

Portrait Of A Pastor – Part 2

Acts 20:22-27

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the passage in Acts 20:22-27, and then we'll set the context and look again at this portrait of Paul the pastor. It says in verse 22, "And now, behold," Paul speaking, "I go bound in the spirit," and we'll come back to that. We don't know if it's the Holy Spirit or Paul's human spirit, even though we can't distinguish which it is, it doesn't really matter because I believe the Holy Spirit was in Paul working together with his human spirit giving him a desire to go to Jerusalem. He says, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there," I don't know what the future holds. He might've gone on to say, "But I know Who holds the future," because he's actually living here by faith. The only thing I do know (verse 23), "Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me," Paul said, "neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus." I want you to note, "...that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry," or the path that God has given me, "which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Paul is on his way to Jerusalem. It's on the end of the third missionary journey, and Paul has been collecting an offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He's been going in the areas of Greece, which is Achaia in the south and Macedonia in the north. He's traveling on this third missionary journey on his way back down, and he has come to this seaport little town of Miletus. About 20 miles inland of Miletus is the city of Ephesus, and Paul has spent three years in the city of Ephesus establishing that church. He wants to get immediately to Jerusalem. He wanted to get there for the Passover, it didn't happen. Now, he wants to get there for Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, and he's hoping to get there. He's on his way to Jerusalem. If we go back for just a moment, I want to remind you of the ministry of Paul the Apostle as he meets with these elders at Ephesus. I want you to go back to verse 17.

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." I talked to you about the elders being pastors. They're called elders, bishops, sometimes translated overseers, and they're also called pastors. When he uses the phrase in verse 28 to feed the flock of God, we get our word "pastor" the flock of God. It's one individual called an elder, pastor, bishop, or overseer. Notice the things that Paul makes mention about his ministry. His motive was (verse 19) that he was serving the Lord. First, Paul was a servant of the Lord. He wasn't serving man, he was serving the Lord. That's really important for us to catch. At the foundation of all our ministries is we're doing it as unto the Lord not as unto man. Paul said, "If I'm the servant of man, I cannot be the servant of Christ." It's so important that we have that as our motive—we're serving God and for His glory.

Secondly, the manner of Paul's ministry was humility. Notice (verse 19) he says, "I'm doing this with all humility." There's always a danger when God begins to use us that we'll be lifted up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil, but Paul says, "I'm doing it in humility." Then, notice the method in his message (verses 20-21). He says, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you," which is going to be a great parallel to verse 27 when we get there in conclusion tonight. He says there, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Paul didn't pick and choose what he wanted to preach and teach. He was bound to declare to them the whole counsel of God. He showed them by his life (verse 20), "...but have shewed you, and have taught you," by his example and by his teaching. You know, something really stood out to me today as I was reading these passages again. When Paul talks about himself as a pastor and as a minister, he keeps coming back and back and back again to this recurring theme that his life was an example. His life was an example. His life was an example.

I think that we bought kind of into it as a church, the culture, that you can separate what the man is and what his message is. We have that with politicians today. Their lives morally can be a wreck, but we think, Well, we like their policies, or We'll accept what they're doing, and maybe we've kept that with a businessman or maybe with a doctor. It's sad that it has crept into the ministry to where, "Oh, well, he's such a gifted speaker," and "He's such a dynamic orator," and "He's such a wonderful pastor. It doesn't matter if he's got these moral failures or these collapses in his life."

