a by-word among us: ‘It was a very plain sermon’: and again, I say, ‘the plainer, the better’.”

Further Reading:

- Donald K. McKim, “Ramism as an Exegetical Tool for English Puritanism as Used by William Perkins” *SBL 1984 Seminar Papers*
- Robert Norris, ‘The Preaching of the Westminster Assembly’, *Premise*, III.3, 1996: <http://capo.org/premise/96/mar/p960305.html>
- Errol Hulse – ‘The Puritan Approach to Persuading Souls’ – in 1973 *Westminster Conference*
- David Field – *Decalogue Dod* – St Antholin’s Lecture, 2004
- Francis Bremer and Ellen Rydell, “Performance Art? Puritans in the Pulpit” - *History Today*, Sept 1995, 50-54
- Chad Van Dixhoorn – “A Puritan Theology of Preaching” (St Antholin’s, 2005)
- Kevin Hartley - Puritan Preaching - <http://www.new-covenant-theology.com/prepaper.html>
- Joel Beeke, ‘Puritan Evangelism’, <http://www.hnrc.org/html/purevan1.html>
- Leland Ryken – *Worldly Saints*, chapter 6
- J. I. Packer – *A Quest for Godliness*, chapter 10
- Brian Freer – ‘The Pastor as Preacher in Seventeenth Century England’ in 1986 *Westminster Conference*
- Patrick Collinson, ‘Elizabethan and Jacobean Puritanism as Forms of Popular Religious Culture’, in Durston & Eales, *The Culture of English Puritanism*, 1996, 32-57; also *From Cranmer to Sancroft*, 2006

1) Preaching was at the heart of the Puritan movement

- as an active, campaigning reform movement – to get the message out
- as Biblical and Reformed Christianity – Word-centred. (Luther, Calvin, Marian exiles, Geneva Bible etc)
- The argument for a preaching ministry consisted in the stark fact that there was no salvation to be had without it. (Collinson, *Cranmer* 53)
- prophesyings – preaching workshops – stamped out by Elizabeth
- lectureships; chaplains
- strategy – preparing the next generation of preachers – William Perkins’ *The Art of Prophesying*, 1592, 1606
- the parish minister’s chief work – Puritan minister 3-5 sermons per week
- sermon attendance – gadding a ‘social event’ – psalm-singing, repeating the sermon; note-taking; meditation
- fast days – ‘holy fairs’ – last Wed of the month, 1642-49
- high proportion of published Puritan practical divinity consists of sermons

Excursus I – Collinson on what parish ministers actually did with their time ...

From *Cranmer to Sancroft*

Monday was not only market day but lecture day when the country ministers took it in turns to preach 37

There is no evidence that the religious public which gaddled in companies to sermons, riding down from Ipswich to John Rogers electrifying sermons at Dedham saying 'let's go to Dedham to get a little fire', were disposed to separate from the Church of England, much evidence to the contrary. 38

But Isaiah 56 v.10 complains of dumb dogs that cannot bark, a text which was often invoked in the denunciation of non-preaching hirelings. 47

To anticipate much of what follows: public and what we may call abstracted accounts of the ministry in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (the period in question is roughly 1570 to 1640) were restricted to a remarkable extent to one function and one function only, that of preaching, or preaching and catechising; a bias built into these sources themselves, since often they consist of sermons delivered, for example, at ordinations, or prove as books to have been derived from courses of sermons. 48

... a routine which otherwise included not only preaching on Sundays and lecturing on every other day of the week but also 'exercising justice in the commonwealth' and the 'practising of Physick and Chirurgerie. There was also a living to be made, collecting tithes and sometimes suing for it, working the glebe and seeking out those supplementary pieces of by-employment and enterprise which earned Ralph Josselin a little more than his 'living' and which made the difference between Micawberish misery and happiness. To dwell only on those ways of spending time which may be deemed professional: we know that they included above all the conduct of common prayer and the administration of the sacraments, weddings, churching women, baptising babies, catechising children, visiting the sick, burying the dead, reproving the wicked and comforting bruised consciences. The minister had a role to play with other parish officers in reporting offences and offenders to higher authority, administering and certifying acts of penance, denouncing excommunicates. He and the material resources at his disposal were involved in parochial charity. Time was spent in study (the night time in Favour's case) and in the company of other clergy, for the purpose of what is now called in universities career development. 49

