

A FAITHFUL MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST

ACTS 20:28 • TV117A

A television broadcast sermon delivered
SUNDAY, MAY 4TH, 1980
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Transcribed, edited and published
NOVEMBER 12TH, 2015

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Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

Acts 20:28

“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.”

Turn in your Bible today to the book of **Acts**. I’m going to be bringing you a message from the **20th** chapter of the book of **Acts** on the subject: **“A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST.”**

I think this is a very important subject and I want you to listen very carefully to the whole message: **“A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”**

Now, all things on this earth must finally come to an end. The great preacher Richard Baxter once said: “I preach as one who may never preach again. I preach as a dying man to dying men.”

And our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of a man one time who had filled his barns with plenty. He had a good crop that year and he was successful. But he was lying upon his bed one night and he said: “I have much goods laid up for many years and I have more goods coming in, I believe I

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will tear down my barns and build bigger barns and then I can say to my soul: eat, drink, and be merry.”

But, the Lord Jesus Christ said that God spoke to him that night and called him a fool; *“thy fool; this night thy soul shall be required of thee and then who shall these things be that you have accumulated?”*

In other words, the Lord called the man a fool who only lived for the present and gave no thought to death and judgment. All things on this earth must come to an end. My ministry must come to an end. My work must come to an end and my life must come to an end and so shall yours.

Well, the Scripture that I am using for a text today is the end of Paul’s ministry in a certain place. The apostle Paul had ministered to the church at Ephesus. He had preached to them for many years.

He had written to them, he had preached to them, he had sent Timothy to them and he had been a minister to these people and now his ministry had come to an end. We know that looking at the latter part of the Chapter in which it says: *“They would see his face no more.”*

In other words, Paul’s ministry to them had come to an end. He was leaving them and it says in **verse 38**: *“they would see his face no more.”* In other words, this was Paul’s farewell sermon. This was the last sermon that he would preach to this congregation and to the elders of this church.

Now, I think it would be a great blessing to every preacher and indeed every believer and every church member if we would read this sermon at least once a week. I believe if we would read the **20th** chapter of the book of **Acts** at least once a week, it would set our priorities straight and it would show us again the work of a faithful minister and a faithful church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this farewell message, (and this is what it is) it’s the last time Paul would preach to these people, the last words that he had for them. He was leaving and he would never come again to their congregation. He would never preach to them. He said: *“You will see my face no more.”*

And this does not sound like one of today’s farewell messages because Paul didn’t spend his time boasting of the converts that he had won while he preached to them nor did he spend his time talking about the books he had written or the many sermons that he had preached or the churches that he had organized.

He certainly was not seeking their praise or a testimonial to his service for God in their community, rather; he summed up his ministry among them and I believe in this chapter he sets a pattern for every faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and too, a pattern for every church that would glorify the Son of God.

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Now, there are five statements in this message, which gives us a summary, not only of Paul's ministry, but what ought to be a summary of my ministry and the ministry of every preacher of the Gospel and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Will you take your Bible and open it there to the **20th** chapter of **Acts** and let's look at these five statements. I believe these are Paul's five points in the message, his last sermon, and his farewell address.

He was leaving these people never to come again and he sums up his ministry among them. I say, as he sums up his ministry, he certainly sets a pattern for my ministry and yours and every other believer's.

First of all: In **verse 19**, he says: *"I have served the Lord with all humility"*

Underscore this in **verse 19**: *"I have served the Lord with all humility."* Pride anywhere is an abomination to God. The Scripture says in the book of **Proverbs** *"six things that the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination to him."*

Do you know what the first sin mentioned? Do you know what the first sin is, *"God hates a proud look?"* Then the Scripture says: *"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall."*

Again the Scripture says: *"God resisteth the proud and gives grace to the humble."* Pride anywhere, whether it be because of our race, or because of our face, or because of our place or position or because of our grace; pride anywhere is an abomination to God, but especially in the ministry, spiritual pride is loathsome to God and it's disgusting to God.

Paul says in **1 Corinthians 4:7**: *"Who maketh thee to differ? What do you have that you did not receive?"* What do you know that you were not taught by God? What are you that God did not make you?

Everything that we have is the gift of God almighty. Hear the apostle all the way through his writings; he says: *"By the grace of God I am what I am."* Again he said: *"I am not worthy to be called an apostle."* Again he said: *"I am less than the least of all the saints."*

Then, in one of his farewell books to Timothy he said: *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief."*

My friends; there are three important things that every believer needs to remember, the first of which is this: Let every man who names the name of Christ be conscience of his own sins and his own imperfections.