In the Bible, it's always held up that the pastor is to be an example of the believer. When Paul wrote to Timothy he said, "...be thou an example of the believers." You are to be, as a Christian, an example to other believers of what a believer is to be; but especially those who preach the Word, they need to live by the Word. The key characteristic of successful leadership is that they live exemplary lives. Notice verse 20, "...and have taught you," so the example and then there's the teaching of the Scriptures. We get that again tonight. Paul's ministry was, "...both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks," and his message (verse 21) was, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, we move to a new section of this farewell speech to these Ephesian elders. As Paul meets on the beach at Miletus with these pastors, Paul now (verses 22-27) begins to talk about his present ministry and about his philosophy of ministry. Let me make a very important distinction for you. What we have quite often in the church today is men in ministry who have orthodoxy. Their doctrine is sound or biblical but their practice is not. I know that seems pretty bizarre, but it can happen. For pragmatic reasons, they don't really practice a biblical philosophy of ministry. There's a real tendency today to want to grow a "successful" church. Let me tell you something. In God's economy, there are no big preachers and there are no small churches. You got that? No big preachers and no small churches. God cares about even little congregations. They're churches of Christ. He cares about them. What happens is a lot of times a man will leave a biblical philosophy of ministry. If you interviewed him he would be orthodox, but in his practice, it's not really a biblical philosophy of ministry. I believe that a pastor should get his queue on what he is to be and do from the Bible not from the culture. A pastor should go to the Bible and discover, What am I supposed to be? What am I supposed to

do? What is the church supposed to be? What is the church supposed to do? That all we believe for life and godliness comes to us from the Word of God.

As Paul opens his heart, he give us five pictures. (If you're taking notes, you can write them down.) They're quite fascinating about the pastorate or about the ministry, particularly referring to these elders at Ephesus, his own life, and his present ministry; but it relates to all of us as well, so five pictures Paul paints of pastoral ministry. The first picture is that of an accountant. I want you to see that in verse 24. He says, "But none of these things move me, neither count," there's the concept, "I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Paul says in verse 22, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem." Those of you that know the story of the book of Acts and the life of Paul, you know that when Paul gets to Jerusalem he gets arrested. He gets thrown into prison. He gets put on a ship and is sent to Rome. Now, that's his heart's desire, to see Rome; but he didn't know he would go there as a prisoner. Sometimes God's plans are different than ours. God puts it in Paul's heart to go to Rome; and so He has him arrested, put in prison, and then has him shipped via the Roman government all the way to Rome. You know, God is kind of into economics, too—He saved Paul a bunch of money. He didn't go first class, he went in chains, but God fulfilled this desire.

What happened was, as Paul's going on his way to Jerusalem, he kept getting these warnings that he would be arrested, persecuted, opposed, that he would face opposition, persecution, and maybe even death. I want to show it to you. Look at Acts 21:4. On the way back Paul says, "And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days," he's in Tyre while on the northern coast of Israel, "who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." This is what confuses people. You say, "Well, here the Holy Spirit is warning Paul, 'Don't do it. Don't do it. Don't do it.'" Paul says, "I'm bound in the spirit. I'm going to do it." Notice as they come down, in the text of verse 8, he says, "And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him."

Remember, back in Acts 6, we had the seven deacons chosen to wait on tables? One of them was Philip, and he became an evangelist. Well, Philip was the evangelist that went down to Samaria. It says, "And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. 10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle," belt, "and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle," belt, "and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought," begged, "him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done." Go back with me to Acts 20:24.

Paul says (verse 22), "...I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem," and "...the Holy Ghost

witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.” You say, “What kind of a crazy man is this?” Paul had a desire. Now, the word “bound in the spirit,” means that I’m just held fast by chains. It means that there’s no way out of it. I’m just being driven. I just have this strong urge and desire to go to Jerusalem. I believe that was placed on his heart by God, but he says, “I don’t really know all that’s involved. All I know is when I get there, I’m going to be arrested and put into prison.” We would be going the opposite direction, right? We would be going the opposite direction as fast as we can, but Paul said, “I believe this is God’s will.” This is what confuses people. They conclude that God is telling him not to go because of the warnings, and that’s not necessarily the case. I believe but what we have here in these passages is that God is telling him what’s going to happen, but God is not forbidding him to go—there’s a big difference. God isn’t saying, “Don’t go.” He’s actually just saying, “This is what’s going to happen when you do go.” We might say, “Well, why would God tell him that?” Well, when Paul was saved on the road to Damascus and Ananias came and laid hands on him, the Lord actually said to then Saul, “I will show him what great things he will suffer for My name’s sake.”