These offices, as well as the sacramental office of ministering communion, interlocked with what John Bossy has identified as the primary social task entrusted to the parish priest or his equivalent throughout the rural parishes of Europe between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, that of a settler of conflicts, the principal instrument of what Bossy has elsewhere called the social miracle. 49

... and they tell us very little about activity, what the clergy did in a day, a week, or a year. So from a very substantial body of scholarly literature we do not learn about such matters as whether baptism was administered (as the Prayer Book directs) in a congregational context, at the time of common prayer, or more privately at other times, and at which times; whether the clergy visited the sick and dying according to commonly recognised rules and at prescribed times, and what rules and times; or how their pastoral visits to other parishioners interacted with habits and rhythms of hospitality and according to what social conventions; and what, in the absence of a sacramental economy of supreme unction and auricular confession, was said on such occasions. Would the threatened visit of the minister lead to an onslaught on household dirt, as in modern Scotland? 50

One of the most substantial treatments of the ministry published within our period was *The faithful shepherd* by Richard Bernard, some time a radical Puritan plucked back from the brink of Separatism and transported by the great and the good of the Jacobean Church from Nottinghamshire to Batcombe in Somerset. An outsider to this discussion might suppose that a book 355 pages in length and with such a title, written for the benefit of ordinands, 'to further young divines in the studie of divinitie', might deal in a fully-rounded fashion with a whole range of professional and practical skills. Not so. After some preliminary, defensive discussion of the ministry as a worthy calling which gentlemen ought not to despise, distinguishing between the worthy and the unworthy who secured livings 'not to feed Christes flock but only to maintaine themselves with the fleece', the entire contents were devoted to the minister as preacher. Chapter Two 'of a mans fitness to the ministerie' proves to be about his fitness for the pulpit: 'It is fit that there be a comely bodily presence of a Minister, standing up in the face of the Congregation, and in the place of God . . . a comely countenance, sober, grave, modest, . . . a seemly gesture, stable and upright'. There is a long taxonomical chapter dealing with pastoral sociology and psychology and distinguishing between six kinds of people in a typical congregation. But they are defined exclusively in respect of their various responses to the word preached. Book Three has for its subject 'The Public Assembly', but includes nothing about the liturgy and sacraments, or rather only this: 'The Minister and man of God well prepared, the godly order of Divine Service, so called, as it is by the Church appoynted, without giving of offence observed, and as the custome is, after a Psalm sung; then may he ascend up into the Pulpit'. Once there we reach Book Four, 'The Method to be Observed in Preaching', which runs to 200 pages, or almost two-thirds of the entire text. If Bernard's treatise be taken as representative of early seventeenth-century treatments of its subject this literature contrasts not only with the pastoral science associated with what may be called the seminarian approach to priesthood and ministry in more recent times but with what was available for the instruction of apprentice priests up to the 1530s. And what is more, as an ideal it must surely have conflicted with much early seventeenth-century reality. 54

Excursus II – Collinson on “Repetition”

From *Cranmer to Sancroft*

‘Repetition’ is among the more neglected words in the religious glossary of the seventeenth century. Among the Elizabethan godly, neighbours met to pray, or to listen to the New Testament or to readings from Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, but primarily to engage in repetition. So it was in Lady Margaret Hoby’s model household at Hackness and in countless humbler households. It was said of the Norwich MP Sir John Hobart that he was unwilling to let a sermon pass without also hearing it repeated. The ‘supposed conventicle’ against which the Puritan lawyer Nicholas Fuller defended his clients Lord and Maunsell in a cause célèbre of 1607 was a regular exercise of repetition. For it was the practice of these Yarmouth shopkeepers on Sunday evenings to join with their minister ‘in repeating of the substance and heads of the sermons that day made in the church’. John Udall of Kingston on Thames supplies a rationale for the practice: ‘If one have missed the observation of this or that point, another hath marked it, so that among them they may bring away the whole, and so be edified one by another’. Such was the practice around Manchester and generally in south-east Lancashire and neighbouring parts of Cheshire in the mid-seventeenth century. In Baxter’s Kidderminster, ‘you might hear a hundred families singing psalms or repeating sermons as you passed through them’. In John Angier’s Denton there was repetition of the morning sermon both in Angier’s house and in the church ‘to many people that stayed there’, with psalms sung before and after. This occupied the time until the afternoon sermon, which in its turn was immediately repeated. On Monday nights [158 ends] Angier’s family repeated the sermon of the preceding Sunday morning, on Saturday nights the same day’s afternoon sermon.

