

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

“...about all that Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1).

R₂L – Resolved to Live: With a Resolve to Last (Part 1)

Acts 19:1-10

1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. 2 He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” 4 Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. 7 There were in all about twelve men. 8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

If for some reason God were to take you out of this world tonight, for what would you be remembered? What kind of legacy would you leave behind? What will you hand down to those who come after you? This past week I attended a funeral for a remarkable woman. This woman would be remembered for a number of things; a beloved wife; an attentive mother; a confidant par none; creative beyond measure; resilient in the face of obstacles. My friend, Sue Wyatt, died at the young age of 50 due to complications that arose from her rheumatoid arthritis, a disease that began to cripple her as a teenager. It is hard to imagine the pain that she endured through the years. One description given was to remember having a sprained ankle or wrist; now imagine that pain in nearly every joint of your body on a daily basis. For most of us, if we would remember the worst pain we have felt in our bodies, this would typically be a good day for Sue. Yet, she never complained, was thankful to God for her life; and constantly ministered to others, if even simply by praying for others while on her bed. Sue was a woman of small stature, less than five feet tall, yet to those who knew her; she was a rock, an anchor and a spiritual giant. And as good as all this is, the greatest thing for which she will be remembered; that which will follow her in the memories of all those who have the privilege of knowing her was her uncompromising commitment, devotion, expression of faith, and proclamation of her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

For what will you be remembered? When people gather at your funeral, what will they say about you? And while what they say may not be bad, will what they say actually be of eternal significance; of lasting value; and of pointing people to the Lord Jesus Christ even as Sue Wyatt’s life did? For in the end, nothing else matters. What we did for employment during our years on earth, will not matter; but what will matter is how we lived our lives to the glory of God in our employment. What grades we received while in school will not matter in the last day; but rather how we conducted ourselves as witnesses for Jesus. What will be your legacy?

As we wind through the history of the early church, we find Luke, the beloved physician and traveling companion, chronicling the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. To consider this in another way, Luke is not only giving us an account of what happened as the church began to spread from Jerusalem, throughout Israel and beyond to Asia Minor, Greece and eventually

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Rome, but he is also remembering the legacy of a great man of God. As we noted last week, and in essence every time we have gazed into the life of Paul, we find a man of uncompromising commitment, devotion, expression of faith, and proclamation of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Not only do I want to be *inspired* by the life of Paul, I *desire* to follow in his legacy of proclaiming Jesus, of proclaiming Him who is the only way, the only truth and the only life; of proclaiming Jesus to family, to friends, to neighbors, to strangers; of being ready at any time and in any way to give a reason to others of the hope I have as found in Jesus Christ. My desire is not simply to look at the life of Sue Wyatt, or of John Schamber, of other saints who have gone on to glory, only to wish I could be more like them; but rather my desire; and I pray that this would be your desire, is to be so committed to serving Jesus on a daily basis that my life would reflected even perhaps half as much as these beloved saints.

It is not enough to wish to be a better witness for Jesus. It is not enough to come to church week after week and simply be informed about how to be a better witness for Jesus. It is time to do! It is time to act! It is time to pray to God and ask, “Lord, help me be that person of uncompromising commitment, devotion, expression of faith, and proclamation of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This all begs the question of “how?” How do I become such a person? What must I do to be such a person? I would have you remember that in Acts 19:1-10 we see Paul’s resolve to build a lasting ministry. As he begins his third missionary journey, we do not find Paul pushing to preach the gospel further, to unreached places. To be sure, Paul still had this desire to reach new places, but he knew something that each of us must remember; that if are to be personally involved in ministry and service to Jesus that will last; then we must be willing to invest regularly, often, repeatedly, and continually in the lives of others. Before Paul would seek to widen the gospel reach, he first comes back to those he had already ministered to in order to deepen the gospel reach. Paul desired to see people truly grow in truth; grow in doctrine; to grow in their understanding and love of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 19:1-10, we learn of the steps Paul took to build a ministry that would last; of leaving a legacy for men like Timothy, Titus and others to follow in and transfer to the next generation. Today we come here and stand in the very living waters of this legacy. We are blessed today by the legacy of Paul, who transferred that to Timothy, who in turn, transferred it to other faithful men and women until it has impacted us today. And my heart’s cry to you is to know and grow in this legacy so that you can transfer it to your children, to your friends, to your family so that when God does take you into glory, you too will be known as one of uncompromising commitment, devotion, expression of faith, and proclamation of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

How did Paul do it? Remember that last week we noted the first of two key points from these verses. We noted from verses 1-7, that Paul sought to expose people to the Word of God. He did this by asking questions that helped him assess where the people he was speaking to were at spiritually; and then, once he heard what they did or did not know spiritually, he shared with them what they needed to know about Jesus. After assessing them, he then sought to aim them toward Jesus.