Now, I know that we are mighty conscience of everybody else's sins and everybody else's imperfections and infirmities and we are quick to condemn them and to criticize them. But, we need to be aware of our own imperfections and our own sin all the time.

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The apostle said: *“O wretched man that I am, I am the chief sinners of.”* He said: *“I’m not one wit behind the chief apostle but I am nothing, I am nothing.”*

Secondly: Then, everyone who names the name of Christ ought to be conscientious, not only of our own sins and our own imperfections but we ought to be conscience that our gifts and our graces are not our own at all, they are borrowed, they are God given.

Whatever we know God taught us. Our minds are enlightened by the Holy Spirit, by his grace. Our hearts are made to love. You say: *“But, I love God and I love his people.”*

“His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” We didn’t produce that love. *“We love him because he first loved us.”* We are taught to love by God’s grace. We are enabled to love by God’s grace.

Then, our lips speak and you say: *“I speak for God. I teach; I know something about the Scripture.”* That’s because of His grace and that’s because of His mercy.

And I will tell you, God who gave these gifts can remove them just as easily as He gave them. Our Lord said: *“A man can receive nothing except it were given him from above.”*

God despises pride. Pride is the number one sin. Someone said, *“Pride, is the granddaddy of all sin. “Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before the fall.”* And pride ought not to be found in the heart of any believer especially any minister of the Gospel.

Thirdly: The Christian ought to remember that our dependence is upon the Holy Spirit!

Why, we don’t even know the things for which we should pray except the spirit of God teaches us. We don’t even know the things that are to be prayed according to the will of God except the Holy Spirit should reveal the will of God to us.

It’s the Spirit that convicts men of sin, we don’t. It’s the Holy Spirit who reveals Christ through the preaching of the Gospel, we don’t. It is the Holy Spirit of God who leads men into all truth, we do not. It’s the Holy Spirit of God who glorifies Jesus Christ, we don’t.

It shouldn’t be difficult for us to wait before God and before men too with great humility. We should be amazed that God would even use us. We should be amazed that God almighty would even condescend to take notice of us.

This is what David the great Psalmist felt when he cried: *“O God who am I and what is my house that you should show such mercy to me? Who am I and what is my house?”*

And that’s the way every true minister of the Gospel feels. And that’s the way Paul began this last message to these dear people whom he loved. He said: *“I’ve served the Lord with great humility:*

“I have labored among you, I have ministered among you, and I have done it with a conscientiousness of my own sins, my own imperfections, with conscientiousness that my gifts and graces were all God given, with the conscientiousness that He who gave those gifts could take them away just as quickly as he gave them.”

Paul said; “I keep my body and bring it into subjection, lest while preaching to others, I myself become a castaway. I remember that my dependence is on the Holy Spirit.” He said: “I may plant and Apollos may plow and someone else water, but God gives the increase.” He’s the Lord of the harvest.

Wouldn’t it be something if we all learned this, not in our heads, but in our hearts, to be able to give and to witness and to teach and to preach and do whatever we do only for the glory of God and not out of any vain ambition and not for any vain show but only for the glory of God.

Secondly: The point in this message is **verse 20**. Now, this is a point that I want to emphasize very strongly and I want you to listen very carefully, most carefully. In **verse 20** he said: *“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.”*

It may be offensive. It may be hard to hear like the Pharisee said to Christ: *“That’s a hard saying, who can hear it?”* It may be contrary to your traditions and ceremonies but I have kept back nothing.

Now, my friend, I believe it is very tempting to some people in this day who desire to build great religious programs and great religious empires and great religious followings to give people what they want to hear rather than what they ought to hear.

This is one of the problems with preaching today is that many preachers in their great desire to build a large following or a large program or a large, religious empire, rather than giving people what God says and what they ought to hear, we are tempted to give them what they want to hear and to get along with them and to avoid offending people and driving people away.

Our Lord preached and thousands walked off and left Him. One time, over five thousand people walked away. And He turned to his own disciples and He said: *“Will you also go away?”* Why, they said: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”*

My friend, listen to me, natural men are religious by nature. I don’t care where you go, you will find political people by nature; they like government. They like to be involved in government.

People are social by nature and wherever you go you will find that people are religious by nature. No matter where it is, anywhere in the world you will find religion. You will find that people are religious.

