

The counsel of God

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- [0 : 00] Now let us look for a few moments at the portion of scripture which we have read together. In the book of the Acts of the Apostle, the 20th chapter, and we shall read again verse 26 and verse 27 of the 20th chapter in the Acts of the Apostle.
- Father, I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.
- These words were addressed to the elders in the church at Ephesus. The Apostle Paul had continued preaching and edifying the church at Ephesus for three whole years.
- He mentioned this in this chapter. And if you read the epistle to the Ephesians, you will notice the depth to which the Apostle goes in reminding them of what he had already told.
- [1 : 54] And some passages are so deep and so spiritual in that letter that we cannot be but surprised at writing such deep theological teaching to people who have just nearly been converted.
- And we find the Apostle here reminding them of what they had and what they were supposed to do.
- That is the elders of the church at Ephesus. Now it is uncertain today what actually their duties were.
- Some in whom they were preaching elders and others that they were simply overseers. But overseers. But overseers does not mean that they were not of the flock.
- He reminds them that they were overseers of the flock. But they themselves were part of that flock. The flock delivered to Christ.
- [3 : 21] He had purchased it with his soul blood. And he testifies to his humiliation that that flock was given to him by the Father.
- And although they were given to him by the Father, he says that they were still in the hands of the Father. And no one could pluck them out of the Father's hands.
- And it was for that flock, he says that he was to lay down his slave. And he himself was to lay down.
- I have power to lay down my life. And I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received from my Father.
- Now, in the verses we have selected for our meditation, you will notice, wherever I take you, and these words are spoken to the elders and offices.
- [4 : 39] Now, the word elder, just by the way, is equivalent to a bishop, a ruler.
- And the Anglican church and those who have bishops in the church are finding this portion very awkward.
- And they maintain that somehow the apostle, speaking to the elders, would indicate that Ephesus was without a bishop at that time.
- No, that is not the case. The elders are the bishops or the overseers. And it reminds them of their work.

And we shall first consider the responsibility of the ministers of the gospel. They are overseers of the flock, but they are part of the flock.

[5 : 47] And secondly, how can they be pure from the blood of all men?

And thirdly, the knowledge required for their work. Now, these three things are absolutely necessary to an overseer of a congregation.

The first is the responsibility of the ministers of the gospel. The responsibility of the ministers of the gospel arises from various conditions and states.

Many things are needed to be able to carry out this responsibility. And I would say that the first necessary thing is that the person who is in this position has a saving grace.

And you know what I mean by saving grace. Because there are many graces that come from God which are not saving.

[7 : 23] Every thing that we have, every drop of water, every kind of bread, every favor that we enjoy in the world, they are temporal favors, a temper of grace.

And we call it grace because the sinner has never had his own. He forfeited even a drop of water.

And every favor that we receive from God comes as grace to him. And we call these temporal gifts.

Grace is a gift. But there are spiritual graces reaching all people who are under the gospel in a peculiar way which are not saving.

All the favors that we have concerning the gospel are not saving. It's a wonderful privilege to be in a position where you can hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 35] Where you can receive an invitation to partake of the salvation that is increased. Where you can receive an invitation to partake of the salvation that is increased. And he will speak of the favor to any people.

And people have gone all over the world to give this favor to people who had it not. Now the overseer or the minister who has these responsibilities.

It's absolutely necessary to be partakers of that saving grace.

For with a saving grace there comes a knowledge that is obtainable only by coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the overseer must have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. And probably there is no one in this building who does not know who the Lord Jesus Christ is.

[9 : 54] It is about him and connected with him one way or the other that you hear of every single day. You are brought up in a situation and with privileges where you heard about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

And dying in the room and in the place of sinners. Now without this knowledge a person would be a dangerous person in any locality or in any congregation.

A minister who felt grace is one of the worst implements that Satan can use. He can turn people away from the very object of life.

And stand between them and the gate of salvation. And we hear that so often today. We hear a person speaking on a radio or on television and there is not a spark of gospel in it.

But to come to enjoy Christ. To come to peace. Without realizing what is the dis-peace. Or what is the state of the person who is invited to come.

[11 : 19] Who would leave the pleasures of sin for a moment to go to the Lord Jesus Christ for something which he didn't want.

And which he was not aware that he was in need of. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that the overseer or the minister would have a knowledge of sin.

