

## Acts 20:22-27

“The Pastoral Heart Of Paul The Apostle” (Pt 2)

We're in this unique portion of the book of Acts that focuses not on the heart of Paul the apologist, or Paul the evangelist, but rather Paul the pastor. and It's the only portion of the book of Acts that brings us this particular perspective. Now we catch up to him on route (via ship) to Jerusalem and he's trying to make it there by the Day of Pentecost. They've docked in the port city of Miletus and from there he called to the elders, that is the spiritual overseers of the church in Ephesus and he's imparting to them his heart not only for them, but for the body of Christ as a whole in which they serve. and Last week we began to see how his heart was just poured out before them in his desire to see them excel in the ministry, to tend to the church of God in an upright, open way that would be earmarked by humility, tenderheartedness, giving to the people the message of the word of God both in commendation and exhortation. If it's profitable, proclaim it, if it's essential, explain it, keep back nothing that is helpful, and never compromise the message of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ He filled them in on the manner of his ministry, the motive of his ministry, and the message of his ministry. and Much like Jesus he was saying, “I've given you an example that you should do to others as I have done to you.” and He pointed to the way he'd ministered amongst them in the past as sort of a prototype that they should model as they were in turn now ministering in the present to the body of Christ.

Though we're peering into the pastor's heart, I really feel that in *many* ways the heart of God for the people of God should be represented in all of us. You don't have to be a pastor to have a heart that desires the body of Christ to do well, or a heart that desires to demonstrate one to another what it means to follow Jesus in the world today. To model what a life lived for Jesus Christ looks like, certainly we want to see in our Pastor a practical picture of what it means to live a life that's set apart, open to God, available to God, how we can be used by God and all the rest. But it's not the Pastor's job to be spiritual for everyone else, we all individually and personally have a responsibility to live our lives in subjection *to* the Lord, seeking *after* the Lord, wide open *before* the Lord, and to one another. So as we go through this particular passage don't approach it like, “Well, that's neat if you're a pastor, but how does it apply to me?” It very much so applies to you, because it's the Word of God, and the principles and precepts of the word of God are applicable to all of our lives.

Well, Paul has *reviewed* the past, now he's going to *overview* the present, and then he'll *preview* the future with these elders/overseers of the church in Ephesus.

Vs 18b-27

So he reminded them of the pattern of his life around them in the past for the purpose of an *illustration*, that they might in turn minister to others after the same manner that he ministered to them.

Now he begins to speak to them about his present *situation*, and purposed determination to finish well the race that's before him, (the course that God has called him to). and You see the transition being made from the past to the present there in vs 22 by those 1<sup>st</sup> 3 words, "And see, now." and He goes from speaking in the past tense up to this point to speaking now in the present tense. and He says, "I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, and I don't know exactly what's going to happen to me when I get there, but I know it's going to be bad because the Holy Spirit testifies everywhere I go that chains and tribulations await me." and Because of the way that Paul speaks here there are those who wonder if perhaps Paul was out of the perfect will of God for his life in even going to Jerusalem. and Their point is that the Holy Spirit was warning him everywhere he went, he should've got the message and not went.

I disagree, the Holy Spirit is more than able to lead us and guide us, to open doors no man can shut, shut the doors that no man can open. We seen earlier when Paul wanted to go to Asia and the Holy Spirit said, "No," so he didn't go. Now I realize we all have free will, we all make mistakes and that the Holy Spirit won't force *His* will upon you. But we're not talking here about a guy who was all about himself, and his own agenda, who was going to do whatever he wanted to do. We're talking about a guy who considered himself a bond slave to Jesus Christ who sought to lead his life in a manner that was pleasing to the Lord, walking in the Spirit and not after the flesh. and If the Lord had told him, "No" I believe he'd have complied. But he had a strong inner compulsion that he was to go to Jerusalem and so he was going to be faithful to what he believed he was being led to do.