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Everybody has his own ideas about God and about death and about eternity and about judgment and about heaven and about hell. It's not difficult to capitalize on this sentiment and on this religious emotion.

And it's not difficult just to confirm men in their false refuge. Just go on and appeal to their sentiment. Go on and appeal to their emotions. Go on and appeal to the direction that they are going.

But, true ministers of the Gospel know that though men, natural men are religious by nature, their ways are not God's ways and their thoughts are not God's thoughts. Their thoughts are religious, their thoughts are sentimental, and their thoughts are emotional.

And many times their thoughts are moral according to man's standard but "their ways are not God's ways. *"There's a way that seemeth right unto men but the end is death and destruction."* And we must preach to people not what they want to hear but what God says in his Word, what people ought to hear.

Our Lord didn't come preaching to the Pharisees what they wanted to hear; to the Sadducees what they wanted to hear, what would please them, what would appease them, what would get along with them. But, he preached to them *"thus saith the Lord God."*

And here in this verse Paul says: *"I have kept back nothing,"* no matter how offensive, no matter how condemning, no matter how contrary to your ways and your thoughts; *"I have kept back nothing profitable unto you."*

Now, watch this in the next verse, **verse 21**; he then declares the two essentials that are profitable. He said: *"I have not shunned to declare unto you repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."* Those are the two essentials, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he said. No man has ever come to God apart from these two things, *"repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."*

What is repentance preacher?

First of all: Repentance is toward God!

David said: *"O Lord, against thee have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight."* Repentance is not toward men. It's not just making restitution to some person that you have offended. Repentance is toward God. We realize our sins have been against God.

Repentance is born of a godly sorrow, not sorrow that we got caught, not sorrow that we had to pay the price, not sorrow that we have upset the applecart, but sorry because we have offended a Holy God: *"Godly sorrow is what worketh repentance. Earthly sorrow bringeth death."*

Secondly: And not only is repentance toward God and not only is it born of godly sorrow but repentance does not have in mind one particular sin only.

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Genuine repentance is over the nature of sin, not only what we've done but what caused us to do it, our nature, our evil hearts, not only the act that was performed but the attitude and spirit that promoted that act. That's real repentance.

A man hasn't yet grieved over sins until he is grieved over sin, the nature of sin, the principle of sin, the root of sin, which is within our hearts and our souls and our mind.

Repentance is continual. It doesn't stop with one act of repentance. We have repented, we are repenting, and we shall continue to repent. We do know we are sinners. We grieve over sin, we repent of sin, and we continue to grieve over our sin.

What is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, faith has one object and that is Christ. Faith has one foundation, the Word of God. And faith continues like repentance, it continues to grow.

The author said:

**“My faith has found a resting place
Not in device or creed
I trust the ever living one
His blood for me shall plead,**

**Enough for me that Jesus saves
This ends my fear and doubt
A sinful soul I come to him
He'll never cast me out.”**

We must not preach that any man can know God apart from genuine repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a genuine Godly sorrow over sin, being stripped that we might be clothed, being slain that we might be made alive, being broken that we may be healed, and being slain that we may be resurrected by the power of the Son of God, repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly: In **verse 27**, he says: *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”*

Now, my friend, we may not preach with the power that we desire and we may not preach with the earnestness with which we ought to preach and we may not preach with the effectiveness with which we would like to preach and we may not preach with the wisdom we desire.

But let no man ever (for the glory of God and for the good of our hearers) let no man ever charge us with failing to declare all the counsel of God. Let no man charge us with failing to preach what we know the Word teaches.

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Let no man charge us out of fear or covetousness or ambition with failing to preach all the counsel of God. *“If I please men I’m not the servant of Christ.”* If I seek the favor and honor and glory of men I’m not the servant of Jesus Christ.

Now, my friend, the Scripture declares that God is sovereign, that God is almighty, and God is omnipotent in creation, in providence and salvation. The Word of God teaches that and that is what I must preach whether it offends or not.

I must preach that God is absolutely God and *“he doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this earth and giveth it to whomsoever he will. “Let God be God;”* that’s what the Scripture says.

He says, *“I am God, I form the light and I create darkness. I create good and I create evil. I the Lord do all these things.”* God is God; He’s sovereign.