A knowledge of what he was. And what he is in himself. And we find concerning all the great creatures in the history of the church.

They came down to the situation where they felt condemned. Where they had no way whereby they could be saved.

Unless the Lord Jesus Christ stretched out his hand and delivered them. The apostle himself declares it. The commandment came.

[12 : 24] Sin revived. And I died. He says. He couldn't save himself. He felt undone. He felt he was unworthy of salvation.

He earned the punishment of God forever and ever. Now it is important that a person would know his own condition before he could tell others or whoever knows concerning what sin is and what sin deserves.

It deserves the punishment of God forever and ever and ever. And again he must learn another great lesson.

His own impotence. That apart from the spirit of God he can do anything. The apostle Paul was a learned highly educated man in the philosophy of the world and in the knowledge of the scriptures.

He had gone through all these colleges and he was a very knowledgeable man in every way. And he learned this.

[13 : 51] That apart from Christ he could do nothing. Though I would speak with the tongues of men and of angels. I am as a sounding brass and tickling symbol.

Apart from faith and peace. On the other hand now a person who is an overseer must have faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

He must believe that God is able to do far more than he is able to declare or to refer to.

Now the next thing that I would draw your attention to is how can a preacher be pure from the blood of all men?

Now it is obvious that the apostle there confines all to those to whom he preached and those to whom he wrote.

[15 : 08] He wasn't referring to those who never heard the gospel at all or people who he was unable to reach. And we find the apostle referring to the scriptures concerning this very thing.

In the Old Testament which the apostle knew so well. We read in the book of Ezekiel.

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. Therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me.

When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die. And thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life.

The same wicked man shall die in his iniquity. But his blood will be required at your hand.

[16 : 26] Now this is the great responsibility of ministers. If he is not warning the sinners that they are under the wrath and the curse of God.

That they are in need of being redeemed by Christ. That they need saving faith in order to partake of that salvation. If that is not taught, God will require the eternal death at the hands of the preacher.

And if he does, I didn't continue reading. But if he does warn. If he makes it clear that there is a salvation prepared by God and other to them.

And if they are rejected, but he has warned them. There is no other way of salvation but through the Lord Jesus Christ. If he fearfully warns his people concerning the salvation that is in Christ.

He is innocent of their guilt. They have to be responsible for themselves. They have rejected it. And we read in the New Testament that God is angry with his sinner every day.

[17 : 53] And some question even the very word of God. They question if God is angry at any time. That that is an emotional feeling.

And God is not feeling joy and sorrow and things as we do in our affections. Because he is God.

He is intangible in his being. But that would deprive. We think that that would deprive our view of God of something very important.

And his reaction to sin. And his reaction to the grace he himself has placed in the heart of a person.

The way he acts. The way his love comes to one. And the way his anger goes to another. Now what is meant by the anger of God? We do not believe that anger rises and subsides in God as we understand it.

[18 : 59] But we can truly say it is a holy revulsion against sin. And he cannot but react in that way against sin.

Whatever it is. Let it be in the church or in the heathen. The preacher therefore has to inform the sinner of his state.

And of God's attitude to sinners. He is slow to punish. He is ready. And to meet the person who sincerely seeks the way of salvation.

And there is nothing in this world comparable. To the salvation that is increased. It is an eternal salvation. Death is not the end of our existence.

And there is, it in another sense begins in another way as it never was before. And there is life eternal in the presence of the glory of God.

[20 : 11] And with Jesus Christ. And with Jesus Christ. And the mediator of the covenant of grace. And of God himself.

And innumerable number of angels. Joining with them. Praising and enjoying that situation. That words cannot describe.

There is that to be obtained. Or the darkness of eternal woe. Where is, where there is, where the fire is not extinguished.

Where the pain will never cease. When it's an eternal, continual state of woe and lamenting.

No, we read thirdly. The knowledge required for the work of the ministry. And we can easily understand a little about this.

[21 : 19] Every one of us. All that is involved in bringing a spiritual message from heaven.

We are in a way mediators. Between God and the people. And bringing the message of God. Which is already given in the Bible. But trying to explain and clarify things that has been revealed.

Now we read. Or for I take you to record this day. That I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned.

To declare unto you. All the counsel of God. Now that is a wonderful statement.

Whatever the apostle meant by it. We can be assured. That he is not referring to all the counsels of God.

