

The Ordained Lamp

by A.W. Pink

God ordains the Gospel lamp to shine in certain places and at certain times to bring people to salvation and edify them.

Scripture: Psalm 89:20

Topics: "Sovereignty Of God", "The Gospel's Light"

Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the significance of the Gospel as the 'ordained lamp' that illuminates the darkness of the world, highlighting God's promises to His church and the role of Christ as the Anointed One. He explains that the Gospel was established by divine decree, beginning from eternity and shining through the ages, even amidst adversity. Pink illustrates how God sovereignly appoints where, when, and through whom the Gospel is preached, ensuring that His elect hear the message of salvation. He stresses that the effectiveness of the Gospel is not determined by human effort but by God's sovereign will, as He decides the measure of success for each minister. Ultimately, the sermon calls believers to recognize the divine orchestration behind the spread of the Gospel and to trust in God's plan for His church.

Transcript

The first part of this Psalm records a series of prayer-petitions; from verse 11 to the close are a number of great and precious promises relating to David and his family in the type, but mainly and ultimately to Christ and His New Testament church in the antitype. Let the reader constantly bear in mind this important principle and fact, namely, that everything in the Old Testament Scriptures typified or represented Gospel or Eternal realities. First, God here promises to fix His residence in the church (vv. 13-14). Then, to bless the provision He makes for her (v. 15). To give her faithful and successful ministers (v. 16). That, however low the interests of Christ on earth may be brought, even though (like Himself) it may appear a root in a dry place, yet, like a tree well planted in the ground, but sore lopt and hacked by man and Satan, it will sprout again (v. 16).

In our present verse three things are before us. First, the designation which is given unto the Saviour of sinners by the Father: He calls Him "Mine Anointed." Though despised and rejected of men, though an unbelieving world see no form nor comeliness in Him, God owns Him as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His church: compare Psalm 89:20-21. Second, the chief agency of God's ordering for the manifestation of Christ to a lost world: "I have ordained a lamp for Mine Anointed." This is the Gospel. The use of a lamp is to give light to people in the darkness of the night: so the proclamation of Christ's glorious person, offices,

and work, is a light shining in a dark place, until the day of glory dawns. Third, the sovereign authority by which this Gospel "lamp" is lighted and carried through this dark world: it is "ordained" of God: it is by Divine command that His servants preach and spread the light of the Gospel: compare Mark 16:15, 20.

This Gospel "lamp" was first set up in the purpose of God from eternity, in the "counsel of peace" (Zech. 6:13 and cf. Prov. 8:22-23, 31), when the whole plan of salvation through Christ was laid. Second, this "lamp" was first lighted in this lower world immediately after the fall in paradise: when a dark and dismal night of woe had spread itself over our first parents, a gleam of hope then shone out through the promise of Genesis 3:15. Third, the lamp of the Gospel shone prophetically (Gal. 3:8) and typically (Heb. 4:2) during all the Old Testament period. It shone, as it were, through a veil. Fourth, after the coming of Christ in the flesh, and His resurrection and ascension into Heaven, the lamp of Gospel light was brightened and its blessed rays were more widely diffused, but even then (and now) according to the sovereign pleasure of God. To show how much God is concerned about this "lamp" of the everlasting Gospel, we mention several things which He had ordained concerning it.

1. God has appointed those places and parts of the world where the Gospel lamp shall be set up and shine: "The wind bloweth where it listethso is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). It was so in Old Testament times: "He showeth His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Ps. 147:19-20). It was so when Christ was upon Earth: to His apostles He said, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). It was so after His ascension: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the regions of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:6-7).

That which regulates God in His providential dealings concerning the Gospel--opening doors or shutting them, sending one of His ministers to a place or withdrawing him--is whether or not there be some of those for whom Christ died in that particular locality: for the "sheep" shall hear His voice (John 10:16). Where there is no Gospel preaching for a protracted period, it is an indication that none of God's elect are there. "Also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvests: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered" (Amos 4:7). So it is spiritually, and for the reason thus given.

2. God has appointed how long the Gospel lamp shall remain in each place, before it be sent to another part of the earth. He ordered how long it should shine among the Jews, namely, until Christ came. He ordained how long it should shine in each of the seven churches in Asia before He came and removed His candlestick. So He has decreed where and when the Gospel shall continue in this country. There is probably more real Gospel preaching in China today, than there is in the U.S.A. Many a church which was once a bright testimony for Christ is so no longer, nor does it know that "Ichabod" ("the glory is departed") has been written over it. Many a town which formerly was blest with the ministry of a true servant of God is now left desolate.

3. God has appointed which persons should be converted and edified under the Gospel, when He sends it to any nation or congregation. The Most High has not left it to the caprice of His servants nor to the whims of their hearers, what measure of success the proclamation of His truth shall enjoy. No, the Lord holds in His own right hand the instruments which He employs (Rev. 1:16), and causes His Word to be either a

"savor of death unto death" or "a savor of life unto life." Paul was bidden by the Lord to remain at Corinth, for, said He, "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). On the other hand, God suffered him not to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7).

When a servant of God settles in a new place he knows not who are the particular ones that he has been ordained a blessing unto. His business is to preach the Word to all who will hear him, leaving it with the Spirit to make whatever application He pleases. The election of grace shall obtain eternal life, the rest will be blinded (Rom. 11:7). Some will prove to be wayside hearers, others stony-ground hearers, and yet others thorny-ground hearers: only a few will give evidence that they are good-ground hearers; but that is all in the hands of "the Lord of the harvest." Nor should we desire it to be otherwise. God is working out His own eternal purpose, and absolute subjection to the Master's will is what is required of servants. A beam of the Gospel lamp will shine into one heart, when many others are left in nature's darkness.

"Why was I made to hear His voice

And enter while there's room?

While others make a wretched choice,

And rather starve than come.

'Twas the same love that spread the feast,

Which sweetly forced me in;

Else I had still refused to taste,

And perished in my sin."

4. God has ordained by what instrument or minister the Gospel lamp shall be brought unto a people or a particular person. Paul was ordained for the Gentiles, Peter for the Jews; but every one of Christ's servants is guided by the hand of the sovereign Lord to labour in this, or that, or the other part of His vineyard. The stars are held in His right hand (Rev. 1:16), and He causes them to shine in this or that orb of His church; and, when he pleases, He removes them from one place to another in His kingdom, where He has other work for them; and when He takes them to heaven, then they that "turn many to righteousness" shall shine "as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

It is not by chance of "good luck" (horrible expression for any child of God to use!) that any one is privileged to sit under the ministry of a man of God to whom the Spirit blesses such to his conversion. No, when God works, He works at both ends of the line, making "all things work together for good" unto His own. It was sovereign grace which selected the Lord of glory to be the one who should preach the Word of life to the Samaritan adulteress (John 4). It was sovereign grace which appointed Philip to be the Spirit's mouthpiece to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). It was sovereign grace which determined that Peter should give forth the word of salvation to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10): Cornelius was a Roman, and Paul (already then saved) was the apostle to the Gentiles, yet Peter (the apostle to the circumcision) was the one sent to him!

5. God has ordained the measure of fruit which each servant of His shall reap from his labours, the degree of success which each Gospel lamp-bearer shall have. He has determined what number of souls should

be edified, and which shall be hardened by his light. "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). It is not always the most gifted ministers, nor the most godly, who are the most successful. So far as we can ascertain from the Gospel records, fewer souls were saved under the preaching of Christ Himself than under Peter's on the day of Pentecost! Why? "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew 11:26) must be the answer.

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