And the Word of God teaches the depravity of man. Man is born dead in sin. He has a nature of evil. And he’s not only a sinner by birth and nature but he’s a sinner by choice and practice. *“From the soul of his feet to the top of his head there is no soundness in him. There’s none good, no not one. There’s none that seeketh after God.”*

I know that folks like to say there’s a little good in everybody, not spiritual good, not spiritual light, not spiritual truth. The Scripture says: *“We are dead in trespasses and sins.”* The Scripture says: *“We are without hope, we are without help, we are without God, we are without Christ, and we are without strength in this world.”*

But, salvation is a miracle, that it’s a work of God, it must be something that God does for man, not something man does for himself or for God.

Then, the Word of God teaches a covenant of grace that the Lord God of heaven gave His Son a people. He determined in His mercy to save a people for the glory of Christ and He gave His Son a people.

And Christ came into this world and effectually redeemed them. Christ is the Redeemer alone and He redeemed us alone. Salvation is the unaided work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the royal bath of mercy in which black souls are washed from their sin was drawn from the veins of the Son of God and no blood of noble martyrs or noble confessors have entered that stream.

**“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel’s veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.”**

The royal banquet of mercy is served up by one host, the Lord of glory. He is the unaided Saviour. He redeemed His people; He didn’t try to, He didn’t make an effort to, He didn’t make

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a down payment on their salvation; He bought and paid for it and ransomed them. The debt is paid for all who believe.

The Scripture declares that the Holy Spirit effectually calls men to Christ. *“My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.”* The Scriptures declare that the redeemed will persevere, that salvation is not a temporary thing, eternal life is not for six months or six years or even 60 years but forever and forever.

And not one for whom Christ died will perish in the flames of hell, not one for whom Christ died shall ever be brought to judgment. Not one for whom Christ died will ever be called upon to die because He paid their debt.

They are redeemed. They will persevere. He will keep them. Paul said: *“I haven’t shunned to declare unto you all (the whole counsel) of God. I kept back nothing profitable unto you.”*

Fourthly: In **verse 32**, he says: *“I commend you to God and to the word of his grace.”* That word *“commend”* is commit. Here is what Paul is saying; he’s saying to this congregation that he is about to leave, preaching his last sermon to them, his farewell address, a pattern for every one of us, he says:

“I commit you to God. I commit you to God to save you. I commit you to God to protect you. I commit you to God to provide for you and I commit you to God to keep you. You are not my children, you are God’s children. You are not my people, you are God’s people.”

Your relationship to God is not a union with a group of men; it’s a vital, living union, with the Lord Jesus Christ and I commit you to Him. He will provide: *“The Lord will provide.”* The Lord is our banner. The Lord is our refuge. The Lord is our strength. David said, *“I will not fear, what man can do unto me.”* I commit you to God.

And notice the next thing he says there: *“And I commit you to his word, which is able to build you up.”*

Now, I don’t have a pamphlet to present to you, *“How to Live the Christian Life,”* *“How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit,”* and *“How to be baptized with the Spirit and the Gifts.”* I don’t have any *“How to Pamphlets”* but I have a Bible and I commend you to the Word of God.

The Word of God is able to strengthen you. The Word of God is able to sanctify you. *“Where with all shall a young man cleanse his way, by taking heed to the Word of God?”*

The Word of God is able to give you faith and build up that faith. *Peter said, “Desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby.”* Paul said, *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”*

Paul said when he was leaving these people: *“I commit you to God. I do not trust you in the hands of a man. I do not trust you in the hands of a denomination or a preacher. I commit you to*

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God. And, I commit you to His Word which is able to strengthen you and establish you and build you up.”

My friend; bury yourself in God’s Word. Saturate your heart with the Word of God. Commit it to your memory. Study the Scriptures. Everything you need is in the Scriptures.

You don’t need all the writings of men; you need the writings of God. The Word of God is able to strengthen and to comfort you and to meet every need.

Now, notice the last thing in **verse 33**, Paul said: *“And I have coveted no man’s silver, gold, or apparel.”* Do we dare say that in this day?

We are making too much noise about money, calling in and sending in money. “Mail your checks, mail your money orders. Buy a brick, buy an album, buy a book, buy something else, and send your money. If you can’t write, just send your money.” I’m sick of it!

The apostle Paul said: “We are the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and He will meet our need.” *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

We don’t need the support of men; we need the love and grace and support of the living God. He will supply our needs. He will comfort our heart. He will bless our ministry if it’s His ministry. Do we dare say that? Say that next Sunday!

“I covet no man’s gold, silver, or apparel, praise, honor, fame, or anything else. I commit you to God and to His blessed Word!”