You know, when you serve the Lord, life isn’t always easy. Life can be very difficult; it can be very hard. When you’re called by God, you can’t do anything else but follow that will and calling of God. You don’t pull back. You don’t shirk back. You don’t get in fear that, “Oh, no! It’s going to be difficult. Oh, no! There’s going to be opposition. Oh, no! People will persecute me.” You have to say, “I believe God has called me, and I know it’s going to be difficult. He’s made it clear, but I’m going to follow His path and His purpose for my life.”

In Philippians 4, there was a man, Epaphroditus, which says that he gambled with his life to fulfill (the believers in Philippi) their lack of service toward Paul. Paul says here in Acts 20:24, I want you to notice it, “But none of these things move me,” they wept and cried. They said, “Please, Paul, don’t go.” He says, “Well, are you trying to make me not go? Are you trying to move me?” He said, “But none of these things move me,” but notice the phrase in verse 24, “neither count I my life dear unto myself,” why? “so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” What an amazing statement that is! Paul says, “I’m willing to die if need be, even in Jerusalem,” and “I count not my life dear unto me.” Again, in Philippians 3 as well, where Paul talked about his priorities and that he came to know Christ and everything else was refuse, “...that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness...but that which is through the faith of Christ.” Paul was willing to give his life to fulfill the ministry that God had called him to. What happens is Paul looks at his bank account of his life. He opens the books of his life, and he realized that it was more important for him to do God’s will and to follow God’s will even though there would be persecution, trouble, and difficulty.

I heard the story of a missionary by the name of James Calvert. He was a young missionary, many many years ago, that was going to the Fijian Islands to reach the heathens on Fiji. I’ve been there and can imagine a hundred years ago what it might’ve been like on the Fijian islands. The captain of the boat, before he left him and his missionary team off, said, “Look, you will certainly be killed by these wild natives. All of you will be killed. You’ll be wiped out.

You won't survive. You're going to die!" This young missionary said to the captain, "We already died before we came." I love that!

The Bible says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." You know, our primary nature is self-preservation; that is, to take care of and protect ourselves. Paul says, "Listen, I'm willing to do whatever. I'm not going to think about, live for, or try to preserve myself. I count not my life dear to myself." The reason was that he wanted to finish the race. The first picture is that of an accountant. He says, "When I look at my life, I don't value it. I value doing the will of God." Someone said, "The reason we are not effective in our Christian service is that we value our lives far more than we do our witness." I like that. We're worried more about our lives than we are our witness or our comfort over obedience to God and His will for us.

The second image Paul gives is in verse 24 as well; that is, that of a runner. First, he's an accountant, and then he's a runner. In the statement he makes (verse 24), "...so that I might finish my course with joy." Paul mentions three things in verse 24: my life, my course, and my ministry. Paul saw them all as gifts from God and we should as well. God has given us our life, our course, and a ministry; and we need to run that race. Interesting, when he came to the end of his life...and by the way, Paul was only going to live at this point for another ten years. Can you imagine if you knew that you only had ten years left? What would you do with your time? Paul only had ten years left. When he wrote 2 Timothy, he comes to the fourth chapter and says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." So, I've fought the fight, he's a wrestler; I've run the race, he's a runner; I've kept the faith, I haven't given up; and I finished my course, therefore there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me and for all those who love His appearing. Notice that he does his ministry and finishes the course with joy. So, we serve the Lord—we serve the Lord with humility, with fidelity, and with joy.

