

077 - Serving the Lord with All Humility - Acts 20:17-19 2013-07-07

Call to Worship: Psalm 149:1

Scripture Reading: Psalm 149:2-9

Sermon: "A Lifestyle of Humble Service" Acts 20:17-19

Benediction: Revelation 21:3-4

REVIEW

-This is Paul's farewell address

-Luke, by the Holy Spirit, seems to have chosen this as a declaration of principles to God's churches

-We first found the central theme, and put that as a banner over this whole study. It is found in verse 24: "to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

-Then we considered the first verse, verse 17, which says that Paul called for the elders of the church

-that week, two weeks ago, we studied what Paul mean by that, as he explains in verses 28-31, that the elders and the church are like shepherds and sheep

-last week we considered the practical applications of that for ourselves as a church of God

-So, today, we are ready to move on to the next section

-There is an outline to Paul's remarks that is easy to see. It goes something like this:

I. Remember what I have done while I have been with you (18-27)

II. I cannot be here to do it for you anymore (25)

III. Therefore you, the elders and the church, must do it from now on, God helping you (28-35)

-the elders ruling, watching, teaching

-the church submitting, staying together, learning

-For a few sessions we plan to work on this first part, where Paul says to the elders, "Remember what I have done while I have been with you."

In today's study, we see how Paul teaches us that with the goal of testifying the gospel of the grace of God, he was serving the Lord with al humility.

Read the text: Acts 20:17-19

In today's study, we see how Paul teaches us that with the goal of testifying the gospel of the grace of God, he was serving the Lord with al humility.

Acts 20:17-19 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. (18) And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, (19) serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

SERMON

I. The church elders came to Paul when he called for them, and they listened to his words (17b-18a)

A. it was inconvenient; it interfered with the other things they were doing

B. it took effort

C. it took time

D. it was humbling

1. consider how

2. notice that not all church pastors would so humble themselves

3rd John verse 9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

E. but the Ephesians elders did it; they came when Paul called for them, and they listened to his words

F. and well they should! Paul was not speaking on his own, but was the spokesman for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior!

G. APPLICATION: If we would testify to the gospel of the grace of God, this is what we must do as a church.

The Lord Jesus Christ calls us to come to His apostles for instruction

We must come, and listen to their words

It will be a constant temptation to listen to others

-the world

-our own imaginations

-very corrupt Christians and churches

-various para-church organizations

-the latest supposedly-Christian book

-popular bible teachers

But if we are to testify to the gospel of God's grace, and to do so for the long haul, we must come to the Lord and His apostles for our instruction

The church elders came to Paul when he called for them, and they listened to his words, and

II. Paul reminded them that his life among them was consistent (18b)

A. from the first day he came to Asia

1. not that Paul had lived consistently from the first day of his life---far from it! He had undergone a radical change!

2. but by the time he entered Asia, he had lived consistently

B. always

1. Paul is not pretending to be perfect; let us not pretend perfection either

2. but Paul's life was so consistent that he could, in good conscience, say he always acted the same way

C. APPLICATION: regarding the Christian life for all of us

1. it is too late to live consistently from the first day of your life
2. but starting now, so that in the future, people you meet from here on may be able to observe that from their first acquaintance with you, you have lived consistently

D. APPLICATION: regarding the choosing of deacons and elders

E. APPLICATION: Here is one way we are helped to know that it is the mature men who should be sent, who should be missionaries.

The church elders came to Paul when he called for them, and they listened to his words Paul reminded them that his life among them was consistent, and

III. Paul reminded them that his life consisted of serving the Lord (19a)

A. the word: *doul-eu-o* to be a slave

B. how is it that Paul sees himself as a servant, a slave of the Lord Jesus?

1. He sees the Christian as having been bought by the Lord

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that . . . you are not your own? (20) For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's [belong to God].

2. The price for that purchase was the blood of Jesus Christ

1 Peter 1:18-19 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

3. Once you accept Paul's view of us as servants of Christ, make sure your idea of what kind of servant you are is low enough

a. sometimes people say we became Christ's slaves when we willingly submitted to His rule; we "made Him Lord"

b. let us see here that such a view is an attempt on our part to maintain a bit of pride in ourselves

c. I did not choose to become His servant

d. I was a slave to sin, I had a cruel master, I was going to be abused and destroyed in my slavery

e. the Lord Jesus bought me, at the ultimate cost to Himself; He made me His slave; He saved me from cruel slavery and brought me into a blessed state of slavery to Him

C. We don't have slavery, so what is the concept?

see Luke 17:7-10

D. Paul was serving the Lord

1. not men "If I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ!" (Gal 1:10)

2. not money (Luke 16:13)

3. ultimately not even the church

E. APPLICATION

The church elders came to Paul when he called for them, and they listened to his words
Paul reminded them that his life among them was consistent
Paul reminded them that his life consisted of serving the Lord, and
IV. Paul reminded them of what characterized that service (19)

A. humility

1. the word: *tap-i-noph-ros-U-ne*
 - a. lowliness or lowness
 - b. of mind
2. what Paul means by this: we can know just what he means, because he used this word in Philippians 2 and explained what he means by it: Philippians 2:3-8
 - a. not selfish ambition
 - b. not vain conceit
 - c. esteeming others better than yourself
 - d. looking out not only for your own interests, but also for the interests of others
 - e. having the mind of Christ Jesus
 - i. willingly took an infinitely lower station (God to servant)
 - ii. coming in the likeness of men, he obeyed even to death of the cross
3. APPLICATION: Oh, let us have this humility!

B. tears and trials

1. in Paul's case, in Ephesus, the tears and trials were brought on largely by the plotting of his Jewish enemies
2. Paul was deeply sorrowful when those who knew the scriptures hardened themselves against the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and refused to believe in Him
3. Paul was tearful when believers who had been settled in the gospel were disturbed by the Judaizers telling them they had to obey certain commands that they did not actually have to obey
4. Paul cried the tears that a mother cries when she is giving birth, as he labored to establish new believers in the faith and settle them into the church, while his Jewish opponents worked to bring them into Judaism
5. APPLICATION: Let us labor in God's church with such a concern for souls that threats to those precious souls bring us tears

CONCLUSION

The church elders came to Paul when he called for them, and they listened to his words
Paul reminded them that his life among them was consistent
Paul reminded them that his life consisted of serving the Lord, and
Paul reminded them of what characterized that service---humility, tears, and trials