The fact that the principal activity in ‘meetings of the godly’ was to repeat sermons heard in public earlier in the day is important in itself, the implications of the fact even more so. Repetition was akin to the process of catechising, in that sermons having been reduced in summary form to their ‘heads’ (it seems to have been a rare gift to memorise an entire sermon, verbatim) were by repetition impressed, perhaps permanently, on the minds of the hearers. The Fifth Monarchist John Rogers later recorded the consequences of his adolescent exposure to this discipline in his superstitious habit of repeating sermons to himself in bed, as a kind of talisman to protect himself against the Devil while he slept, and according to a set plan. On Sunday night he would repeat the sermon heard that afternoon, on Monday a sermon heard the previous Sunday, on other nights sermons heard as much as ten years before.

This was how that famous edifice ‘the Puritan Mind’ was erected and furnished. We may apply to repetition what has been said of the mental effects of catechisms: that those who listened to sermons and read the Bible did so with faculties trained by catechisms – trained, that is, to arrange what they heard in formal rhetorical structures, a much more advanced facility than the tendency of earlier heretics and Protestants to reduce a sermon to one or two strikingly memorable and even scandalous pronouncements, prefaced by ‘he hath heard it said that . . .’ or ‘that there was a saying in the country that ...’ Mentally and rhetorically this was the very essence of what Dr Cameron has called ‘the reformation of the heretics’. 158-59

2) Authority and Purpose

- Scripture authority unchallenged and unquestioned
- confidence in preaching as God’s appointed means
- release the truth of Scripture – drive home, persuade, command, urge, plead
- bringing Bible to bear on people’s lives
- designed to bring about change – ‘holy reformation’
- preaching as an event, for a response
- Maclure: “For the Puritans, the sermon is not just hinged to Scripture; it quite literally exists *inside* the Word of God; the text is not in the sermon but the sermon is in the text ... Put summarily, listening to a sermon is being in the Bible.” q. Ryken, 99

3) Method and Structure

A. The Influence of Peter Ramus, 1515-72

- Ramus’ work was both a protest against and a simplifying of Aristotelian logic.
- The most distinctive feature of the Ramist interpretation of disposition is its emphasis upon method. Ramus had written that those who think wisely and methodically ‘descend from the most general idea to the various divisions thereof, and thence to the particular cases it comprehends’. (*Dialectique*, 1555, p. 4.) ... proceeds by dividing and repeatedly subdividing the subject matter,

each subdivision in turn opening with a sub-proposition relating to the general proposition and defining the appropriate material therein.

- “To him, a sentence was considered to have emerged from the sentence before it, either by defining something which was there or by dividing something there.” McKim, 12
- “ ‘Method’ for Ramus meant basically the proper arrangement of propositions or axioms. True method was to move from “universals” to “singulars”, from the general to the specific ... by applying this method, any discourse could be either constructed or analyzed.” McKim, 13
- Ramus: “the more general a rule is, the more it precedes” - q. p. 13
- “The task of the logician for Ramus was classification.” p.14
- William Perkins wrote a treatise on preaching using Ramus' method. He thought the liberal arts of logic, grammar, and rhetoric were essential for preaching: "Without these the Bible would remain sealed, but with logic the meaning of Scripture may be extracted, with grammar it may be phrased so that men may grasp it, and with rhetoric its doctrine may be insinuated into their brains and hearts.”
- Less endeavour to prove than to “unfold” the meaning of the text.
- Ames talks about "knowledge by analysis or resolution" - *Marrow* 24
- The job of the exegete as the same as that of the logician:
 - to discover and dispose of matter
 - to define, divide and classify.
- The goal was to see how God had constructed the text.
 - Place in context
 - Define the words.
 - Divide or distribute the text.
- Each division/heading is a ‘topic’ or ‘commonplace’.

