

Encouraging Godly Leaders

4 October, 2009

By Rev. Lonny R. Bower

Scripture Reference – Acts 20:13-38

Unit Theme: The Expanding Church

Central Truth: Christians can best encourage godly leaders by following their example.

Focus: Examine principles of godly leadership and make them priorities in living for Christ.

Key Verse: Acts 20:28

Introduction:

We find Paul headed for Jerusalem, but yet still doing the work of preaching the gospel, imparting divine direction and revelation to his followers. This is the genuine call of all apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers – to feed their followers the living word of God. I view Paul as the epitome of a godly leader, whatever ones ministry gift is they would do well to emulate Paul. Very few have ever been able to say as Paul did – “follow me as I follow Christ”

(1 Corinthians 11:1) Paul was able to accomplish unthinkable things even in the face of continual adversity. He never complained, but kept the greater purpose of his call in view – to feed the church of God. ¹*The elders knew that Paul was no designing, self-seeking man. Those who would in any office serve the Lord acceptably, and profitably to others, must do it with humility. He was a plain preacher, one that spoke his message so as to be understood. He was a powerful preacher; he preached the gospel as a testimony to them if they received it; but as a testimony against them if they rejected it. He was a profitable preacher; one that aimed to inform their judgments, and reform their hearts and lives. He was a painful preacher, very industrious in his work. He was a faithful preacher; he did not keep back reproofs when necessary, nor keep back the preaching of the cross. He was a truly Christian, evangelical preacher; he did not preach notions or doubtful matters; nor affairs of state or the civil government; but he preached faith and repentance. A better summary of these things, without which there is no salvation, cannot be given: even repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, with their fruits and effects. Without these no sinner can escape, and with these none will come short of eternal life. Let them not think that Paul left Asia for fear of persecution; he was in full expectation of trouble, yet resolved to go on, well assured that it was by Divine direction. The powerful influences of the Holy Spirit bind the true Christian to his duty. Even when he expects persecution and affliction, the love of Christ constrains him to proceed. None of these things moved Paul from his work; they did not deprive him of his comfort. Believing that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals concerning his integrity. He had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the gospel purely, so he had preached it to them entire; he faithfully did his work, whether men would bear or forbear. We cannot choose*

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who will receive the word or not, but we can choose how we live our life, whether or not we genuinely and wholeheartedly follow Christ. It is our godly example that will carry on long after we are gone and it is our genuine Christ likeness that will substantiate the word that we preach wherever the Spirit leads us.

I. Serve God Wholeheartedly – Acts 20:17-24

No one in their right mind would ever choose tribulations or persecution, yet as Christians this is what we can expect. Jesus said in John 15:20 that we would be persecuted, then again He reminds us (in case we forgot) through Paul (2 Timothy 3:12) who says those who live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It is how we respond to this persecution that defines our character. The devil would want us to get “spun around the axel” and lose focus on what our purpose is – to preach the gospel. It is when we lose sight of our purpose that we find ourselves in trouble – lashing out, saying things and doing things that do not honor God. We must keep our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Knowing that because He endured, we too can endure and if we are faithful, He will give us a harvest. Paul knew that tribulation awaited him in Jerusalem, yet he refused to allow this knowledge to change his course. We must be more dedicated to fulfilling the purpose of Christ than we are to fulfilling our own desires for comfort. Living this way allows God to demonstrate His power through us; this is our greatest potential, and in fact is what we were created to do – demonstrate God’s power through our daily lives. It just doesn’t get any better than that.

➤ **Think about it:**

What does it mean to serve God with your whole heart?

Does God get the glory when you are persecuted – why or why not?

“It takes a very short time to lose a good reputation but a long, long time to get another one.”—Muncie Evening Press

II. Care for God’s People – Acts 20:25-31

The Lord is not pleased when His servants just share part of the word – we must preach, live and teach the whole counsel of God. Many preachers will not preach against sin, they know nothing

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of holiness and are missing it when it comes to the urgency of the Lord's return. The message cannot be watered down and it must not be hidden. We must care enough to get out of our comfort zones and go and preach – to all who will hear. Many today know God's word inside and out, upside down and backwards, yet they mistakenly think that God will bring the people to them – how wrong they are! Jude 1:23 says that some we will snatch from the fire – to do this we must leave the comfort of our pews and attack the gates of hell. I often feel the Spirit of the Lord burning within me, relating to Jeremiah (20:9) who said that the Lord's word was as fire shut up in His bones! I can't keep silent less I be consumed with the word that burns within me. This word is not just for me, in fact, I only partially benefit until I share it with God's people, then I receive the fullness thereof. One who receives, but does not share God's word, is lukewarm at best and will never realize their full potential. It is when we learn to not only walk in God's word, but proclaim it that His word has full affect in our lives and the lives of those around us. **Ezekiel 34:2** the Lord rebuked the shepherds who did not feed the sheep, but were only concerned about themselves. They snatched no one from the fires of hell, rescued no one from danger. These are the savage wolves Paul warned about. It is the whole word of God that equips us to be able to stand in the day of adversity. God loves us so much that He sent His only Son to shed His blood for us – the least we can do in return is to love Him back by caring for His people.

➤ **Think about it:**

Has God called you to care for His people, if so how are you doing this?

“Some wish to live within the sound of church and chapel bells. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.” —C.T. Studd

III. Love Sacrificially – Acts 20:32-38

One can be known for their charisma, their speaking abilities, their wealth and even their compassion. But of all the things that set us apart from the world the word of God must be preeminent to everything else. We must not neglect the word – it should not be second to anything in our lives, not our education, entertainment or even vocation. We must learn to make

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it priority and to incorporate it in every area of our life – this is what sets godly leaders apart from everyone else. Paul was able to encourage the Ephesian disciples with the word because he himself lived it – all the time. Many struggle in their faith and their walk today and do not have the power of God (their full potential) evident in their lives because they have not made the word of God superlative to everything else. The word builds us up, it is the word that sustains us. In Matthew 4:4 Jesus quoted the word from Deuteronomy 8:3 – man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Furthermore, Hebrews 4:12 says the word of God is living and powerful.... Those who neglect it are dying and those who have rejected it are dead! Paul reveals his integrity and righteousness in that he was not motivated by money – he did not covet riches. He was motivated by the gospel and its potential to change lives (**1 Corinthians 9:16-18**). There are many who have lost sight of the purpose of giving; it is not to make godly leaders prosper, but to further the kingdom. Paul had no problem laboring for his living so that he could continue to present the gospel free of charge. His love for people drove him to do the impossible – we will never fully know his sacrifice.

➤ **Think about it:**

Where is the word of God placed in your life?

Is your giving used to further the spread of the gospel?

“Money is a means, not an end—a tool to provide people with opportunities to hear and accept the gospel of Christ.”—Charles Stanley

Conclusion:

In 3 John 1:4 John states that he has no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in truth. This is the desire of every godly leader that their followers not just hear the truth but walk in truth (James 1:22). However, if we do not walk in truth ourselves then how can we expect our followers to? The manner of life Paul referred to in verse 18 was without question above reproach. We must not willfully do anything, and we must avoid all things that would seemingly bring reproach on our call or on our Lord. It is most difficult to convince anyone what the will of

