

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Paul's View of the Ministry, Part 2: Evangelism and Sacrifice

Scripture: Acts 20:21-24

Code: 1778

We've entitled this two part message Paul Looks at His Ministry, Paul Looks at his Ministry. And this is part two. And we'll be doing some review from our last one to bring you into perspective for this morning.

Certainly the chapter that we're studying, the 20th Chapter is expressive of the great love of Paul for the church. We've seen this again and again, all through the 20th Chapter. We usually think of Paul's love chapter as 1 Corinthians 13, you know, where it expresses all about love. Well you might say that 1 Corinthians 13 is a love chapter in doctrine, and Acts 20 is Paul's love in action, because certainly here, he expresses his love for the Lord and his love for the church by the sacrifice of himself and his dedication to his ministry. So we've learned much about Paul's love for the church in this chapter, and shall continue to see some of it as we go this morning.

I suppose in the mentality of today, if we were to examine the apostle Paul and he were present with us, and he were invited to be our guest, we would want to find out his methods for success. This is a day when methodology is a marketable commodity. And even churches today and religious organizations are both selling and buying success methods. There is even a whole curriculum of material called Success With Youth, in which the whole effort is to bring about a successful response. The word success is a tremendously dominating word in our world, and we look, so very often, at success in terms of method.

When somebody is successful, the first thing we want to do is bottle his method and transport it somewhere. And I suppose if Paul were here today and a whole lot of churches leaders gathered around him, they'd start pumping him on the area of, well how did you do this? What are the techniques for reaching a city? Or what are the patterns for growing a church? Or how do you work this way? Or what is this little trick that you may use here? Or so forth or so on.

And we could do that 'til we were blue in the face and never get to the real success of Paul unless he sidetracked us off of that and got us on the main track, because the success of the apostle Paul how do nothing to do with his methods, and I don't hesitate to say that. It had nothing to do with his methods directly. Indirectly the methods grew out of what he was and were important. But Paul's success was totally based upon who he was.

I just spoke at a conference on leadership, and they had trained a whole lot of leaders for 10 weeks, you know, they had all kinds of graphs, and charts, and things that they had trained them in, and all were very good and very helpful. And I was asked to give a keynote thing to wrap it all up and express, in one statement as best I could, in one message, what success was Biblically. Now that, at first seemed like a monstrous problem to try to reduce it all, all of this down, what leadership is, what successful leadership is in one message. And, you know what, I reduced it to one message and, better than that, I reduced it to one word. I said a few more things after I said that word.

[Laughter]

I want you to know. But anyway I reduced it to one word, and the one word that spells leadership, and the one word that spells successes is the word, example. Example. In all of Christian leadership, that is the most dynamic thing that happens. It's expressed throughout the Scriptures.

You take, for example, the Lord Jesus Christ who taught repeatedly by example. Do to people what I have done to you. He expressed his love in service by washing their feet. Time and again, Jesus manifested what they were to do by doing it himself. In Acts 1:1, Luke says, "The former treatise have I written to you, Theopholos, of all that Jesus began to do and teach." Jesus not only taught but he set example. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and told him how to be a leader, he put it in one statement, "Be thou an example to the believers," right.

The Apostle Paul said to the Philippians, "The things that you have seen in me, do them." Example. Peter said to the elders, he said, "You take care of the flock, and you feed the flock, and you take the oversight of the flock, not as being lords over it with a big club, but being examples.

And people, the reason Paul was so successful was he was an example. There was no credibility gap between what he said and what he was, and people patterned their lives after him. He said, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." The Christian life boils down to example and Biblical leadership is example. And the thing that made Paul what he was was the example, not of his methods but of his life. And if you want to know how to be successful in the ministry, or you want to know how to be successful in building whatever particular objective you have in mind, it is as simple, spiritually speaking as being the right kind of person.

And I don't care what gimmicks you've got for leadership, if you're not the right example, you'll never pull it off. Leadership is example. This is true even in the secular world. But, monumentally true in the spiritual. And so rather than caring about what Paul's methods were, and tricks of the trade, and gimmicks, which he didn't have, I'm concerned about what kind of a man he was. Because if I can pattern my life spiritually after the things that made him spiritually successful, then I can have the same kind of fruitfulness that God gave him. Maybe not the same dimension and the same degree, but the same in kind.

And so I'm not concerned with talking about all of the avenues of approach that Paul used as much as I am concerned about talking about the kind of man that he was, because if my life can at all approximate the kind of man he was, I'll know the kind of fruitfulness that he knew.

And so as we look at Acts Chapter 20, we're seeing some of the greatest insights into effective ministry, and they're not pedantic, they're not academically strung out in a list, they're just there in his life, and they just ooze out of him, but they're the keys to everything.

And so, really, to reduce Paul to a list of successful techniques is absolutely wrong. He was a man that was what he was because he was the man that he was. And believe me, people, the Christian life is as simple as being what God wants you to be and then letting the spirit work through you. That's what I tried to express in the little book we wrote on God's will, that if you're the right person, God'll express his will through you. It's a question of being the right person. And Paul's success was because he was right, he was called of God, empowered by the spirit, he yielded to that power, lived a holy life, and through that avenue, the spirit of God operated with blessedness.

But there's one little dimension here in this chapter that just gives us an insight into Paul's mind that really helps us see the man that he was. And that is in versus 17 to 27, we have Paul's view of the ministry. He saw the ministry in perspective, and he saw in four different dimensions: He saw his ministry as it related to God; to the saved; to the lost; and to himself. And they were all spiritual perspectives. He saw the ministry for being what it was, a ministry toward God, toward saved, toward lost, and an obligation toward himself.