B. Structure

- 1) *Exegetical* – explaining the setting, the words, the divisions
- 2) *Doctrinal or didactic* – outlining the doctrinal propositions which are stated in or deduced from the text.
 - as part of the confirmation or illustration of the doctrine/head, *reasons* may be given
 - “articulation of the general principle on the basis of a specific biblical text which gave it warrant.” (Norris)
- 3) *Applicatory* – bringing this to bear on the lives of the hearers. This will often be described as *Use* – and there may be several uses – for trial, for encouragement, for conduct etc

Application is direct, expansive, specific and made to various classes of hearer Perkins lists seven:

- 1) unbelievers who are both ignorant and unteachable
- 2) some who are teachable but yet ignorant
- 3) some have knowledge, but are not as yet humbled
- 4) some are humbled
- 5) some do believe
- 6) some are fallen
- 7) there is a mingled people

Applications to mind, will, conduct

“The Puritan sermon quotes the text and ‘opens’ it as briefly as possible, expounding circumstances and context, explaining its grammatical meanings, reducing its tropes and schemata to prose and setting forth its logical implications; the sermon then proclaims in a flat, indicative sentence the ‘doctrine’ contained in the text or logically deduced from it, and proceeds to the first reason or proof. Reason follows reason, with no other transition than a period and a number; after the last proof is stated there follow the uses or applications, also in numbered sequence, and the sermon ends when there is nothing more to be said.”

Perry Miller, q Ryken, 100

“The methodology ensured that the content would be tied to Scripture, that the sermon would involve an intelligent grasp of truth and that theological doctrine would be applied to everyday living.” Ryken, 101

Where are the stress points in the system?

4) Style

- ‘plain style’ in contrast to the ‘Anglican’ courtly style with its foreign language quotations, rhetorical devices etc.
- direct – 2nd person plural
- long (hours and years)
- earnest, vigorous, urgent, serious, dramatic (John Rogers) (see Bremer/Rydell)
- "read myself full, pray myself full, pour myself out"; T Hooker to Ashe, "Sim, make it hot!"
- use of reason – ‘consider’, ‘think’ ‘how could you not ...?’
- address to the conscience – self-assessment, motives etc
- use of questions
- illustrative material
 - Biblical material – many citations and many references
 - human experience
 - encyclopaedia – natural history / classical history

“If we are ever prone to be proud of our Bible knowledge, we ought to open any volume of John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, or Thomas Brooks, note how some obscure passage in Nahum is quoted followed by a familiar passage from John – both of which perfectly illustrate the point the writer is making – then compare our knowledge to theirs. How can we explain this marvelous – for us, humbling – grasp of Scripture other than that these divines were ministers of the Word? These men obviously studied their Bibles daily, falling to their knees as God’s Spirit burned the Word into their pastoral hearts. Then, as they wrote or preached their evangelistic messages, one scriptural passage after another would come to mind.”
Joel Beeke

5) Content

- whole Bible, counsel of God;
- doctrine, conduct, experience - but beginning with doctrine
- use of OT
- Christ
- volume and range of application
- “the real subject is always God and his ways”, Packer, 167

6) The Preacher

- “godly and learned”
- regenerate and holy and affected by what he preaches
- studies hard
- knows his people

7) Some illustrative primary material

- A. Bunyan’s picture of the Godly preacher
- B. Robert Traill and John Flavel
- C. Directory of Public Worship on preaching
- D. Westminster Assembly – *Directory of Public Worship* - see other doc

A. John Bunyan's Picture of the Godly Preacher – *Pilgrim's Progress*

INTERPRETER. Then said the Interpreter, Come in; I will show thee that which will be profitable to thee. So He commanded His man to light the candle, and bid Christian follow Him: so He had him into a private room, and bid His man open a door; the which when he had done, Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had eyes lifted up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.

