

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Submitted Life **Acts 20:1-24**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: This section of Acts chronicles the final days of Paul's ministry in Macedonia and Achaia with a special focus on the final exhortations of Paul to the elders of Ephesus. In this section we are given a stark description of the mind set and actions of Paul as an Apostle/Elder as he gives his final exhortations to these precious men. Today we have the privilege to see him unabashedly declare his single-minded submission to the ministry of a servant of Jesus Christ.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read 20:1-24.
- B. Paul is coming to the end of his 3rd Journey, which Luke chronicles for us.
 - 1. The final part of this chapter is my focus, where he gives us a stark autobiographical sketch of what his life of a pastor and an Apostle looked like.
 - 2. This is what I want us to consider today, the marks of a submitted life as modeled by Paul.
- C. But to get to that part of the passage we need to give attention to how Paul gets to the point of meeting with the elders from Ephesus in vss 17-38. So the first part of this message will be quickly going through verses 1-16. Then we will slow down and consider vss 17-24 and then next week I hope to deal with vss 25-38.

II. The Closing Months of the 3rd Journey (1-16).

- A. Paul leaves the Ephesian Church (1-6).
 - 1. Paul exhorts/encourages the Ephesian believers in light of the riot before leaving them. He is leaving but he does not leave without a final time of encouragement.
 - 2. Pastors are part of the Church body and therefore they are like sheep just like everyone else. But the pastors are shepherds more than they are sheep.

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And this means they must set aside their own needs so that they can come alongside and give comfort as a shepherd.

3. This is what Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5, that we are to “shepherd the flock of God. . . .” And in time the Chief Shepherd, Jesus our Lord will give us a crown of glory.
- B. (1b) Now Paul heads to Macedonia to go throughout that area to give them similar exhortations that he gave to Ephesus.
 1. There were many gatherings and meetings (2a) for this was very likely the last time he would see them.
 2. During this time he wrote 2 Corinthians, a very hard letter to write. But a necessary one because he was going to be back at Corinth shortly.
 3. We see the constant state of enmity by the Jews to the message of Jesus as the promised Savior and Lord.
4. Vss 4-6 we have a list of seven companions of Paul.
 - a. It is also possible that these men were representatives from the various churches who were going to bring the money to Jerusalem and give formal greetings to the believers in Jerusalem.
 - b. In Philippi Paul met Luke. Paul's team celebrated the Feast "of Unleavened Bread," which followed immediately after Passover, in Philippi in the spring of A.D. 57. This eight-day festival began with Passover and continued with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

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5. Vss 7-12 The church in Troas receives Paul's teaching and gain a miracle in the process.
 - a. Note that the church gathered on the first day of the week. We again see the habit of the NT church was not a new sort of Sabbath, or they would have called it that. They gathered on Sunday. Note the two events that took place.
 - (1) First, the breaking of bread, this is the Lord's Supper.
 - (2) Second, the preaching of the Word.
 - b. Paul's approach to teaching apparently was to take whatever time was available if he was not going to be able to stay. This meant he taught until midnight.
6. Luke and the rest of the team board the ship, but Paul wanted to travel on foot and meet them there.
7. It is here that we can now consider how Paul's self description represents for us a glimpse into a submitted life to God.
- C. Thirteen examples of a life submitted to God.
 1. What follows is Paul's final words to these men.
 2. I want to make several simple points about the nature of ministry as a pastor/elder by examining Paul's example.
 3. You may say he was an Apostle not an elder. But this is only partially correct. Acts 15 when Paul came to present himself and his teaching to the leadership in Jerusalem, it was to the Apostles and elders. Peter, speaking to the elders he is writing to in 1 Peter 5 says this, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder. . . ."
 4. For anyone wanting to understand the core values and motivations that should drive a pastor, this is a key passage.

III. A Submitted Life.

- A. A level of transparency (18).
 1. Note the confidence Paul has in his words. He has all the elders present and if he is lying it will be quickly known.
 2. He lays out how he was an example for these men and there is no waffling or vagaries in what he describes.