We find in scripture that it's not at all uncommon for the Lord to lead someone into an otherwise dangerous, or even deadly situation but then also warn them what's to come so that they might be prepared accordingly. I suppose Jesus would be the quintessential example of a man who was led into a deadly situation by the will of God and had been being prepared for years in advance as to the reality of what was going to take place physically, emotionally/spiritually to Him. and He would tell His disciples that it was coming, He knew it, but was still determined to go to Jerusalem. Isaiah prophesied of the determination with which the Messiah would subject Himself to the will of God knowing the brutality that it would entail on multiple levels. In Isaiah ch 50 after saying of the Messiah, "I gave My back to those who struck me, My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard, I didn't hide My face from shame and spitting," he said, "*For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint. And I know that I will not be ashamed.*" Isa 50:7 In other words He was filled with rock solid determination to follow through with the will of God regardless of what it might cost Him physically. Jeremiah was told over and over again of the rejection that the people would reject him with, yet he was told to press on. The Lord had said of Paul at the time of his conversion, "...*I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.*" Acts 9:16 So it's not inconsistent with the ways of God to allow physical suffering in the life of a believer as an avenue to ultimately accomplish His purpose, but in His mercy He prepares us for it, and will at times warn us of it. So Paul knew that he was headed for hard times, maybe even death, but like Christ he was determined to go the distance regardless of what that might mean to him physically, notice.

Vs24

Now this is where we start considering the practical application for our lives. Paul says here, “None of these things move me;” what things? The idea of troubles, trials, imprisonment, danger, and possibly even death, he said, “I don’t know exactly what’s going to happen to me when I get there but that doesn’t move me.” (That is, crush my commitment, it doesn’t cause him to change his course) The 1<sup>st</sup> thing we note, “Uncertainty doesn’t uproot him.” He’s not moved by uncertainty, he doesn’t exactly know what’s going to happen to him, but that doesn’t make him want to change his mind about going. How many of us if we had solid reason to believe our being somewhere was questionable at best as it related to our physical safety would still press on in the face of that uncertainty? Or would we be more like, “You know, I’m not sure I like the sound of those odds, so I think I’ll have to pass for now.” Paul pressed on in the face of uncertainty. 2<sup>ndly</sup> we see that, “*Danger* didn’t dissuade, or discourage him.” He was uncertain as to what exactly was going to happen when he got to Jerusalem, but *he was certain* of the fact that it wouldn’t be good, at best it was chains (imprisonment) and “tribulation” which is a pretty open ended kind of a word. Is that torture, dismemberment, death?

It didn't matter to Paul, he was ready, (if necessary) to die in Jerusalem if that was the end that God had prepared for him if that meant he would be finishing well the call God had placed on his life. In the next ch we'll see where he's warned again, and all his friends start crying and pleading with him not to go - and he says, “*What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*” Acts 21:13 So uncertainty didn’t uproot him, danger didn’t discourage him, even the thought of death wouldn’t dissuade him. Why? How does one actually come to the place where the thought and even the very reality of uncertainty at best, danger for sure, or possibly even death doesn’t derail you from following through with what it is that God has called you to do? Because that’s the place where the scripture exhorts us to be, 1 Cor 15:58 “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,*” but how do I come to that place?

Well, according to Paul you have to do some accounting, it’s checks and balances, credits and debits; you place your life in the balance and measure it out in what you consider its worth to be. and Then you balance on the other side of that who Jesus is, all that He’s done on your behalf in leading an absolutely perfect and sinless life yet becoming sin for you that you might become the righteousness of God in Him, the laying down of His life that you might never experience death (that is eternal separation from God), the breaking of His body that you might be made whole. The immeasurable love that He displayed for you in stepping out of all eternity as the eternal God robed in majesty and wrapping Himself in flesh and blood and the limitations of this tent, that though He was rich yet for your sake He became poor that through His poverty you might become rich and you decide which is of higher value. and Whichever you consider to be worth more, you’ll be sold out to. and If your life means more to you than infinite riches of what Jesus has done for you, than you won’t go the distance. But according to Jesus you have to be willing to lose your life to truly find life, but in trying to save your life, you’ll only lose it.

Matt 16:25 *“For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”* You see Jesus taught that if we really want to come after Him we have to *deny* ourselves take up our cross (the instrument of the crucifying of the flesh, that spells death to self and the self will) and follow Him. and What Jesus *taught*, Paul *caught*. See it there in vs 24, “...nor do I count my life dear to myself.” He added it all up, and Christ, and the call of God on his life was of much more value than his own well-being. He considered his life worth nothing compared to the eternal riches found in Christ, knowing Him and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead.