We move to the third picture (verse 24), that of a steward. This is my favorite. He says, "...and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Catch that phrase, "the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify," so he's both a steward (God has entrusted the ministry to him) and a witness; I need to testify of what God has done in my life. The minister or the pastor, and I believe that we as individual Christians, are stewards. Now, we don't understand this concept today, but in Bible days if you were a wealthy landowner and had lots of servants, animals, property, money, and lots of things to do, you were busy traveling around doing your job, you needed someone to manage that. You needed someone to oversee your servants to make sure they're getting paid, they're doing their job, and the work schedules were laid out. It's what we would call a manager today. What you would do is entrust your estate—all your money, servants, and property—to your steward. None of it belonged to the steward, he was only a manager. The owner would go away and then come back, and the steward would have to give a report to the owner about what he did with his goods. This concept is now transferred over to the minister, and it's very simple. God

has entrusted to the pastor His Word, and the pastor is to dispense His Word to the people of God—the household of God—faithfully.

In 1 Corinthians 4, the Bible says that we're called to be ministers who are stewards. Turn with me real quick if you want to 1 Corinthians 4:1. Paul says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and," there's our word, "stewards of the mysteries of God." So, how should we view Paul and the pastorate? As stewards of the mysteries of God. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful," not talented but faithful, "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment," so we don't let men judge us (verse 4), we don't judge ourselves, but the Lord judges us. He says, "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." He goes on and continues to talk about the ministry as a steward. Go back with me to Acts 20.

What a pastor is to do is to be faithful to preach, teach, and dispense the Word. Do you know that God has entrusted you with His Word? It'd be like Jesus shows up at your house and hands you a Bible saying, "I'm trusting you to take this message and tell other people about it. It's My Word, but you're going to be the steward. I'm going to come back, and when I come back, you're going to have to give an account to Me on what you did." Remember the parable Jesus told about the unjust steward who buried that treasure in the ground? When the master came back, he just gave him his treasure back. He didn't invest it in the bank, expand it, or do anything with it; and he was in trouble with the master because he didn't use the faithful stewardship that God had entrusted to him. God has given you a gift. God has given you talents. God has given you abilities. God has given you opportunities. What are you doing with them? Maybe God wants you to be a steward of His Word to your family or in your marriage or with your children. Maybe God has put you in an office and there are others there that need to hear the good news, and God says, "I've entrusted you with My Word. These people need to hear it. You need to spread the good news," because one day we'll be accountable to God. We'll have to testify to Him. This is the steward picture.

The fourth picture is that of a herald. First, we're accountants, then runners, we're stewards, and now we're a herald, notice verse 25. He says, "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching," there's the word, "the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." The word "preaching" there we get our word "herald" from. It's a Greek word *kerysso*. It means to proclaim. Again, you need to understand the culture and the time. In those days they didn't have newspapers (praise God for that, I guess). They didn't have CNN, FOX News, ABC or NBC News. They didn't have the internet. They didn't have smart phones. They didn't have social media. They didn't have radio. They didn't have any way to spread the news. If a king had a proclamation and wanted people in his kingdom to get a message, they didn't even have the printed page, so do you know what they did? They hired a guy that officially worked for the king who would go out (you see it in the old Robin Hood, merry old England thing) and blow a trumpet and say, "Hear ye, hear ye! The king has a proclamation!" They would roll the scroll out and read the message from the king. All the townspeople would gather to listen to the herald—his name wasn't Harold, he was a herald.

The herald would say, "Hear ye! Hear ye! The king's message!" Now, when he delivered the message, he had no right to change the message. When the king handed him the message and said, "I want you to go read it," he didn't say, "Let me check it first. Oh, I can fix this. Oh, I'm going to correct that. Oh, this is...I'm going to take that out, change this a little bit." He wasn't to mess with the king's message, he was only to proclaim it. Both of these images of the steward means that we faithfully share God's Word—we don't add to it, we don't take away from it—and the herald would faithfully proclaim God's Word—we don't add to it or take away from it. He is to just herald the Word.

This is what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-5. He said, "Preach the word," same Greek word *kerysso*, herald the Word. Don't just preach on psychology, philosophy, your own ideas, current events or political things, modern trends, or what's happening in the world today. Just take My Word and herald it. Proclaim it. The gospel is not good views, it's good news; and it needs to just be proclaimed. He is to preach the Word, "...with all longsuffering and doctrine," and he tells him why, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts," or desires, "shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." This is the same thing Paul is talking about himself. He talks about the afflictions, the problems, that await him, but you have to be a faithful steward, witness, and a herald. Preach the Word. Notice verse 25, "...preaching the kingdom of God," what does that mean? Not only does he preach the gospel to the unbelievers, but he teaches the Word of God to the believers.