And, you know, you don't need any more than that. I know in my heart, that if I ever got into the position that Paul is in in Acts 20, and ever really and honestly and totally felt these four dimensions the way he feels them, that the world wouldn't be able to handle the impact of my own life. And that's true of yours as well. Because these four things, as simple as they are, are the heart of the success of the man.

Now the setting is Miletus, verse 17, Paul is completing his 3rd missionary tour, the church is being planted around the world, that's the story of the book of acts. By this time it's reached the gentile world. Paul himself has been the great agent of that planting, establishing churches all over the eastern Mediterranean area.

And now coming back from this third tour under great persecution and stress, he lands at Miletus, headed for Jerusalem, he's got a lot of money that he's gonna give the poor saints of Jerusalem from the gentile church, he wants to tie the two together and show their love, and so he's got all this money with him, he's got some other men with him who represent the gentile church, and they're headed for there Jerusalem trying to make it by the time of the feast of Pentecost. But he has a couple days lay

over in Miletus, which was on the shore of Asia Minor, right near Ephesus.

And so he sends to Ephesus, verse 17 says, and calls for the elders for the church, about 30 miles away, and he wants the elders of Ephesus to come down, because he has a few more things to say before he leaves and he thinks this'll be the last time. He knows the churches are growing there, they're reproducing themselves, there have been elders raised up in each city, he knows that the fruit has already begun to be born and there are probably already second and third generation believers, and he knows his primary work is done. He also is very much aware that the Jews are on his trial, there's a torrid persecution on him, and so he feels this is a farewell, and he wants a last word with the elders at Ephesus where he spent three years and whom he loves so deeply. So he calls them.

Then in verse 18, he announces to them, the subject of their discussion. "And when they were come to him," they came all the 30 mile distance, "He said to them, 'You know, from the first day that I came into Asia Minor, the first day that I arrived in your area, you know what manner I have been with you at all seasons.'" In other words, you know my lifestyle, you know the patterns of my living and ministering.

And then he, from there says, "Now I will remind you of those patterns for they must become the patterns of your life and ministry. You know," he says, "How I have been with you at all times, you know, my priorities. Now let me remind you that these are to be your priorities." And so he begins then, by saying, this is how I conduct myself, this is how to conduct yourselves as leaders of the church. And, again, he comes back to, real leadership is a question of what? Example.

You know how I did it, now let me tell you, and refresh you, for this is the way that you must do it. Now how did he see his ministry? Four ways, toward God, toward the church, toward the lost, toward himself. And then we saw, last time, toward God he saw his ministry as service to the Lord. His Godward view of his ministry was, that in all the time he ministered, he kept in his mind, I'm not serving men, and I'm not serving the whims and fancies of the people, I'm serving the Lord. So whatever the Lord tells me to do, I do that without worrying about what people are gonna say.

That's a great thing to learn, you know. The ministry was, to the apostle Paul, service to the Lord. He saw himself in the mentality of a servant. In Romans 1, he says in verse 1, "A servant of Christ," but in verse 9 he says, "God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit." He didn't just serve God externally but internally. He saw himself as a slave, and he uses the word *Doulos* over and over again, and the word means a slave, a bond slave, a slave in bondage. Paul saw himself serving God.

Now the mentality of a servant is this, I obey orders. That's a servant. Therefore, the mentality of Christian ministry is obedience, isn't it. God gives the orders and I carry them out, I don't worry about what the reaction's gonna be, I don't worry about what people are gonna say, I don't try to please men. Galatians 1:10, Paul said, "If I try to please men I am not the servant of Jesus Christ." So he

says, "I have got to serve God," that's the mentality of the servant, he gives the orders, I carry them out. Legitimately

But the beautiful thing about it was he didn't just do it on the outside, he loved it on the inside. He had the spirit of obedience as well as the actual obedience. He never changed his message, he never altered his plans at all because of what men did. He believed that God gave him something to do and he was gonna do it.

And, you know, this is a sad thing to admit, but throughout the history of the church, the church has taken a back seat a lot of times because of the whims of men, and watered down all kinds of ministries so that they don't offend people. In fact, sometimes it's amazing how we work hard at trying to make everything so palatable that it loses all of its meaning.

I think about the 17th Century Jesuit Priests who went to China. And they arrived in China and they were so startled at the tremendous culture of the Chinese people, and at the very elite character of these people, that they felt that the basic gospel would be offensive to them. So, history tells us that the Jesuits redrafted the gospel, omitted everything they felt would be offensive to the Chinese, including the crucifixion, and went from there.

And, you know, that goes on today. Believe me. There's no place for such service to Jesus Christ is complete slavery, and whatever the orders are, we obey with the spirit of obedience. That's how Paul saw his ministry, not as pleasing me, but as pleasing God.

Now he said to, in verse 19, there are two ingredients in this, here comes his first statement, toward God he says, "Serving the Lord." Now that's the way he viewed his ministry Godward, it was service to Christ. Serving the Lord, but here are two ingredients, "With all humility of mind and many tears and trials from the plotting of the Jews." He said there are two things that go with service, humility and suffering. And the suffering comes from two things, inside and outside: Inside tears, outside persecution.

So he realized that servitude has with it two things: Humility and suffering. Humility is basic to being a servant. You can't be effective as a servant unless you see yourself as lower than your master, right. It's gotta be. You cannot see yourself in terms of honest servitude unless you see yourself in subjection to him who is your Lord. And that's basic. And Paul saw himself that way. And he said, even in that I glory.

I mean, occasionally he would boast and he would say, I only boast in the Lord, I'm not boasting about who the servant is, I'm boasting about who the servant gets to serve. I'm excited about just being able to serve the King of kings.

And so there is, then, basic to every Christians ministry, a tremendous consciousness that it is nothing more, but it is nothing less than serving the Lord of lords and the King of kings. What a high calling. To be called into his chamber to be his personal servant. But it's service, and it involves humility.