You guys this is such a key, Paul considered finishing well more important than life itself, how many times we flippantly throw out a phrase like, “Man I just want to get there, that’s all that matters to me.” and Though what we’re perhaps saying is that we don’t need all the rewards as long as we make it and in our minds that may carry with it a pseudo sense of humility, Paul would say, and the word of God teaches that that mentality is lame! Don’t settle for, “Well as long as I get there.” No way! Press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Don’t you know that of all who run in a race, though all may run only 1 receives the prize? Paul told the Corinthians, “Run in such a way that you might obtain it.” In other words give to God the 1<sup>st</sup> fruits effort that He’s worthy of, don’t settle for the “sluggard” of a Christian life. But rather love the Lord your God, and serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Now the people that run in races they run for a crown that’ll perish, but we run for an imperishable crown, so serve the Lord with all that you are, and all that you have.

You see if we can’t commit to something *more* than us, than it really won’t mean anything *to* us, because once we sense uncertainty, danger, or if its death it’s a *definite* no brainer, we’ll just cast that commitment or whatever it may be aside. But if what we’re doing, or the One whom we’ve committed to means more to us than our own lives, than it doesn’t matter *what* may come, we’re going to follow through and finish our course. Rev 12:11, How was it that the brethren were able to overcome the wicked one, the accuser of the brethren? “... they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” Had they loved their lives more than they loved the Lord they’d have fallen, but because they didn’t they followed through.

Paul didn’t just want to get there, but he wanted to finish his race with *joy*. Knowing that he was of a no retreat, no surrender frame of mind, committed to the end to Jesus Christ and Notice this phrase, “...the ministry I received.” What does that speak of? *Stewardship*, he knew that what he was, he was by the grace of God, and God had caused him to become a steward of the gospel of the grace of God. That means that God had entrusted him with something very precious, the bible tells us that, *“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”* 1 Cor 4:2 and

God has entrusted to you the mystery of the gospel as well, He's placed such a treasure in earthen vessels such as us, the question is what are you doing with it? Are you investing it in the lives of others, making a return for the Master, or have you dug the proverbial hole in the ground and buried to where it's not really doing anyone any good? We have nothing but that we haven't *received* it, and if we've received it that means we've been entrusted as stewards, or you might say we've been called on the stands of the court of life to be witnesses to the gospel of the grace of God.

Notice Paul says, "...to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." God has called us to be witnesses of the gospel of His grace, that is the good news of His grace, His unmerited, undeserved favor that we can receive in Christ. Do you realize that there's really no testimony to the grace of God anywhere else? Nature testifies to the power of God, the fact that He's a God of order, of law, of absolutes, perhaps the beauty, the majesty, and creativity of God, but there's no testimony of the grace of God in nature. God has ordained that man would be the witnesses of His grace, that we would testify of the fact that there's nothing you can do to earn God's favor. and That it doesn't matter how base of an individual you are or have been but that God loves you, wants to forgive you, where your sin abounds His grace abounds much more. "*...that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Rom 5:21 It's by grace we're saved, it's by grace we're sustained, it's by grace that we're sanctified, the bible says, "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,*" Titus 2:11-12

So the grace of God teaches us as well, but that's why the grace of God is such an emphatic principle of the NT, everything that we are, everything that's available to us in Christ Jesus comes to us through the vehicle of God's grace. and God has called us to testify of these things, Paul is just pouring out his heart here. These are the reasons (he's saying) that he's pressing on in the face of certain danger, because he wants to finish his race with joy, it's required and he desires to be faithful in his stewardship of the ministry he's received, and a true and faithful witness to the gospel of the grace of God. and In order to do these things he's already weighed it all out, and he's placed infinitely more value upon Jesus Christ and *His* plan for his life, than his own life and his desires for life.

Vs25-27

Paul says, "You won't be seeing me again on this side of eternity, and so I make known to you today that I'm innocent of the blood of all men." What does that mean?

We've spoken of this a couple ch's back when in ch 18 there in vs 6 he told the Jews in Corinth that their blood be on their own head and that his hands were clean because he'd declared to them the truth of the Word of God, the message of the gospel and they'd rejected it.

What he's saying here is that he hasn't held back anything from anyone with respect to the word of God, but that he's declared it all. and He's in reference again to that passage in the book of Ezek which states, "*When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.*" Ezek 3:18-19

It's restated there in ch 33 where God says, "If the watchman sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the horn and people choose to not take heed, than their blood be on them. But if he's sees them coming and doesn't blow the horn to warn the people, than I'll require their blood at his hands." and The idea is that of warning people of impending judgment and how they have a span of time right now to do something about it. and If they choose to ignore the warning than their blood is on them, but if they never receive the warning than God will hold His watchmen accountable.