There's a fifth and last image (verses 26-27), the image of a watchman. Notice in verse 26 he says, "Wherefore I take you to record this day," now he's actually giving a solemn declaration, "I want you to write this down. I want you to record this," "that I am pure from the blood of all men." He had a clear conscience. He had ministered there for three years, and he had done what God had called him to do. "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Earlier he said, "...I kept back nothing that was profitable," that's the mark of a true minister. "I didn't water it down. I didn't delete it. I didn't make it palatable. I didn't take out what might be offensive to you." "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Notice in verse 26 this image of a watchman. It's taken from the book of Ezekiel 3 and in other Old Testament places. Again, you need to understand what a watchman is. It's not a person that fixes watches, okay? So, we have a steward, a herald, and now a watchman. In the ancient world they had cities, and what they would do is actually put watchmen on the walls. The watchmen would look out and keep an eye, kind of like the Coast Guard today cruising the coast, watching our coast to keep it secure, or the border patrol. They're like watchmen. The watchmen would stand upon the wall of the city. If he saw an enemy or some threatening army coming, his job was to warn the citizens of the town that there's danger coming. Very simple, right? Now, here's the pastor, and the pastor is to be a watchman on the wall. That doesn't mean I walk around on the roof at the church, although we do keep our eye on the premises. He's talking about in the spiritual realm—the pastor, spiritually, over this flock keeps a watchful

eye out for predators. This is a flock and Satan comes as a wolf to devour the sheep, so the pastor has to watch out for people who will bring in false teaching, false doctrine, heresy, and cause division. He is the watchman, and he has to warn the congregation.

This is the part of ministry that is so lost in our modern church today. A lot of popular pastors won't do this. They don't want to name cults. They don't want to label false teachers. They don't want to warn people. You know, a simple little illustration is when you have little children at home, and maybe in the garage or in the kitchen you have things that are harmful for them, maybe poisons or cleaners that you don't want kids to get to. What do you do? You put lock tops on them. You put them up high where the kids can't get to them. You make sure you label them: Don't Drink—Poisonous! You want to protect the kids from those dangerous things, right? That's what a pastor's job is to do, but this is something that's not popular today because we have, again, bought the culture that we're not to say anything negative about anyone else. We've got this pluralistic concept that everything is equally valid, everything is okay, we need to be tolerant, no one is right, no one is wrong, and who do you think you are to say this man's doctrine is in error or this ministry is wrong, and that's not right for you to criticize them. I understand that. There's a point where we can become critical or faultfinding. Jesus in Matthew 7 told us not to do that. I don't know people's hearts or motives, but Jesus did say you will know them by their fruit and we should be discerning about the content and the doctrine in which they're preaching.

A lot of times Christians aren't thinking that way. I have people come up to me all the time from this church that sit under this ministry and say, "Oh, I was listening to so-and-so," or "I like so-and-so," or "I watch this person on tv," and immediately I know that a lot of what they're getting is poisonous and dangerous. I try to be as tactful as I can, but on the other hand, I want to speak the truth in love. I'm not attacking any other individual. Now, I'm going to go into this more next week, and I will, next week, go into some specific things that I want to warn you about because I want you to go down to verse 28 for just a moment and we'll wrap this up. He says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." That's a pastor. That's a shepherd. He was a watchman on the wall.