That's why the apostle Paul gives all the lists of ministries, in Romans 12, he says, the first thing you do is, you do not think more highly of yourself that you ought to think. Why? Because if you do you're not going to submit yourself as a servant.

In 1 Corinthians 3, let me illustrate this by showing you how Paul viewed his ministry. 1 Corinthians 1, first of all. The Corinthians had split into factions, this is the first exercise of denominationalism. And in the 1 Corinthians 1, they were having all kinds of hassles, contentions, and division, and fightings, and the reason was they were all split into groups. In verse 12 he says, 1 Corinthians 1:12, "Now this I say, every year one of you," he says, I'm a Paul, I'm a Paulite myself, follow him. Whatever Paul says I'm for that. Somebody else says, well I'm of Appolis, I'm an Appolis man myself; well I'm a Sefist, Sefist, Peter. Then there's always those that come along and say, we're of Christ. They were just as contentious as the rest.

And then Paul says, is Christ divided, was Paul crucified for you, were you baptized in the name of Paul? How'd you ever get all split up? But over in verse 5 of chapter 3, he really, really makes a great statement and it gets lost sometimes, the, in the general interpretation of this passage, because it's just kind of tucked in there. But it says this, "Who then is Paul and who is Appolis?"

I like that. He just says, you think we're anything? Who am I, I'm nothing, I'm nothing. If you've got a fantastic commodity over here and you wanted to deposit it over here, the funnel you pour it through doesn't have anything to do with it, it's just there. Paul says, I'm nothing, I'm just there so God can get through to you. I'm nothing but a channel, no glory in me. Who am I, who's Appolis. I love this, "But servants, by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man." We didn't do this, we were just there, servant, Diachonos, it means service. We were servants, that's all, and that's the only way to look at your ministry.

Because, to begin with, you see, then your faithfulness to the Lord is basic, isn't it, because you're a servant. If you do not obey the Lord, my friend, whatever else you do can never make up with that, for that, because you are basically a servant. If you don't serve, then what do you do? That's basic. So he says, we're servants, well ballyhoo us, we're nothing. And he had the servant spirit when he came to Corinth in the chapter there right before, chapter 2, he says, "I didn't come with fancy words and great speech and try to show you what a wonderful guy I was and use all kinds of long words and all my philosophical knowledge and really blow you out of the tub and show you what a terrific person, I just came in there and I determined nothing, to know nothing among you except Christ and him

crucified. Why? "Because I didn't want your faith to depend on me," verse 5, "But I wanted it to stand in the power of God." I wasn't looking for followers for me, I was looking for followers for Jesus.

The worst thing a man could ever do is build loyalty to himself. That only makes factions in the church. The only thing you should be interested in is being such a faithful servant to Jesus Christ that every single thing you do ultimately points to him.

Paul saw himself first, then, as a servant of the Lord. In terms of the kind of service, the Achonos service, ministry, and depth of service, Dulos, he was a slave and he loved every bit of it; secondly, and reviewing still, he saw his ministry towards the church too. He knew the priority toward the church, and we said there in verse 20 of Acts 20, that toward the church his ministry was seen as teaching. For God it was service, for the church it was teaching. Verse 20, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have shown you and have taught you publicly and from house to house."

Now watch this, he says, "I have shown you and taught you." What do you see there again, what's our word for leadership? Example. It isn't just saying it, friends, it's being it. It's being it, that is the heart of it. So the heart of every Christian is not what he says, it is what he is. This is what makes the difference.

And Paul says now, "I have taught you and I have shown you in my life," taught you publicly and from house to house. Now here he's talking of his relation to the church. I kept back nothing that was profitable. You say, well what's profitable. I'll tell you what's profitable, 2 Timothy 3:16, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is, what? Profitable. All Scriptures, so Paul taught publicly, from house to house, taught, taught, taught. What was profitable? The word was profitable, that's what he taught. And he's the guy who said 2 Timothy 3:16, so he must have known he was saying what he was saying.

For him everything in the church took on the character of teaching. When he wrote to Timothy and told him how to handle his church, he said, you just keep reading the text, explaining the text until I get there. He wrote later on to him and said, preach the word in season and out of season, preach it when you're suppose to and when you're not, just keep preaching it.

And he taught in two places, publicly, remember in the school if Tyrannous, and from house to house, he went to the home and reinforced what he was teaching. The love of the ministry is teach, the ministry is communicating divine truth.

Paul expressed this in another verse in 1 Corinthians 4, and I can't bypass the point without showing it to you, 'cause it's so basic to this particular concept. But in 1 Corinthians 4:1, he says, "Let a man sew account of us." In other words, when the books are written and they write down our name, let it

be said that we were like this. Like what? As ministers of Christ, there's that word service again, servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. What's a mystery? It's something that was hidden and is now revealed. That's the Bible, it's a whole lot of mysteries revealed. We're stewards of the Bible.

If I'm a minister, I am a steward of this. You say, what's a steward? Well, let's say you're living in Paul's day, we'll put it in his context, and you had a nice house and some land and some servants, and in those days, you know, you had, the houses grew up because often times the kids would get married and live in the same place and they'd add a little addition on. So, you know, the big family would grow on a piece of land and they had, let's say you had animals, you had a whole lot of stuff; a lot of servants, a lot of food, and a lot of processing of various things going on, and you had a business. But you were the house owner, and in order to keep the business alive you had to be on the move. You would turn over the running of your whole operation to a person called a steward. And this guy would direct everything. He would pay the wages of the employees, he would set up the time schedules, he would determine the priority of jobs, of course you'd work with him, but he'd be the guy to carry it out when you were out of town. He would make sure that nobody overdid their eating so that they ran short on food, because, in most cases, they supplied their own. He would make sure everything was dispensed in a balanced diet, he would work through the kitchen staff as well as the people in the fields, taking care of the animals, etcetera, etcetera. He managed the whole thing.