Now who are the watchmen? Anyone who's aware of the fact that judgment is coming and don't warn the people accordingly, in other words, the bible is clear that God judges sin. But if you and I don't warn people of that fact, and give them the opportunity to do something about it while there's still time, we're accountable for that.

Is grace available for you should you fail in a certain situation, you bet, but are we to use the grace of God as a cloak for not doing what is right in the 1<sup>st</sup> place? No way, to him who knows to do what's right and doesn't do it, to him it's sin (that's what the bible says). So Paul is saying, "I'm innocent of the blood of all men because not only have I warned the people that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and that the righteousness of God is not found in the outward reformation by the law, but I've shared with them the fact that salvation is found in the person of Jesus Christ by grace through faith."

In other words I've given them the totality of what the Word of God teaches. Notice it there in vs 27, what is it that has insured his innocence? "I have not shunned to declare to you the *whole counsel* of God." How scarce (it seems) have those become today who will simply declare the whole counsel of God, cover to cover, vs by vs, ch by ch, book by book. Just solid doctrinal exposition, Paul told Timothy, "*...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*" 2 Tim 4:3-4 Don't confuse me with the facts just tell me what I want to hear. Surely we live in such a time, people wanting feel good messages that stir them emotionally, but bring no conviction personally, "Don't talk to me about sin and the need to repent, who are you to judge me?" All these catch phrases our society has coined in order to justify sin in their lives, politically correct phrases so as not to offend.

The word of God can be offensive, because it calls sin “sin” and commands all men everywhere to repent, tells us that there’s not many ways to heaven, there’s only 1. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever would believe on Him would never perish but have everlasting life. Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by Him.

Paul was clear about the reality of what God’s Word declares to humanity. So many only use the bible as a launching pad and from there they just say whatever they want, or they come up with something they want to tell you and mix and mingle a few scriptures in there in order to illustrate their stories, or their principles. But so few have the men become who’ll just let God’s Word speak for itself in power, confronting humanity, commanding repentance and offering salvation through the grace of God by faith in Jesus Christ?

Think about this, if the way Paul maintains his innocence of the blood of all men is to declare the whole counsel of the word of God, then conversely those who don’t declare the whole counsel of God but deliberately fail to dispense it must be guilty of the blood of all men... The guy that simply preaches or teaches what the people want to hear only harms not only them, but himself as well.

As the people of God we should demand that we be given all of what God says, not just what we consider interesting topics, not just the gripping epic sagas of the Word of God, but all of it, we’re to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Believe me it would be easier to just tell everyone what they want to hear, there are certain areas of scripture that aren’t easy to teach, that aren’t comfortable to confront, but God doesn’t waste His breath, and if He’s said it we need to hear it.

Paul told Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”<sup>1</sup> 2 Ti 3:16 So all scripture is given by God and is profitable for the *man* of God that we might be made complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. Translation = if you’re not getting all of God’s word, there are things being held out on you that are of benefit to you. and You’re not getting properly equipped for the work God has for you, you’re lacking the necessary tools. How important that we get the entirety of God’s Word. That’s the heart of Pastor Paul, that we would stay the course and finish well, don’t seek to save your life in this world, but count Christ, Who He is *to* you, what He’s done *for* you as the single most valuable aspect of life. and In so doing you’ll go the distance, you’ll be a faithful steward and the witness He’s called you to be of the gospel of the grace of God. and Be upfront and honest about what the truth of the Word of God says about sin/repentance/salvation, and the fact that reconciliation to God is available only by grace through faith in the person of Jesus Christ

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<sup>1</sup>The New King James Version. 1996, c1982 (2 Ti 3:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points: God give us boldness to share the truth of Your Word to those whom You bring into the sphere of our lives in order that we might be a witness to them of the gospel of Your grace. and Would You teach us what it means to not count our lives dear to ourselves that we not be moved from the course that You've called us to. That uncertainty wouldn't uproot us, that danger wouldn't discourage us, or even the possibility of death wouldn't defeat Your plans for our lives. and Help us Lord to stay the course and press toward the goal with all that we have and all that we are for Your glory and for Your names sake.

If you've never been reconciled to God, you've never personally truly repented of your sin and cried out to God asking Jesus to be your Savior than I want to invite you to do that and give you that opportunity today. You've heard the truth of the Word of God, the only way to the Father is through Jesus Christ there's no other way the Word of God demands repentance (or a turning from sin towards God) and faith towards Jesus Christ In short, what that means is you give your heart to Jesus and He'll take care of the rest, make you brand new and wash you white like snow, if you've never done that why don't you do that today?