CHRISTIAN. Then said Christian, What meaneth this?

INTERPRETER. The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand; he can beget children (1 Cor. 4:15), travail in birth with children (Gal. 4:19), and nurse them himself when they are born. And whereas thou seest him with his eyes lift up to Heaven, the best of books in his hand, and the law of truth writ on his lips, it is to show thee, that his work is to know and unfold dark things to sinners; even as also thou seest him stand as if he pleaded with men; and whereas thou seest the world as cast behind him, and that a crown hangs over his head, that is to show thee that slighting and despising the things that are present, for the love that he hath to his Master's service, he is sure in the world that comes next to have glory for his reward. Now, said the Interpreter, I have showed thee this picture first, because the man whose picture this is, is the only man whom the Lord of the place whither thou art going, hath authorized to be thy guide in all difficult places thou mayest meet with in the way; wherefore, take good heed to what I have showed thee, and bear well in thy mind what thou hast seen, lest in thy journey thou meet with some that pretend to lead thee right, but their way goes down to death.

B. Robert Traill, *Works*, I.237, 246

“The principal work of a minister is preaching; and the principal benefit people have by them, is to hear the Lord's word from them ...”

“Two things ministers have to do about Christ in preaching him to them that are without. 1. To set him forth to people (Gal 3.1); to paint him in his love, excellency, and ability to save. 2. To offer him freely, fully, without any limitation to sinners, or their sinful estate.”

C. John Flavel, *Works*, VI.572

“the excellency of a sermon lies in the plainest discoveries and liveliest applications of Jesus Christ.” I.39

“Ministerial wisdom will not only direct us ... in the choice of our subjects, but of the language too. ... It will tell you, a crucified style best suits the preachers of a crucified Christ. A grave and proper style becomes the lips of Christ's ambassadors. Prudence will neither allow us to be rude, nor affectedly gaudy in our expressions Words are but servants to matter ... Prudence will cast away a thousand fine words, for one that is apt to penetrate the conscience, and reach the heart.”

D. Westminster Assembly – *Directory of Public Worship* – see other doc

E. John Owen on the Duties of Pastors - *Works*, XVI, 74-79

WE have declared the way whereby pastors are given unto and instated in the church; that which should ensue is an account of their work and duty in the discharge of their office: but this hath been the subject of many large discourses, both among the ancient writers of the church and of late; I shall therefore only touch on some things that are of most necessary consideration: –

A. The first and principal duty of a pastor is to feed the flock by diligent preaching of the word. It is a promise relating to the new testament, that God would give unto his church “pastors according to his own heart, which should feed them with knowledge and understandings” Jeremiah 3:15. This is by teaching or preaching the word, and no otherwise. This feeding is of the essence of the office of a pastor, as unto the exercise of it; so that he who doth not, or can not, or will not feed the flock is no pastor, whatever outward call or work he may have in the church. The care of preaching the gospel was committed to Peter, and in him unto all true pastors of the church, under the name of “feeding,” John 21:15-17. According to the example of the apostles, they are to free themselves from all encumbrances, that they may give themselves wholly unto the word and prayer, Acts 6:1-4. Their work is “to labor in the word and doctrine,” 1 Timothy 5:17; and thereby to “feed the

flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers,” Acts 20:28: and it is that which is everywhere given them in charge. This work and duty, therefore, as was said, is essential unto the office of a pastor. A man is a pastor unto them whom he leads by pastoral teaching, and to no more; and he that doth not so feed is no pastor. Nor is it required only that he preach now and then at his leisure, but that he lay aside all other employments, though lawful, all other duties in the church, as unto such a constant attendance on them as would divert him from this work, that he give himself unto it, — that he be in these things laboring to the utmost of his ability. Without this no man will be able to give a comfortable account of the pastoral office at the last day. There is, indeed, no more required of any man than God giveth him ability for. Weakness, sickness, bodily infirmities, may disenable men from the actual discharge of this duty in that assiduity and frequency which are required in ordinary cases; and some may, through age or other incapacitating distempers, be utterly disabled for it, — in which case it is their duty to lay down and take a dismission from their office, or, if their disability be but partial, provide a suitable supply, that the edification of the church be not prejudiced; — but for men to pretend themselves pastors of the church, and to be unable for, or negligent of, this work and duty, is to live in open defiance of the commands of Christ. We have lived to see and hear of reproachful scorn and contempt cast upon laborious preaching, — that is, “laboring in the word and doctrine,” and all manner of discouragements given unto it, with endeavors for its suppression in sundry instances; yea, some have proceeded so far as to declare that the work of preaching is unnecessary in the church, so to reduce all religion to the reading and rule of the liturgy. The next attempt, so far as! know, may be to exclude Christ himself out of their religion; which the denial of a necessity of preaching the gospel makes an entrance into, yea, a good progress towards.