- [22 : 28] Because no mere man could be able to understand all the counsels of God. The eternal counsel.
- The covenant of grace. And all those who took part in it. The resolutions that were made. Before he created anything. All he was seeing us as we are here.
- He knew you were to be there. And that you were to hear the word of God being spoken today. He was seeing it before he created anything. There is nothing new coming into his mind.
- Now. Now the knowledge. Required for the work of the ministry.
- And he declares. I have not shunned. To declare unto you. All the counsel of God. Now. For myself.
- [23 : 35] I. I am happy. To accept. That the apostle. Here refers. To the counsel. To all the counsel. Connected. With the salvation. Of his church. That he declared. What I have already said. What God devised.
- A covenant of grace. And appointed. A mediator. And in due time. In the fullness of time. That mediator. Came into this world.
- As a man of sorrows. And acquainted with grief. And in that condition. That he. Repaired. Or. Brought in another.
- Way of salvation. Which the first. Adam. Ruined by the fall. So the apostle. He knew. Of the name of God.
- [24 : 34] Concerning. His resolution. To save sinners. He knew. Also. From the scriptures. From the whole of the scripture. The counsel of God.
- As it. Was revealed. Through the prophets. Through Moses. And the prophets. And by the. And by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The counsel of God.
- As it was contained. In the scriptures. Of the old. And the new testament. That that is the counsel. To which he refers. And that there was nothing. In that counsel.
- That he did not declare. It's not what he liked. And what he should. What he should teach to others. That appeal to himself.
- That wasn't his. Method of declaring. The counsel of God. That would be only declaring. His own counsel. And many are doing. That sort of thing. They harp.
- [25 : 29] On the love of God. As if there is nothing. In God. But love. And that is the. The tendency today. To equate. God with love.
- And love is God. Well we see the ridiculousness. Of such teaching. God is love.
- But God is just. God is holy. These are attributes. Of his being. Which are clearly declared. And God is just.
- In all his ways. Now the knowledge. Required. Of a preacher. Is to know. All that counsel. And we know. We know how wide. And how deep. And how high. That counsel of God is.
- [26 : 25] You have only to turn. To the. To the Bible. And see. The wisdom of God. His power. And his knowledge. And his goodness.
- And truth. As well. As. That he is. Unchangeable. In his being. That he. That he is. Infinite. And interchangeable. In his being. And we cannot understand. How these. Statements. Concerning. The of liberty. That he is.
- That he is. Only present. And that he is. Unmissioned. Now that means. That he is everywhere. He reaches. Everywhere. He is down in hell.

He is up in heaven. He is in all his creation. And there we would. As the apostle would say. That he would go to the distant point. Of the universe.

[27 : 21] He is there in all his fullness. And he is also. In all his fullness. With the believer. In his secret place. In his closet.

He is. He is a God. Who is everywhere. And sees everything. In all his things. Now. Paul himself.

Was used. To the revelation. That God. Had given. To him. Concerning. Creation. Concerning. The fall of Adam.

And concerning. His method. Of salvation. Now remember this. That the apostle. Was taught. In that. Revelation.

Of God. As we had it. In the Old Testament. He was shown. The shadows. Of things to come. He was shown. About the.

[28 : 17] The sacrifices. And their meaning. And they never. Penetrated. In spite. Of all that. Learning. And all.

These privileges. Which he received. From the Old Testament. As he was. A student. At the feet. Of Gamaliel. That. He was.

Inclarent. Of the way. Of salvation. He was. Actually. Prosecuting. The church. However. The message. The church. Had. Was taking. The very foundation.

Upon which he was. Building. From of his feet. And therefore. He wanted to destroy. The church. And uphold. The faith. By which he.

Helped. And he. Intended. To enter. Into heaven. Now. We might not be. As rigorous. In attending.

[29 : 11] To these. As the apostles. But it's a very. Liable. Tendency. In every person. Who attains. The means of grace.

That. I mean. That. That. Who comes to church. Regularly. Or often. As often as he can. And. Base. Our salvation. On.

On that alone. That we are doing. All that we can. We are coming to church. And we are hearing. And we are reading. The Bible. We are not reading. The Bible.

But if you will. If you will look. Into yourself. And into your own life. And question. What do you. Do you really want. To be saved? Would you rather.