Let me remind you that our job, our goal, and our efforts are to be the same as Paul’s; to expose people to the truth of God’s Word; to the wonders of the gospel, this good news that while all people are in a state of rebellion, hostility and varying degrees of sin against God and that

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such actions deserve God’s eternal wrath; God yet demonstrates His own love for us in this; that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; the ungodly. The good news is that the Son of God became the Son of Man, so that the sons of men might become the sons of God. This is the truth of the gospel; the truth of God’s Word.

This morning then, I wish to give you the second key point from these verses that reveal to us how to engage and involve ourselves in a ministry that will last. Listen carefully because this second point sounds similar to the first, but there is an important distinction. Not only are we to expose people to the Word of God; but second...

II. We must expose the Word of God to people (8-10).

If Hope CBC would have a lasting impact and ministry in Northwest Arkansas; and if you would have a legacy of ministry following your life, we must understand that there are two goals to keep in mind. The first is what we noted last week, exposing people to the Word of God is a concern of *depth* – of seeing those who have made professions of faith in Jesus grow in the knowledge of Jesus. But the second goal is a concern for *breadth* – of exposing the Word to people who have yet to hear it.

Perhaps this is a confession, or just a statement of fact; but Hope CBC has generally been good about exposing people to the Word of God. We have expressed and are committed to seeing depth of knowledge in our people concerning God and His Word. But, I am not as confident that our church has been as diligent in the ministry of breadth. It is great and valuable to know and be able to define such things as eschatology and futuristic Premillennialism. But your family, neighbors, co-workers, fellow students and others will not spend eternity in hell for not knowing that Jesus will set up a 1,000-year kingdom on earth. But they will spend an eternity in hell for not knowing and responding to the gospel; that Jesus Christ came into the world to sinners and that sinners must repent and believe upon Jesus to save them and that such faith in Jesus actually changes the sinners life and behavior. This is the message that Paul took the people. If we would see a legacy personally and for Hope CBC, we must invest in such a ministry. Let us note how Paul exposed the Word of God to people. There are two ways we see in our text but they can be both summarized in one statement; Paul took the Word of God to where the people were.

A. Paul expose the Word of God in a sacred setting (Acts 19:8-9a)

8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them

You might recall that on Paul’s first visit to Ephesus, back in Acts 18:19-20, he was met with a rather favorable response. The Jews actually asked him to spend more time teaching them. This is what Paul is doing now in verses 8-9. This is of course Paul’s custom or habit. Upon entering a city, he sought to first reach the religious people in the synagogue. This is in a “sacred” setting; a church like setting. Just because people are in a synagogue or in a church and know a few Scriptures, does not mean they understand and know about the person and work of Jesus. Let me have you note a couple of things we learn concerning this exposing Word of God to people.

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First, note with me from verse 8 *the theme of Paul’s message*. He speaks to them concerning the kingdom of God. The Jews loved to talk about the kingdom of God. You might recall that Jesus spend His final forty days on earth speaking to the disciples about the kingdom of God, the coming millennial kingdom where Messiah would reign and rule as Israel’s king and indeed king over all the earth. We learn in verse 8 that Paul did this for three months. As a trained rabbi, Paul was allowed to teach; and how did he teach? Luke describes it as “**boldly**”. Using the Old Testament, the Word of God, Paul proclaimed to the listening Jews concerning a near to their hearts, *the kingdom of God*.

For hundreds of years, the Jews had been waiting for God’s kingdom to come. They were waiting for *the coming king*, the Son of David. We can only speculate as to what verses Paul might have used, but he undoubtedly pointed them to many of the prophecies: How God’s Anointed One would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and eventually put to death (Psalm 22:16), not for His own sins but for the sins of His people (Isaiah 53:5). Then He would rise again (Psalm 16:11), ascend to heaven (Psalm 68:18), and send the blessed Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32). Paul’s proclamation to these religious people was simple, “The King has come! *King Jesus* has come, just as God revealed in His Word. Receive Him and be saved!” And evidently many did receive Jesus. But, according to verse 9, some became hardened and disobedient. The word “hardened” means stubborn, unwilling to think and change. An unwillingness to hear and heed the word of God always leads to disobedience to God’s word. When a person stops listening to preaching, stops reading his or her bible, stops receiving godly input from family or friends, disobedience to God is always the result. So, our message must include truths concerning the person and work of Jesus. But this brings us to a second truth we must remember when exposing the word of God to people.

Second, *the truth about Jesus will offend many*. Beloved, there is no such thing as just a little of Jesus. A person must either receive and submit to Him, or reject Him. John Wesley used to ask the young men he sent out to do open air preaching two questions upon their return: “Has anyone been converted?” and “Did anyone get mad?” If the answer was “No,” he told them he did not think God had called them to preach the Gospel, and sent them away. When the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, either people are converted or they are conceited. May conceited persons oppose Paul and so he had to leave synagogue, discouraged, I imagine; but certainly not disillusioned. This would not end his ministry in Ephesus and leads us to the second group to whom Paul exposed the Word of God.