Sundry things are required unto this work and duty of pastoral preaching; as, —

- (1.) *Spiritual wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel*, that they may declare unto the church “all the counsel of God” and “the unsearchable riches of Christ:” see Acts 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:4-7; Ephesians 3:8-11. The generality of the church, especially those who are grown in knowledge and experience, have a spiritual insight into these things, and the apostle prays that all believers may have so, Ephesians 1:15-19; and if those that instruct them, or should do so, have not some degree of eminency herein, they cannot be useful to lead them on to perfection. And the little care hereof or concernment herein is that which in our days hath rendered the ministry of many fruitless and useless.
- (2.) *Experience of the power of the truth which they preach in and upon their own souls*. Without this they will themselves be lifeless and heartless in their own work, and their labor for the most part will be unprofitable towards others. It is, to such men, attended unto as a task for their advantage, or as that which carries some satisfaction in it from ostentation and supposed reputation wherewith it is accompanied. But a man preacheth that sermon only well unto others which preacheth itself in his own soul. And he that doth not feed on and thrive in the digestion of the food which he provides for others will scarce make it savory unto them; yea, he knows not but the food he hath provided may be poison, unless he have really tasted of it himself. If the word do not dwell with power in us, it will not pass with power from us. And no man lives in a more woful condition than those who really believe not themselves what they persuade others to believe continually. The want of this experience of the power of gospel truth on their own souls is that which gives us so many lifeless, sapless orations, quaint in words and dead as to power, instead of preaching the gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit. And let any say what they please, it is evident that some men’s preaching, as well as others’ not-preaching, hath lost the credit of their ministry.
- (3.) *Skill to divide the word aright*, 2 Timothy 2:15; and this consists in a practical wisdom, upon a diligent attendance unto the word of truth, to find out what is real, substantial, and meet food for the souls of the hearers, — to give unto all sorts of persons in the church that which is their proper portion. And this requires,
- (4.) *A prudent and diligent consideration of the state of the flock over which any man is set*, as unto their strength or weakness, their growth or defect in knowledge (the measure of their attainments requiring either milk or strong meat), their temptations and duties, their spiritual decays or thrivings; and that not only in general, but, as near as may be, with respect unto all the individual members of the church. Without a due regard unto these things, men preach at random, uncertainly fighting, like those that beat the air. Preaching sermons not designed for the advantage of them to whom they are preached; insisting on general doctrines not levelled to the condition of the auditory; speaking what men can, without consideration of what they ought, — are things that will make men weary of preaching, when their minds are not influenced with outward advantages, as much as make others weary in hearing of them. And,
- (5.) All these, in the whole discharge of their duty, are to be *constantly accompanied with the evidence of zeal for the glory of God and compassion for the souls of men*. Where these are not in vigorous exercise in the minds and souls of them that preach the word, giving a demonstration of themselves unto the consciences of them that hear, the quickening form, the life and soul of preaching, is lost. All these things seem common, obvious, and universally acknowledged; but the ruin of the ministry of the most for the want of them, or from notable defects in them, is or may be no less evidently known. And the very naming of them (which is all at present which I design) is sufficient to evidence how great a necessity there is incumbent on all pastors of churches to give themselves unto the word and prayer, to labor in the word and doctrine, to be continually intent on this work, to engage all the faculties of their souls, to stir up all their graces and gifts, unto constant exercise in the discharge of their duty; for “who is sufficient for these things?” And as the consideration of them is sufficient to stir up all ministers unto fervent prayer for supplies of divine aid and assistance for that work which in their own strength they can no way answer, so is it enough to warn them of the avoidance of all things that would give them a diversion or avocation from the constant attendance unto the discharge of it.