Now Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:2, it is required as stewards that a man be found faithful. Now you can understand that, can't you? And if you turned over your whole operation to a guy that wasn't faithful, you'd really have a mess when you got back. And that's why the Lord dealt so seriously with the servant who was given a stewardship, remember, of a Talent, and he buried it. He didn't dispense that which was, he was given to dispense, he didn't multiple that which he was given. He was unfaithful in his stewardship, he hoarded it.

And so the steward had to be a faithful, trustworthy person. I mean if you couldn't trust him he could steal from the cash box, he could pilfer food, he could mess you up badly. And so he needed to be faithful. But, basically, the whole character of his work was as a steward of something that didn't belong to him, he managed it.

As a minister you're a steward, I'm a steward. You say, what am I a steward of. I'm a steward of the mysteries of God, I'm a steward of this book. God has said, John MacArthur, I'm gonna give you this book and I'm gonna give you some people, and you're all sittin here right now, and you're a gift from God to me. And God says, with this book, feed those people, that's your stewardship. Now I'm gonna be in heaven, I'm gonna put my spirit within you because you need the spirit to do it, but it's your stewardship and you're gonna be responsible for the carrying out of it, and I want you, more than anything else, to be faithful.

You know that helps me simplify my ministry. You know what my ministry is, it's to get this book from my hand into your heart. That's my ministry. That's exactly how Paul saw his ministry to the church. The minister is a steward of the mystery of God, or the mysteries of God to dispense those mysteries that they might learn, and be fed, and grow.

You say, well I'm glad I'm not in the ministry, 'cause I don't wanna be a steward. You are a steward and you're in the ministry. You may not be a pastor, but you're a servant of the Lord, aren't you? Don't you have spiritual gifts? And the dispensing of those spiritual gifts is your stewardship, if you don't do it faithfully you're an unfaithful steward.

We have been entrusted with goods that don't belong to us, they belong to the Lord to dispense to other people, to bring blessing to the whole house. Think of it in a simple term, you're a father, you live in a home, you're a Christian father, you're a steward of the mysteries of God for your family. This is the book that you're to teach your family. If you don't you're an unfaithful steward. That's simple enough. That's how all of Christian life works. We are stewards dispensing what God has given us, to those who are in need and those who are in our care.

In fact, specifically to a pastor, does this word come from Paul to Titus, this is Titus 1:7, "A pastor must be blameless as the steward of God, not self-willed." In other words, he must realize that he doesn't run his own life, he dispenses the mysteries of God.

People, I can't understand it, and I say this so often, but I can't understand how a man in the pulpit can see himself in any other way than a dispenser of the truth of God. That's why I believe the only way to approach a ministry is expositionally, because then you're gonna give out the whole thing. That's what Paul said in verse 27 here, he says, "I haven't failed to declare unto you the whole thing, the whole council of God. It is a question of dispensing the food as God has committed for their care."

And, you know, I think the more you do that, the less you're gonna have factions, because the less you're gonna get in the way of what you're teaching. You know, I don't wanna create anything that even remotely represents a follower of John MacArthur, I wanna create a followers of Jesus Christ. And, if you can't see through me to him, then I haven't done my job, I haven't really fulfilled my stewardship.

... says, "The less the preacher comes between the word and the here is the better. What really feeds the household is the food which the householder supplies," that's God, "Not he steward who dispenses it. The Christian preacher is best satisfied when his person is eclipsed by the light which shines from the Scripture and when his voice is drowned out by the voice of God." So the skilled steward, then, what does he do?

Well, he dispenses the full menu. He doesn't absolutely his people with a steady diet of the same thing, and he doesn't make him fat and sassy by given them a whole lot of stuff they can't understand, he dispenses a balanced diet. Now this is the heart of Paul and this is what God desires. Paul looks at his ministry toward the church and what did he say? "I kept back nothing that was," what? "Profitable." Nothing. Publicly, house to house, I taught it and I lived it. That's the key.

There are only three things to learn truth, only three possible sources of truth. What are they? Well, one is human speculation. That's the one most people lean to. Well I just think it's true, I believe such a-- Whenever I hear somebody say that, you know, I always wonder, how could they be so dumb as to believe that what they believe is, therefore, made credible?

Hear anybody interviewed, you know, you hear them on those talk radios, I was listening it to it the last few days Cabe, you say, well I believe, well it's my opinion. That is really a hopeless thing. Wouldn't you, wouldn't it be terrible to have to say that in front of everything you thought? Isn't it much better to say, you know, the Bible says. Oh, I like that. That's authority. But some people will not put their eggs in the basket of human speculation, it's a shifting sand of philosophy, it doesn't hold any weight.

Then there are other people who say, no, it's not in human speculation do the, truth is through the infallible institution of the church. And the Roman Catholics have been trying to sell people that for a long time, but not all of us are buying, are we? That whatever is true is gonna be stated as such by the Pope and if he says it, it's true.

Dr. Chriswell was riding on a train from Munich to Zurich, he's the Pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, and then he wrote this little testimony. He said, "I sat in the compartment with a Catholic monk who'd been brought up in Detroit, lived the last 13 years of his life in Rome. He was a member of the Benedictine Order and was being trained through a 15 year course for the office of a priest." It's a long course. "I was eager to take advantage of the opportunity, even though I was somewhat dubious about the outcome of the conversation. You see, I had just read an editorial in the famous national magazine to the effect that, when you ask a Roman Catholic about his faith, his answers are clear and lucid; but when you ask a Protestant about his faith, his answers are always fuzzy. I thought, well, in this well-trained Benedictine Monk, I'll be at grievously unhappy disadvantage, but this is my one chance to try, and so I started.