B. Paul exposed the Word of God in a secular setting (Acts 19:9b-10)

...he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Having had problems in the sacred setting, Paul now turns to a lecture hall, taking disciples with him so that he might instruct them. There are three things we see Paul did to expose the Word of God here; please note them with me:

First, *Paul worked with the disciples*. Perhaps feeling as though there would be too many distractions in the synagogue, Paul, “took away the disciples” and “reasoned” – same word used up in verse 8, a word we have looked at before, *dialogomai* – that is he dialogued with them. He taught them through interaction and conversation. Beloved, if we would expose the Word of God

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to people in any setting, know that it begins with talking to others about the person and work of Jesus.

Second, Paul invested greatly in these disciples. Notice that Paul dialogues with these disciples and any others who came *daily*. Paul began conducting *daily dialogues*. And where did he do this? In a lecture hall, the hall or school of Tyrannus. Tyrannus was either the owner of the lecture hall or one of the key philosophers who taught there. His name means “our tyrant” which may have been a nickname given to him by his students! Either way, Paul taught there daily. According to one Greek manuscript, Paul taught in the hall from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Most of the philosophers taught in the morning and in the evening because it would get too warm in the afternoon. Most cities of this time in this area stopped work at 11:00 and would not start again until late afternoon. What did the people do during this time? They took a siesta. According to historical accounts, more people slept in Ephesus at 1:00 p.m. than at 1:00 a.m. This reveals to us not only how serious Paul was about teaching the Word, but also how serious the disciples were in learning the Word of God. It would seem that Paul would use the morning hours to do work as a tentmaker, then he would teach in the vacant hall from 11am to 4 pm, and in the evenings, he would go from house to house ministering. The point is that Paul was committed about exposing Word to people, and that some of these people were as serious about *learning* God’s Word as Paul was about teaching it. Beloved, they were giving up their siestas to learn. How little we are willing to give up to learn the word of God.

Consider what I am saying. Paul would teach the word of God for five hours a day, every day, for two years. Let us suppose that Paul took the Lord’s Day off for worship. In that case, two years adds up to more than 3,000 hours of teaching. This would be more teaching than most seminarians receive in a three-year academic program preparing them for the pastorate. If we would build a ministry that lasts here at Hope CBC; and if we would have a legacy of eternal value, we must do what Paul did; we must expose the people God brings into our lives to the Word, and then find ways to expose the Word of God to more and more people. We must resolve to teach, preach, share, discuss and dialogue with the Word of God consistently, carefully, and continuously.

Paul had a building plan. He invested, he sacrificed, he endured and spent his time building up God’s people by building God’s Word into their lives. But this is not all Paul did. Notice what we read in verse 10; for he are the results of his investment:

This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Remember that Paul was intent on seeing people grow in depth, becoming grounded in God’s Word; and he was intent on seeing the gospel grow in breadth, being spread throughout the land. Luke tells us that ***“all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord...”*** This does not mean that all believed it, but they definitely all heard it. Beloved, literally thousands upon thousands of people heard the Word of God because Paul and the disciples at Ephesus were resolved to be involved in a ministry that lasts. Let me tell you that is was not Paul who reached all of these people. What did he do? If we would expose the Word of God to people, there is a third thing Paul did.

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Third, Paul mobilized his students to reach the region. Again, Paul is said to have taught daily in Ephesus for two years, but Luke records that the Word spread throughout the whole province of Asia. This tells us that Paul mobilized others to spread the gospel. Here is the principle of 2 Timothy 2:2 before our very eyes:

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Paul found faithful men, taught them, and then urged them to do the same resulting in churches being started in Colosse, in Laodicea and other cities. Beloved, if Hope CBC is going to impact Northwest Arkansas for Jesus in both depth and breadth, and if it will be a lasting legacy, it begins with a strong teaching ministry and then is dependent upon you all to speak to others about Jesus. If we want a strategy for a ministry that lasts, here it is. It is not complicated and it is proven:

1. *We must give people God’s word, not our opinions*

Only God’s Word is powerful and only God’s Word can do what man’s ideas cannot do, *change lives!*

2. *We must emphasize teaching, not entertainment.*

Paul taught the Word for some 25-30 hours a week every week for two years in Ephesus. Can you imagine what would happen if churches in American became as serious about teaching God’s Word as they have been about entertaining the lost? Honestly, they would lose a lot of people, but they would also begin to build strong ministries that would last to the glory of God.

3. *We must focus on our commission, not our comfort.*

It would seem that Paul did not sleep a lot in Ephesus. According to Acts 20:31, he worked night and day with tears. Why did he do this? He did it because God’s mission mattered more to him than his comfort. What is just one thing you could give up so as to spend that time in reaching others for Jesus? Are you willing to do it? It might make you uncomfortable!

4. *We must remember to whom this ministry really belongs.*

Beloved, this is God’s ministry. And if God’s work is done God’s way, it will have God’s provision. And what is God’s way? It is exposing people to the Word of God so that they will grow; and it is exposing the Word of God to people so that they may know; know the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria

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