Be saved. What no. Would you really pray. That the Lord Jesus Christ. Would know. By the Holy Spirit. And to be saved.

[30 : 07] Can you truly tell. God and Israel. That. You would like to be saved. Well. The Apostle Paul.

Had a. At his own way. Like many others. The Pharisees. Of which he was one. The man that. Was not a person. Who was doing. What they were doing.

In order to receive people. They were doing it. For a. For a. For a. For a. For a. Thing in it. They were doing it. In order to get.

Eternal life. In heaven. In glory. To be. That is. That is why. They were so strict. They. They. Based it upon. Their own work.

Giving obedience. To the law. Now we can do. Something similar. By giving. Outward obedience. To the gospel. And we. We assume.

[31 : 05] Of. If we give. Outward obedience. To the gospel. That God. Therefore. Will not cast you away. Right. That will not.

Save anyone. That will not. Save. That will not. Save. A person.

That ever. Though he would. Give his. Body to be burnt. And all his. Substance. To feed the poor. It would. Cleanse away.

One spot of season. There is. Nothing. That can. Save. The sinner. Outward. The blood. Of Jesus Christ. And the.

And the. Apostle Paul. Reminds us. Reminds us. Of this. In verse 21.

[32 : 02] He. He points to it. And try to look at it. Testifying. Both. To the Jews. And to the Greeks. Now you have the two. Kinds of.

Of people there. Both who were religious. They were basing. Their. Their salvation. On the law. These are the Jews. And the Greeks. That.

Testifying. Both. To the Jews. And also. To the Greeks. Repentance. Toward. God. And faith. Towards. Our Lord.

Jesus Christ. That is the two. Cardinal things. In scriptures. That is the way. Of salvation. Repentance.

Towards God. Now repentance. Is a grace. Of God. Whereby. Are we. Turning.

[32 : 57] Our. Back. To God. With. Full intent. Of. Departing. From. Our sins. And. Coming. To God.

Through the Lord. Jesus Christ. That turning. Is turning. Back. To God. Has. Has. Has. Revealed. To us. In Christ. And. Faith.

On the other hand. It's not just. Faith. That Jesus Christ. Came into the world. But. Receiving. Faith. And. Resting. Upon.

Him. Is only the two things. It's not just. Believing. That Christ. Came. But. Receiving him. And. Resting. Upon. Him. Has. The only. Foundation.

Has. The only way. By which. You can. deceived and the salvation immediately you turn to God and exercise that fear upon Christ that you have nothing else but wrestling upon Christ alone for your salvation then immediately you are justified wonderful blessings will flow from the throne of God to the person who repents and believes in Jesus Christ he is immediately justified and the justification is not just to make your heart better or to new graces into your heart it is actually God imputing to you the righteousness which Christ brought out in this world and especially the death which he which he suffered of Calvary he died in the room and in a place of sinners and he made an atoning sacrifice and all that he did in his in his pilgrimage through the world honoring the law and exalting it and glorifying God loving God with all his heart loving his neighbor as himself that's that's the perfection that he continued doing all the time he was in the world and then offering himself as an atoning sacrifice unto God and God poured upon him the wrath and the anger that he that that should be poured upon the sinners he poured it upon Jesus Christ in the room and in his place of his church and now when you believe in Jesus Christ that immediately what Christ has done the obedience he gave the death he gave the death he suffered is imputed to you it's imputed to you as if you had done it yourself as if you had done it on your behalf and you then God pronounces you justified there is no and he cannot punish you for he has already punished Christ you are delivered from the punishment of sin you have to adjust person in the sight of God

[36 : 19] God and the second great privilege that follows upon God is that immediately you justified he adopts you into his family now could you have a greater reward and a higher situation anywhere than to be adopted into the family of God if the if you were adopted into a royal family in this world see you would be made a prince but that is nothing in comparison to be a prince with God that is the status which Jacob received he became Israel a prince with God and that applies to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior he is justified and then adopted into the family and he can truly call him through the Lord Jesus Christ and it doesn't stop at that he then gives us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and the Holy Spirit when he comes into the sinner casts away the the idolatry the idols in the heart whatever idol is there many have different idols in their heart they are cast down and the Holy Spirit indwells in the heart of the person who believes in Jesus Christ and he comes into the Holy Spirit and he comes into the Holy Spirit and therefore he is sanctified immediately these things follow one another and you cannot put one before the other possession of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit is sanctified immediately these things follow on the Holy Spirit and therefore he is or Colossae and whatever the church is, he calls them saints because they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and they become spiritually minded and they begin to understand the things of God and then they become spiritually minded, they understand spiritual things which you never understood before, the Bible becomes new, the preaching of the gospel, they begin to understand, they have a spiritual experience and they go on learning more and more about the mystery of redemption and more and more about themselves. Therefore they knew the kind of the presence they were but never in the way in which they learn about themselves when the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, not only in the knowledge of Christ but in the knowledge of themselves. And they never thought they were such creatures as they are and they see the things in which the views they had before, all things become new. They are as of a new