"The Pope had just delivered a tremendous address in Rome in which he announced the fact that when the 1st of November that year came, he would formally promulgate the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven." She didn't die, she ascended like Jesus.

"The Pope at that time made a scorching, withering blast against those in the congregation of the faithful who were arguing against the doctrine. The Pope was saying that he was proposing to pronounce the dogma and, when and if he did, that, of course, would make it immediately true and infallible.

"In matters of faith and morals, the Pope is above imperfection or a mistake. All this meant the Roman Catholic person was to believe the dogma or be guilty of mortal sin. I started off with the priest by asking him how he knew the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary to heaven was true. He replied that it was true because the head of the church said it was true.

Then he said to me, 'You must have faith,' and he asked me if I did not receive my religious convictions by faith. I answered him, yes, I received them by faith, but I have a reason, I have a proof for what I believe. He asked me, 'What's your proof?' and I replied, 'I have the New Testament, and in the New Testament, Jesus is more clearly seen in the pages of the book than if I had shaken hands with him and spoken with him face-to-face.'

Well the conversation continues and he said, "Then I said to him, 'What proof do you have for such a thing as the bodily assumption of Mary?' Not being able to answer that question any further than the avowal that it was true because the Pope had said it, we turned from the discussion to others of like nature. In each instance, whether we discussed the immaculate conception of Mary," that is she, also, was virgin born, "Her marriage to Joseph, the Santo Bambino, or the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, to my amazement, he had no other foundation for his faith than the dogma promulgated by the church as it was exhibited in a so-called infallible Pope."

Now here you have an illustration of another avenue of truth possibly, and that is through an infallible human source. Neither one of those make it with me. The only real source of infallible truth is a Biblical revelation. If God is true and God speaks truth, then when we have his truth, that's where we have what we need. And if, friends, that all that we know about truth is here, basically. If this is it, then what in the world is anybody in the ministry doing who's not teaching this?

Paul knew what he was to do. The noblest men of God are the stewards who dispense the word, just like the noblest people were those at ..., and they were noble because they searched the Scriptures daily.

All right, thirdly, toward the lost, what was Paul's view of the ministry? Toward God it was serving the Lord, toward the church it was teaching, and toward the lost it was, thirdly, evangelism. Evangelism, verse 21, now Paul saw his ministry, not only in reference to Christians but to unsaved people, he knew he had an obligation to the world. Verse 21, "Testifying both the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

And here you have the gospel, repent from sin and put your faith in Christ, that's what he preached to Jew and gentile alike. You know, if you know 1 Corinthians 9, that Paul really was burdened about preaching. He said in 1 Corinthians 9, don't glorify me, don't praise me for preaching, necessity is laid on me. Whoa is unto me if I preach not the gospel. This is what God has called me to do, this is the thing he's given me to do, this is the passion of my heart. And he was, liked to weep tears in Romans 9 when he says, "I could almost wish myself accursed for the sake of my brother and my kinsman in the flesh, Israel."

He really had a burden for the loss. In Romans 1 he said, "I'm a debtor to the Greeks, the barbarians, the wise, the unwise." And he said, "I'm ready to preach the gospel at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ." The gospel is the story of the cross, the resurrection, and the message of salvation. Everything isn't the gospel.

I think Christians have used that as, they could say, well, we preach the gospel, or, you know, you'll preach a sermon on something and they'll say, oh, thank you for preaching the gospel us. I'll say, that wasn't the gospel. The gospel is, Jesus died, rose again, for our justification, that's the gospel, a lot of other good things that aren't the gospel. And the gospel's good, don't go out and say, John MacArthur doesn't believe in the gospel. The gospel is good, I believe the gospel, but everything isn't the gospel, there are other things.

Abraham went over there from Irr to Israel, it wasn't the gospel, that was just Abraham going over there.

[Laughter]

That's just something else, that's history, but everything isn't the gospel. So don't always say, well, that's the gospel or he preached the gospel, because the gospel relates directly to the plan of salvation, the work of Christ on the cross and the resurrection.

But, anyway, that's what Paul told the unbelievers: Repentance from sin and faith exercise toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Now there's the two sides. One little note, the word testifying there is a compound verb, and it means, through, complete testimony. And I think it's important to point that out, that Paul's presentation of the gospel was always through, it was always complete, it was never shoddy, never shabby, never was there missing ingredients.

Now there's two sides to the gospel message, the negative side is this, repentance. You say, well, John, what is repentance mean? Well the word Metanoya means to change your mind. It means to be thinking one thing and to go and think the opposite thing. It doesn't mean, well, he repented, he went 10 degrees. No, it means 180 degrees, to go from one to the opposite, to change your mind

about it, to make a valuation about Christ and reverse it. And, believe me, this is the first aspect in man's experience of salvation. It is not the first aspect in salvation, the first aspect in salvation was the call of God, the decree of God. But the first aspect in man's experience is when he actually turns away from sin toward God, he repents of his sin.

Now there are some people who say repentance is not necessary, that you can be saved without repenting of sin. I find that very hard to accept. And the reason is, well multiple, but several versus, Luke 24:47, tells me of the importance of repentance, it says this, "Repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations."

Now Jesus said, this is the great commission, Jesus says, you preach repentance and forgiveness to all nations, and if it wasn't important he wouldn't have it being preached to everybody. And if repentance wasn't just as much a part of salvation as forgiveness, he wouldn't have lumped it in the same context.

And, in fact, in Acts 17:30, Paul said this, "God commands all men everywhere to repent." You can't be saved until you turn from sin, salvation has got to be changing your mind from living unto sin to living unto God. That is what it is, it is conversion. And so I don't think we can say that you don't need to repent of sin. That's why sometimes when we present Christ and we tell people to believe in Jesus and we don't get into the area of repenting for sin, I wonder whether their salvation is legitimate. If they've done that repentance in their heart, certainly.

