

his preaching, and the design of his preaching: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." How doth he do it? Verse 29, "Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." There is not one word in our translation that answers the emphasis of the original words,— "Whereunto I labour,"—*Εἰς ὃ καὶ κοπιῶ*. *Κοπιῶ* is to labour with diligence and intention, with weariness and industry. "I labour 'usque ad fatigationem'—to the spending of myself. Striving (*ἀγωνίζομαι*),—striving as a man that runs in a race, or striving as a man that wrestles for victory,"—as men did in their public contests. And how? *Κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν αὐτοῦ*,—"According to the effectual in-working, or inward operation, of him (*ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἐμοί*) who does effectually work in me." We cannot reach the emphasis by any words in our language. And how is all this? *Ἐν δυνάμει*,—"With mighty power." Here is the frame of the apostle's spirit (it should give dread to us in the consideration of it): "I labour diligently, I strive as in a race, I wrestle for victory,—by the mighty in-working power of Christ working in me; and that with great and exceeding power."

What I shall do is, to show you, in some instances, what is required unto this work of teaching or of feeding the congregation with knowledge and understanding, in this duty of preaching the word:—

1. There is *spiritual wisdom* in understanding the mysteries of the gospel, that we may be able to declare the whole counsel of God, and the riches and treasures of the grace of Christ, unto the souls of men. See Acts xx. 27; 1 Cor. ii. 1–4; Eph. iii. 7–9. Many in the church of God were, in those days of light, growing and thriving; they had a great insight into spiritual things, and into the mysteries of the gospel. The apostle prays that they might all have it, Eph. i. 17, 18, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Really it is no easy thing for ministers to instruct to such kind of duties. If there be not some degree of eminency in themselves, how shall we lead on such persons as these to perfection? We must labour ourselves to have a thorough knowledge of these mysteries, or we shall be useless to a great part of the church. There is spiritual wisdom and understanding in the mysteries of the gospel required hereunto.

2. *Authority* is required. What is authority in a preaching ministry? It is a consequent of unction, and not of office. The scribes had an outward call to teach in the church; but they had no unction, no

anointing, that could evidence they had the Holy Ghost in his gifts and graces. Christ had no outward call; but he had an unction,—he had a full unction of the Holy Ghost in his gifts and graces, for the preaching of the gospel. Hereon there was a controversy about his authority. The scribes say unto him, Mark xi. 28, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" The Holy Ghost determines the matter, Matt. vii. 29, "He preached as one having authority, and not as the scribes." They had the authority of office, but not of unction; Christ only had that. And preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit, which men quarrel so much about, is nothing less than the evidence in preaching of unction, in the communication of gifts and grace unto them, for the discharge of their office: for it is a vain thing for men to assume and personate authority. So much evidence as they have of unction from God in gifts and grace, so much authority they have, and no more, in preaching: and let every one, then, keep within his bounds.

3. Another thing required hereunto is, *experience* of the power of the things we preach to others. I think, truly, *that no man preaches that sermon well to others that doth not first preach it to his own heart*. He who doth not feed on, and digest, and thrive by, what he prepares for his people, he may give them poison, as far as he knows; for, unless he finds the power of it in his own heart, he cannot have any ground of confidence that it will have power in the hearts of others. *It is an easier thing to bring our heads to preach than our hearts to preach*. To bring our heads to preach, is but to fill our minds and memories with some notions of truth, of our own or other men, and speak them out to give satisfaction to ourselves and others: this is very easy. But to bring our hearts to preach, is to be transformed into the power of these truths; or to find the power of them, both before, in fashioning our minds and hearts, and in delivering of them, that we may have benefit; and to be acted with zeal for God and compassion to the souls of men. A man may preach every day in the week, and not have his heart engaged once. This hath lost us powerful preaching in the world, and set up, instead of it, quaint orations; for such men never seek after experience in their own hearts: and so it is come to pass, that some men's preaching, and some men's not preaching, have lost us the power of what we call the ministry; that though there be twenty or thirty thousand in orders, yet the nation perishes for want of knowledge, and is overwhelmed in all manner of sins, and not delivered from them unto this day.

4. *Skill* to divide the word aright. This skill to divide the word aright, is *practical wisdom* in considering the word of God,—to take out not only that which is substantial food for the souls of men, but what is meet food for them to whom we preach. And that,—

Owen, John. Sermons to the Church. Vol. 9 of The Works of John Owen. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967.