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3. Paul did not live life and do his ministry behind a cadre of handlers like so many today. The men he took with him on these journeys were men he was training.
- B. A focus on the Lord rather than self (19a).
 1. This is how and why he could have the confidence that they could reflect on his lifestyle and see his faithfulness. It was never about him. He was not trying to build his church.
 2. The question that would be in his mind every day in every situation was, “How might I show honor to Jesus my Lord?”
- C. A heart of humility (19b).
 1. Humility was a key part of his ministry because it was a key quality in Jesus Christ.
 2. Paul tells the Roman church to not think more highly of themselves than they ought to think because all that they have and are is due to the grace of God.
 3. Paul tells the Philippian church to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each regard one another as more important.
- D. A heart of emotion (19c).
 1. He is not over-stating this. He was not a cold man who merely lectured the people in theology. He was a bold man, but the boldness was about the power and necessity of the gospel to be preached and believed.
 2. But with the people, he saw them in one of two ways: As sheep who are lost in need of salvation; or as sheep for whom Christ purchased with His own blood.
 3. And tears are an appropriate response.
- E. A life of trials lived publicly (19d).
 1. They watched everything that happened to him as the powers of darkness, the evil hearts of those who hated the gospel, reacted to his message.
 2. They watched his fellow Jews turn their back on him or hurl insults and attack him.
 3. Paul would take the hits and the anger and absorb them into himself so as to guard the people of God.

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- F. A commitment to teach all that is profitable for a believer (20a).
 - 1. To lighten a message, to down play a doctrine, these are the constant temptations any bible teacher faces. And so much harm is done to the people as a result.
 - 2. For Paul, there was a simple question he would ask as he considered what he was going to teach. “Was this profitable to the people?” He did not worry if it would be well received, merely if it would profit, help, build up, instruct the people.
- G. A public life of teaching (20b).
 - 1. He did not seek to teach in a so-called ivory tower, tucked away from the people while he wrote deep things for them to read.
 - 2. He did his work in a way that people could come to listen. He was accessible.
- H. A personal life of teaching (20c).
 - 1. But he also was not confined only to the public stage, where he could preach relatively uninterrupted.
 - 2. He would come to people where they were, in their homes, to small groups gathered who were willing to listen. But here he would entertain questions and challenges. Here he would drill down a bit deeper into the needs of the persons.
 - 3. I suspect his persona in public gatherings was different from when he sat beside an aged man or a frustrated young person who had honest questions.
- I. A message of repentance and faith (21).
 - 1. He always kept these together. This is not a vague message that he preached.
 - 2. Whether the listeners were Jews or Gentiles, they heard the same thing. Repent, meaning, turn from your current gods, loves, desires and ways and turn to God through His Son Jesus Christ.
- J. A life controlled by the Spirit (22a)
 - 1. Paul was under divine constraint and he understood that. More than understanding, he embraced it.

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2. Life as a Christian can often be rather mundane, which is a good thing. Day in and day out we live, doing the simple, common things that all people do.
 3. But then there are those times where we find ourselves being moved in ways we did not anticipate. We see forces working in our lives that make our eyes go wide.
 4. For some, this results in kicking and screaming, bitterness and anger. But, for others it becomes a sober time as they watch the hand of God moving in their lives in ways they had not imagined.
 5. Where they, with trembling lips whisper, “No my will be done, but Thine.”
- K. A life that embraces the unknown for the sake of the known (22b-23).
1. He does not fully know what is coming. The details are not known. But the Holy Spirit has given him a little bit of information. What awaits him at the end of this journey is chains and afflictions.
 2. Might we all just pause on that statement for a moment?
 - a. Contrast that with the never-ending proclamations by so-called prophets and apostles today of how God is preparing to release His power upon us and that we will see and do mighty things.
 - b. Contrast the awaiting chains and afflictions with the short-sighted way that we see God’s goodness in the pleasant things that we experience.
 - c. Consider how we often think that if we do what is good and right before God then only good must come.
- L. A dying to self (24a).
1. The only way any of us will ultimately serve the Lord in whatever way is required is if our life here and now is of no account.
 2. “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.” Matthew 10:37. The words of Jesus.
 3. Jesus said that if you are unwilling to pick up your cross and follow Him then you are not worthy of being His disciples (Matthew 10:38).

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4. These are not words that have no meaning. Each of us will find ourselves tested. What do we hold most precious? Our life? Our family? Our comfort? Or Jesus.
5. This is what a submitted life looked like.
- M. A determination to finish the proper course given by God (24b).
 1. Many start well, but then fall away. Many want Jesus but not the cross. Many want eternal life but do not wish to die to self.
 2. This age we live in is littered with those who were like the friend to Paul, Demas. Paul tells us that Demas loved this present age and so he deserted.
 3. Paul wrote those words in his final letter while he awaited the sword that would sever his head from his body. Where faith would finally become sight.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Notice in vs 24 the “so that” for it explains everything.
 1. How will Paul finish his race? And how will Paul finish the ministry given to him by his Lord Jesus?
 2. By not making his own life matter. So simple and yet so profound.
- B. Paul did not approach life by asking how something might affect him for good or for bad. Rather it was simply this, “What has my Lord told me to do and be?” And that was enough.
- C. Is it enough for you?

Benediction

May the Lord of peace Himself, grant you peace at all times, under all circumstances. The Lord be with you all. Amen.