Jesus in the, Luke 13:3, interesting statement, listen, "I tell you, nay, but except you repent, you shall all, likewise, perish." That sounds to me like repentance has gotta be in there.

In 2 Peter 3:9, God is not incapable of keeping his promise, as some men are, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. There must be a turning from sin. Now repentance then, is the conscious act of the sinner, whereby he turns from his sin toward God. He's sick of his sin, he realizes it. And I think it involves three things: Intellect, emotion, and will. Let me just pinpoint these.

First of all, I think repentance starts with the intellect, you gotta change your mind, that's what the word means, to change your mind. Illustration from Acts 2, the people of Jerusalem had just killed Christ, well the Romans did the actual execution, but they were the ones that killed him, that's what Peter says in Acts 2:23. But, anyway, they had killed Christ. Well they had made a judgment, they were facing sin and they said, we judge Jesus to be a fraud, he's not our messiah.

So Peter comes along, in his great sermon in Acts 2 and says, now I want you to change your mind about Jesus. And so he approaches 'em on an intellectual basis, and he gives 'em all the facts and all the fulfilled prophecies, and all of that, and it's an intellectual thing. And in verse 36 he sums it up,

Acts 2, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom you crucified, Lord and Christ.

In other words, here are the facts, folks, summarizing it, he is Messiah whatever you think. That's intellectual. You can't repent until you know the facts. In other words, if you're looking this way and you ought to be looking that way, you gotta know that looking this way is the wrong way to look.

And so he says, intellectually, change your mind about Jesus. Change your evaluation, you said he was not the Messiah, the evidence says he is, that's intellectual, change your mind. And that's where it all begins, repentance starts there, when you come exposed to the gospel to the place where you say, I think that Christ is who he claimed to be.

Then there's the emotional part. And, I think, in repentance there is an emotional response, I really believe that. Because, in the very next verse in Acts 2:37, "When they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men, brothers, what shall we do?'" They were really torn up.

You know why? You say, why were they torn up? Because Peter got all emotional and preached a tearjerker sermon. No, no. You know why they were torn up, they were torn up because he had executed their Messiah, they were standing in opposition to God and it got to 'em. They knew it. And, you know, I think in every honest repentance, there's that inside emotional reaction. Not everybody busts out and cries all over everywhere, but there's that, the tremendous awareness emotionally, that you have been living in rebellion against God. The emotional is part of it.

But then the third, and the key, is the will. It'd be fine to have the intellectual, he's right, ah, oh, boy, he's right about Jesus Christ, I'm wrong. And to get all emotional and feel the pain, and all of that. But the third thing that's gotta come along somewhere is the will, right?

Like the prodigal who said, I'm standing here in the pig slop, that's not good. My father's home, he's loaded, he's got all the goodies, and he wants me. I will arise and go to my father. And it was then that he got out of the pig slop and into the blessing. So he had to activate his will. He could stand there mulling around about his circumstances all day, and he could even believe the father had all the goodies, but he had to get up and go.

So repentance involves the intellect, where you know you're in the wrong position; it involves the emotions where you're hurting because of it; it involves the will where you turn and go the other way.

Now let me hasten to say this, you must not confuse repentance with remorse. I think the reason some people want to such repentance out of the doctrine of salvation is because they confuse it with an emotional thing. Totally, I think it has emotions, I've said, but not totally.

Remorse, you know what remorse is, oh, you know, we all, I sin. You know what that remorse is sorrow for the consequences of sin. You got that? But repentance is condemning the sin that brought the consequences. Remorse is, I'm sorry I got caught; repentance is, I'm sorry I did it. Different.

And, you know, the King James hasn't done us any favors, the authorized version in Matthew 27:3 it says, "Judas repented." That isn't the same Greek word it isn't even Metnia, oh, it isn't even the word repent, it's the word regret. A lot of people do a lot of that, a lot of regrets, but not repentance. Judas never repented did he? Did he ever turn around and make another evaluation about himself and about Christ and turn from sin toward God and put his faith in Christ? No. He regretted, he regretted the mess he'd made of his life. But regret never saved him. Job knew what repentance was, he said I look at myself and I hate myself and I repent in sackcloth and ashes. He turned toward God.

Well, true repentance, then, is what we're talking about and that's what Paul preached, that a man, in order to come to the time of conversion, in order to come to God, a man, in order to be saved, a man in order to be right with God must be, first of all, shown intellectually that he is in a wrong position, that he is facing the wrong way, that he's living in rebellion against God, he must be convinced of that intellectually. That's why we must preach the content of the gospels.

And then the spirit of God will convict his heart and stir up his emotion, the spirit of God, John 16, moves in, convicts of sin and righteousness and judgment, and then he exercises an act of a will and he turns from sin toward God. And so the negative of salvation is repentance. And that brings us to the positive side.

The positive side is expressed by Paul in 20, verse 20, as faith toward our Lord, Jesus Christ. You turn away from sin, you turn toward God, then you place your faith in Jesus Christ.

You say what does faith in Christ mean? Well, it's like saying this, I'm a sinner, I know it, I see it, I'm living in violation of God, I've been making the wrong evaluation about Jesus, he is the Messiah, he is the savior, he is the Christ, he has made a claim on my life, and I'm gonna exercise my will, I'm gonna turn to God and turn to Christ. And when you turn there, then you place your faith in Christ. That is the positive conviction that the gospel is true and you're gonna bank your life on it. That's faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is believing all that he was, all that he did, and all that he said.

And, again, that's intellectual, and emotional, and an act of the will too, isn't it? Sure. It's the same thing. Those people in that same day, intellectually heard who he was, felt emotionally torn on the inside, and Peter says, what are you doing? Do this, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. And they did, 3,000 of 'em, 3000 or 'em.