world and they are in a new life and they have a new destination. God is their Father and they are on the way there and whatever difficulties are in the way, they have the powerful Jehovah of God behind them and in them. And it tells them, fear not for I am with you. Do not dismay it for I am thy God and you can go through fire and water and he will not forsake you. And what can be compared to that?

Looking to an eternal salvation, to an inheritance that shall never fade away and to be joined with that glorious union on the right hand of the Majesty on High where Christ is interceding now.

And will you ask him that you might have a place in his intercession? That he would please intercede for yourself so that the word of God would enter in you and a light in your mind and understand that you are a sinner unworthy of the least but yet that you need the greatest of all to be saved from yourself and from the the leaving of Satan. Save the way you are as when you sinned. Evil angels, evil demons, Satan can whisper into your heart. But when you, if you come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, other good angels can be ministering to you. They are the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole multitude of the, of the holy angels are at the, are at the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. He could have called on twelve legions of angels in Gethsemane if he cared to do so. When he told Peter to, to, to cease with the sword.

The whole, all was hindering and he can use it for your salvation, for every danger in your life. You, if you, if you're on the side of God, you're on the side of safety. He's be with you in, in, in sorrow, in, in, in, in joy.

[42 : 51] Or wherever you go, you can set the Lord before you and you can go from strength to strength and wear it to strength and wear it to you until you arrive in Zion with everlasting joy upon your head.

Well, could we not say that it is a fool who would reject that and carry on in his own life after his own ambitions and spending his life and his money on that which is not bread. Turn, turn ye, turn ye. Why should you die?

May the Lord bless his word to us. Let us pray. Eternal God, we seek thy blessing upon us. We would thank thee for the gospel of Jesus Christ, for making us able to accept it.

And we beseech thee to remember us now as we, as we gather together here in connection with the gospel. And with one who's beginning his life as a minister of the church. We would pray for thy blessing upon him.

And that he may be used in his service in this corner of thy vineyard. And now accept our prayers and bless thine own word. And all we ask is in the name and for the sake of Christ our Lord. Amen.

[44 : 38] Now, before we conclude, I have the pleasure of introducing, which is not necessary for me to do.

It is not coming to you as a stranger. I'm referring to my son, Kenneth Ian McLeod, who is beginning as an assistant to Mr. McLeod in this congregation.

And he is fortunate enough to have experienced life in various ways before he was actually brought to a saving knowledge of Christ.

He has been in secular employment in various places and in various situations. And I believe that that is very useful to a minister of the gospel in order to understand the people to whom he addresses a message of salvation.

That he, like Ezekiel, that he could sit where they were sitting. He sat where they sat. And that he can understand a part of their trials and part of their difficulties.

[46 : 08] But he has something else, as I was trying to say, he had to learn the whole counsel of God.

Now, although that is taught in divinity halls, they can only teach the mind. But everyone who is truly converted comes into the college of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm fully persuaded that he came to that knowledge. And that he knows the Lord Jesus Christ has his personal savior.

And he teaches his soul. And he teaches them sometimes in a way that they themselves cannot understand that it is a teaching.

He brings them into situations that only themselves can truly experience. Each one has his own personal experience. And the Lord knows our frame of mind. And he teaches according to what we are.

[47 : 23] And I have pleasure in referring to him as such, as a person who has quite an experience of life.

And, though he is beginning his ministry, he is not just a young student just finishing his course at all. He is a person who has already partaken of the trials and difficulties of life.

And I pray that he will prove a true and a helpful assistant to Mr. MacLeod in this corner of the vineyard.

And we shall conclude this part of the meeting.