In that imagery, again, what would you think if you went to bed at night knowing the watchman was on the wall, if any enemies were approaching that he would be warning you and, lo and behold, he fell asleep. He was sleeping on the job, and the enemy approached, took the city, and wiped you all out! That would be a disaster, wouldn't it? Well, a lot of pastors are sleeping on the wall. They're sleeping on the wall. They're not awake. They're not vigilant. They're not sober. Do you know in the Old Testament, Isaiah 56:10-11, God says, "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs," this is God speaking about these prophets that fall asleep and live only serving themselves, "they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to

slumber. 11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” This is one of the heartbreaks of God. God has placed men over the church to be a watchman, but they are greedy dogs. They’re sleeping, and they’re in it for themselves. This is again as I said something that is so unpopular in our culture today, yet it is biblical. Well, that’s why when I say that you need to have a biblical ministry, it involves this watchtower on the wall concept of protecting God’s people from things that are detrimental and dangerous.

In closing, notice (verse 27) that he says, “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” Everything in God’s Word I’ve talked to you about. If the Bible teaches about hell, I’ve told you about hell. If the Bible talks about holiness, I’ve taught you about holiness. If the Bible talks about the rapture of the church, I’ve taught on the rapture of the church. If the Bible talks about the Second Coming, the bema seat of Christ, the sanctified life, the Spirit-filled life, the Person and the work of Jesus Christ, all of those doctrines...you see, the danger is a lot of pastors will ride hobby horses and do a series on marriage. They’ll do a series on spiritual warfare, then a series on prophecy, and come back to do a series on how to be rich and how to make money, marriage, raising children, prophecy, spiritual warfare, because those are the topics that people like.

Based on my topic on preaching here at Revival will determine how many people show up for church. I can preach sermons that will draw bigger crowds. If we had a marquee out front and I preached a sermon on how to be rich—Wow! I wanna hear that!—how to be healthy and wealthy, how to have a happy marriage, (I’ve preached on how to have a happy marriage) but there’s a lot of other things in the Bible. This is why I don’t poll the congregation to find out what you want me to preach about because I preach God’s Word. I want to minister to your needs. I believe that the best way to meet your needs is to share with you God’s Word, for you to get strong in the Word. I believe that when you know your Bible, you’ll be closer to the Lord and God will bless your marriage, God will bless your job, God will bless you in every area of your life as you grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. I believe God will bless you, but if I pull away from that and try to minister to these other areas then I’m neglecting my responsibility as a faithful steward and a herald of God’s Word. Regardless of the consequences, Paul shared the whole counsel of God.

When the Bible talks about divorce, I’m going to talk about divorce. When the Bible talks about sexual purity, I’m going to talk about sexual purity. When the Bible talks about the deity of Christ or the resurrection of Christ, I’m not going to water that down. I’m going to teach what the Bible teaches. I have a responsibility to God, who has called me to this ministry, to be faithful to His Word. That’s what motivates me; that’s what motivates me. So, if you want God’s Word—nothing more, nothing less—that’s what my commitment is to.

Let me wrap this up with three important lessons from the life of Saint Paul, then we’ll continue this text next week. First, Paul had an unshakable commitment to God and to His people, the church, and so should we. Even as I see people in the church today, they love the Lord but lack a commitment to the church—the bride of Christ, the body of Christ. Paul had an unshakable

commitment to God and to the church, the family of God. Secondly, Paul had an unshakable commitment to the proclamation of God's Word, and so should we. He had an unshakable commitment. He never wavered from the proclamation of God's Word, and neither should we. Thirdly, Paul's commitment transcended his concern for self. In verse 24, "...neither count I my life dear unto myself." In Philippians 1, Paul said, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Can you imagine if we had more Paul the Apostles today in the church? A commitment to God and to church, a commitment to preaching the Word, more concerned about the glory of God and the ministry of God than they are themselves and self-advancing their own lives? I believe that the world would be transformed if God's people simply cared more about obedience to God and the will of God and the glory of God and the preaching of God's Word than they were what people think about me, what people are going to do to me, how it's going to affect me, I may lose my job, I may lose my friends, people may not like me; instead of saying, "Lord, here I am. Here I am. Set my heart on fire for You, O God. Use me for Your Glory." I believe that we could see the world turned right-side up for Jesus Christ. Amen?