So Paul preached salvation, oh, he felt it in his heart to preach it. He saw himself as a herald. In 1 Corinthians 1:23 he says, "We preach the gospel," but he uses the word *Karuso* we herald. You know, herald is an old word, in fact, and in those days you didn't have any newspapers. So, when you had a big announcement to make you hired the local herald, and he went down, and you've seen this historically, he stood on a corner and said, hear ye, hear ye, only in Greek he probably said *A quay*, a quay or whatever.

[Laughter]

But anyway, and everybody would come. Why? This was a new city ordinance, a dignitary arriving in town, a special event. Well you know the Christian preachers just jumped on the bandwagon. They arrive in town, stand up in the town square, hear ye, hear ye, Jesus is the Messiah. That was like front page headlines folks, that's what a herald was. And Paul heralded the gospel. Publicly he moved into the city, he moved into the swing of life and he just pronounced and announced Jesus.

You see, that was his ministry to the lost. He was a herald, he was a preacher, a herald of the gospel. The task, then, of the Christian ministry for Paul was a steward, feed the household. But it was also a herald, announce to the whole world the good news. Beloved, this is part of our ministry as well, to proclaim to the lost that Jesus is the savior. And I think any good pastor has to do both, and any good Christian has to be in tune with both of those areas, teaching those in his charge as well as proclaiming to those who are outside Jesus Christ.

Paul then was deader, he proclaimed the death, resurrection of Christ and called people for a response. You know, and I have to add this too, that it's easy, I think, sometimes when we think about the sovereignty of God and how God's purposes are all set, signed, and sealed, and God knows what he's doing, and we say, well, I don't need to get too pushy with people, if they're in they're in, if they're out, they're out, I'll let God do that. That's not the attend of the Scripture at all.

2 Corinthians 5, Paul says, "We beg you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God." In other words he pleaded with people, begged them. Jesus even cried. I think we have every right to persuade people. That word appears over and over in the book of Acts, you've seen it at least five times already, six, seven times. He was persuading them, trying to get them to come to Christ. And there should never be an appeal without a proclamation, there should never be a proclamation without an appeal.

When we proclaim the truth, we ought to make that appeal. Richard Baxter wrote a book called *The Reformed Pastor*, he wrote it in 1656, and he said this, "I marvel how I can preach slightly and coldly, how I can let men alone in their sins and that I do not go to them and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent. However they take it and whatever pains or troubles it should cost me, I seldom

come out of the pulpit, but my conscious smites me. I have been no more serious and fervent than I have.

"It accuses me not so much for want of human ornaments or elegance, not for letting fall an uncomely word, but it asks me, how could you speak of life and death with such a heart? Should us though not weep over such a people and should not thy tears interrupt thy words. Should not thy cry allowed and show them their transgressions and entreat and beseech them as for life and death."

Yes, I think that Paul had a heart that was passionate enough that he begged men. And in 2 Corinthians 5 he said, "Now we're ambassadors too, aren't we. The ministry of reconciliation has been given to us to call men to God, and we need to beg men to be reconciled to God." Paul's view, then, of the ministry toward God, service; toward the church, teaching; toward the lost, evangelism; lastly, briefly, toward himself, sacrifice.

He saw his ministry in terms of a sacrifice of self and self will. He had only one reason to live, to minister. That's all, the only reason he lived. Look at verse 22, "And now behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem," and the term, bound in the spirit is interesting. The word bound here is a very strong word, it refers usually to chains, or cords, or fetters. He was tied up, believe me in this, he was under strong pressure.

Romans 7:2, the same word is used to speak of a strong obligation. He was absolutely chained to this fulfillment, he was chained and driven to this desire, bound in the spirit. Now some say that's the Holy Spirit, some say it's his human spirit. He's just saying, inside I was bound for this. I don't think it matters because it was both, he was a spirit filled man, so either the Holy Spirit or the human spirit would probably be one in the same.

But Paul was compelled on the inside to go to Jerusalem, "Not knowing the things that should befall me there," verse 22 says, he was on his way to Jerusalem because he believed God was entered, it was right, and he was gonna do it. He had a great compulsion to go, he had this money, he had to give it to the saints there, he knew that it would help to tie the church together, it was so important to him, as we've seen.

And he knew that things were gonna be rough, he said I don't know the things that are gonna befall me there, "Except," verse 23, "That the Holy Spirit keeps telling me in every city that bonds and afflictions await me." You say, well what do you mean you don't know? Well I don't know specifics, I just know generally I'm about to get persecuted again.

And when he wrote the book of Romans in 15:31, he said to the Roman Christian, he said, pray for me, I'm heading for Jerusalem and I know what's gonna happen when I get there. But he says, "I go bound and the only thing I know is that everywhere I go the spirit keeps telling me I'm gonna get it."

And it was true. Later on, chapter 21, interesting, he comes to Tere and he meets a prophet, Agabus, verse 10, and Agabus gives him a little logic lesson, takes his belt and ties him up, and says, see that, that's what's gonna happen to you when you get to Jerusalem. A little logic lesson there. "And the Holy Spirit told me that," Agabus says. Paul says, "Fine," verse 13, "What mean you to weep and break my heart? Why are you crying, what are you trying to do, make me sad?" They're were all saying, well Paul, this is what's gonna happen to you when you get there, oh Paul. He said, what are you trying to do, make me feel bad. "I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Cut this stuff out.

I'll die over there, I don't-- He didn't care about his life. He said, "Chains and afflictions await me," that's what bonds means. That's all right, and everywhere I went, people keep telling me that, and that's fine. See, he only had one reason to live and that was to finish the work God gave him, and he just wanted to get it done and leave. I mean if you went through what he went through, you'd want to die too.