When men undertake the pastoral office, and either judge it not their duty to preach, or are not able so to do, or attempt it only at some solemn seasons, or attend unto it as a task required of them, without that wisdom, skill, diligence, care, prudence, zeal, and compassion, which are required thereunto, the glory and use of the ministry will be utterly destroyed.

B. The second duty of a pastor towards his flock is continual fervent prayer for them, James 5:16; John 17:20; Exodus 32:11; Deuteronomy 9:18; Leviticus 16:24; 1 Samuel 12:23; 2 Corinthians 13:7, 9; Ephesians 1:15-19,3:14; Philippians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer," Acts 6:4. Without this, no man can or doth preach to them as he ought, nor perform any other duty of his pastoral office. From hence may any man take the best measure of the discharge of his duty towards his flock. He that doth constantly, diligently, fervently, pray for them, will have a testimony in himself of his own sincerity in the discharge of all other pastoral duties, nor can he voluntarily omit or neglect any of them. And as for those who are negligent herein, be their pains, labor, and travail in other duties never so great, they may be influenced from other reasons, and so give no evidence of sincerity in the discharge of their office. In this constant prayer for the church, which is so incumbent on all pastors as that whatever is done without it is of no esteem in the sight of Jesus Christ, respect is to be had, —

- (1.) *Unto the success of the word, unto all the blessed ends of it, among them. ...*
- (2.) *Unto the temptations that the church is generally exposed unto. ...*
- (3.) *Unto the especial state and condition of all the members....*
- (4.) *Unto the presence of Christ in the assemblies of the church ...*
- (5.) *To their preservation in faith, love, and fruitfulness ...*

It were much to be desired that all those who take upon them this pastoral office did well consider and understand how great and necessary a part of their work and duty doth consist in their continual fervent prayer for their flocks; for besides that it is the only instituted way whereby they may, by virtue of their office, bless their congregations, so will they find their hearts and minds, in and by the discharge of it, more and more filled with love, and engaged with diligence unto all other duties of their office, and excited unto the exercise of all grace towards the whole church on all occasions. And where any are negligent herein, there is no duty which they perform towards the church but it is influenced with false considerations, and will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary.

C. The administration of the seals of the covenant is committed unto them, as the stewards of the house of Christ; for unto them the authoritative dispensation of the word is committed, whereunto the administration of the seals is annexed; for their principal end is the peculiar confirmation and application of the word preached. And herein there are three things that they are to attend unto: —

- (1.) *The times and seasons of their administration unto the church's edification ...*
- (2.) *To keep severely unto the institution of Christ, as unto the way and manner of their administration. ...*
- (3.) *To take care that these holy things be administered only unto those who are meet and worthy, according unto the rule of the gospel.*

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**Some suggestions for reading Puritan sermons** The Works of the following great Puritans are all in the library and two minutes browsing will arouse your interest in something or other:

John Owen (vols 8, 9, 16), Thomas Manton, Thomas Brooks, David Clarkson, George Swinnock, John Flavel, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Goodwin.

Or the six volumes of *The Morning Exercises at Cripplegate* (regular London preaching events at which leading Puritans would preach. Examples:

1. Richard Steele, "What are the duties of husbands and wives towards each other?"
2. Thomas Watson, "How may we read the Scriptures with most spiritual profit?"
3. Stephen Charnock, "The sinfulness and cure of thoughts"
4. William Whitaker, "How are we complete in Christ?"
5. Thomas Watson, "How must we make religion our business?"
6. Thomas Manton, "How may we cure distractions in holy duties?"
7. Henry Hurst, "How may we best cure the love of being flattered?"
8. Thomas Jacombe, "The leading of the Holy Spirit opened"
9. Thomas Woodcock, "Whether it be expedient, and how the congregation may say 'Amen' in public worship"
10. Vincent Alsop, "What is that fulness of God every true Christian ought to pray and strive to be filled with?"