But, you know, and here's an interesting thought, the lowest thing, the last thing on Paul's list of priorities was self preservation. You get that? The last thing. You know where that is on most of our lists? First. Well, I will endeavor to do that, however, I must take care of certain things first.

Yeah, it's like Jesus called the disciples and the guy said, well I had to go home and bury my father, his father wasn't even dead, but he wanted to hang around 'til he died so he could get the goodies that were left to him. See, always self preservation. But Paul, last on the list. Look, he says, "Don't worry about me getting tied pick up, I'll die if that's what the Lord wants, I just wanna do what he wants anyway."

That's a combination of faith and confidence. His only concern was to finish the work. Verse 24, I just love this, "None of these things move me. I mean I don't care in every town, if they keep telling me, even via the Holy Spirit, that I'm gonna get it when I get there, that doesn't bother me, I do not count my life dear unto myself." Last on the list, self preservation. Can you say that? Can you say, you know, I don't care what's gonna happen to me, it doesn't bother me one bit, because I don't care about my life. I have only one reason to live, here it is, "So that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." He says I'm here for one reason, that's to finish what the Lord gave me to do and then I wanna go. And, believe me he did, because when the time came that he was done, he said, Lord please take my life, I am not ready to die, I am done. 2 Timothy 4.

That's the only thing he lived for. The last thing he ever thought of was self preservation. The whole view toward self in the ministry for Paul was sacrifice. And, you know, that's a word that probably doesn't belong in any of our vocabularies, does it? Can you fit sacrifice into your vocabulary? When's the last time you made a sacrifice of anything? I mean anything, comfort, money, time,

anything.

You know we live a kind of leisure time in Christianity, just sort of a little leisure thing. On Sunday we all get our little Sunday clothes and we all get in our little car, and putt, putt, and Christianity, you see. And, you know, and most of us live our whole life, and the biggest, the high point of our Christianity is when we go to a retreat. See, we all flake out on the mountains under some super Bible teacher and that's the exposure that we have for the depths of Christianity.

Now it's nice to go there and hear a Bible t-- I hope somebody comes or I won't have anybody to talk to this summer, but.

[Laughter]

I'll tell ya, there's more to Christianity than that. If you're Christianity's a vacation, you're in trouble.

Paul saw his life toward himself as sacrifice. He only lived for one reason, that's to finish the work the Lord gave him to do, and that's all. He says, "I wanna finish the course and the ministry," now look at this, "That the Lord gave me. I received it of the Lord." Listen, if you really believe that God has given you the ministry and that he's in control of your life, you're not gonna worry about dying, you're not gonna worry about anything, you're gonna take it and spend it on him because you know he's in charge of it.

I like what it says about, well it's in Philippians 2, just kind of an obscure character, you know his name, of course, Apaphroditis, but it said, "Apaphroditis, you ought to receive, him," says to the Philippians, you receive this fellow, he's terrific. Verse 30, Philippians 2, "Because, for the work of Christ he was near death, not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me." This guy served the Lord and didn't take a thought for his own life. The literal Greek parabola, he rolled the dice, he gambled with his life. He bet that God was in charge of his life, and he could do anything, even when he was d-- he was on, he was deathly sick, he had a fatal illness, and he continued to minister because he was willing to gamble that God was in control of his life and he wouldn't die one split second sooner than God had determined it.

I like that. People say, oh, you don't wanna over do it. We must get proper eating, sleeping, and exercise.

[Laughter]

Don't overdo it. You know, and then when you, so many people just coddle themselves and dote on themselves. Oh, my, there's a slight pain here, I best not do that. Well, I don't know whether I'm up to it this time. Oh, coddling ours-- I never knew anybody who died from overwork in the service of

Christ, who didn't die right on schedule, right on schedule. You should risk everything so that you fulfill your ministry, and then when you're done you can go and be with the Lord.

That's Paul's passion, he says, I'm not gonna be worried about what they do to me, I'm just gonna finish the job, when I'm done, I'll go. Finish preaching. How beloved, he saw his ministry in the right perspectives, service toward the Lord, teaching toward the church, evangelism toward the lost, sacrifice toward self.

Well he concludes with these words, and we'll look into them in more detail next week, but in verse 25, "Now," he says, "Behold, I have, I know that you all, among who I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God," that means everything about God's rule in the world, "So see my face no more," he says, well, this is goodbye guys. "Wherefore I testify unto you this day that I'm pure from the blood of all men." He, I've released my responsibility, whatever happens now, I've released my responsibility. I declared the truth, what they do with it's their problem. And well get into that in detail next time.

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole council of God. I discharged my ministry to the absolute full to you, the responsibility is yours." Listen, I'm telling you people, it's exciting to think that you could come to the end of your life and say, I discharged my ministry. Or it's exciting to think you can come to the end of a certain time and a certain place like Paul did here, and stand up before a congregation of people or leaders and say, look, I'm leaving, and whatever happens is up to you, because I gave you the truth. You know that would be what a pastor should say and may-- and, only God knows, someday I should be able to say to you, I'm leaving, but I'm leaving knowing that I've given you the truth, now what you do with it is up to you.

That's really what Paul is saying. But the only way you'll ever be able to say that in your ministry, is when you view it right toward God, right toward the church, right toward the world, and right toward self. Let's pray.

Father, thank you for the insights that we've gained into Paul. We know that when he arrived in heaven he heard 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' because that he was. Thank you Father for what he gave us by precept and what he gave us by example. Help us to be faithful ministers, stewards who dispense to the household the things of the mysteries of God that are needful, all that is profitable. Help us also to be evangelists to the lost, preaching repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to see ourselves in terms of sacrifice, willing to set ourselves aside and make our own comfort and our own preservation the last on the list. Help us to take the one brief life, the one flickering candle we have and spend it for Jesus sake. We pray in his name, Amen.

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