

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

R₂L – Resolved to Live: Living Life Without Regrets (Part 4c)

Living to do the work of God (Acts 20:25-38)

Acts 20:32-35

32 “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. 34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. 35 In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

There is an issue that few of us treat with proper and full respect. An issue that we profess and claim to know, and yet often; if we honestly evaluate our lives, our behaviors, our amusements; this issue may have little or no impact upon the way we actually live our lives moment by moment. A failure to rightly consider and live in light of this particular issue demonstrates our own misplaced priorities as well as our mistaken perspectives. What is the issue of which I speak? I am speaking to you of the matter of eternity and, more specifically, of one’s eternal destiny.

To say that we get wrapped up and bogged down with the *things* of this earth is an understatement. Is it not? It has been said that our inordinate preoccupation with the passing things of this life is like a person trying to straighten the pictures on the walls of the Titanic as she was sinking. God is clear in His Word; this world and everything in it will be destroyed, and the day of this destruction is drawing near (2 Peter 3:9-14). We are told in 1 John 2:17 that this world is passing away; and yet we are so easily distracted by and worried about such things. The apostle Paul warned the saints at Rome with these words: **“Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed”** (Romans 13:11). In other words, the issue of eternity is just around the corner!

Let me remind you that each of us has a date with eternity; either in the ecstatic, inconceivable and eternal joy and blessing of the presence of God in heaven; or in the experiencing of the hopelessness and horrors of eternal hell! Two eternal destinations are described in the Scripture; either you will be home with God our Father and Jesus Christ our Savior; you will endure the eternal sentence of pain and anguish. These are the only two options and the Scriptures declare that they are *everlasting, they are forever!*

And let me make this sobering observation. According to the truth of God’s revealed Word, the overwhelming *majority* of people in this world are unprepared to meet God, and because of this, they will not be among the eternally blessed. And yet, they continue to rush rebelliously headlong into a Christless eternity without hope. Are you and I guilty of ignoring this truth day by day? Do we forget the warning of Jesus who said in Matthew 24:42, **“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.”**

The matter of eternity is one that we must face daily? We must not seek to avoid, ignore, or even deny these divine truths. And yet, we tend to fill our minds much more with pastimes and pleasures; with the mundane and morose; things that yield little results when compared with eternity? Why do we tend to overly occupy ourselves with matters of no eternal purpose? We will devote countless hours entertaining ourselves before a TV or watching sporting events. We invest ourselves in knowing the latest news; the latest song; in leafing through magazines that

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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divert our attention. We literally waste countless hours talking about nonessentials, gossiping about people, and discussing the most trivial of matters. In addition to this, we take necessary time to eat and to sleep. But while we do both the necessary and the trivial, the world around us is heading toward eternal destruction. Meanwhile, the best description of what we Christians are doing is that we are spiritually asleep!

Some of us are more concerned about our yards; more intent on what is on our computer screens, or preoccupied with shopping for things we don't really need. And if we are not careful, and I fear we are not, this preoccupation with the temporal numbs our awareness of the weight of an impending eternity!

Do we read our Bibles and pray as though our life and eternity depends on it? Are we guilty of neglecting our duty to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others even though we know for certain that He is the only way, the only truth, the only life; the only possible means by which people can be rescued from eternal destruction? I confess for myself and believe that I do not stand alone when I say that we act as though there is plenty of time for us and others to prepare for eternity. We have come to believe that there is always tomorrow for our family, friends, and fellow-workers to repent and get right with God.

But the truth is that not one of us is guaranteed more than today. The reality is that this may be the last day, week, month, or year for a number of us here. And what comes next? Eternity in one of two places; either heaven or hell. Not one of us is assured that when we wake up in the morning that we will be laying our heads down on our pillows at night; that when we say good-bye to a loved one or friend, that it may be the last time you see that person.

“What are you doing, pastor? Why are you saying all these things?” Beloved, we need to wake up! We need to reexamine our priorities and commitments. We need to stop fretting over things that the Bible says are not even worth worrying. We need to make sure we are not trapped by the temporal, keeping us from engaging in the matters of the eternal. *For the sobering truth is this, if we are neglecting the kingdom of God now, we are not preparing ourselves for the kingdom of God in the future.* We are to be living for Jesus right now; in this moment. If we are not seeking to live for Jesus now; we bring into question whether we will be living for Him in eternity. My call to us this morning is that we would repent from our half-hearted attitude toward spiritual things. Let us be diligent about knowing God and His Word. Let us be diligent about making God known to those who have yet to bow the knee to Jesus as Lord and Savior. Beloved, this is what really matters. Knowing God through His Word and making Him known by His Word so that others might live; this is living life *now* in light of *eternity*! Let me remind you that there are just two eternal destinies for every person who has ever lived. According to Jesus in Matthew 25:46, there are those who, **“will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”** Eternal punishment and eternal life—and there is a vast difference between them!

How do we live in light of eternity? What does this look like? I take it to mean that I should learn and practice reading and studying God's Word as though my life depended on it. Consider what Paul instructed Timothy to do so that he would also be an example to other believers. In 1 Timothy 4:16 we read;

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Did you catch that? Pay close attention to yourself; that is your life, your behavior, the things you do; the attitude you take; and, pay close attention to your teaching, your doctrine; those things you believe to be true. Why do this? Because as you do, you ensure and affirm not only the reality of your own salvation; but you bring salvation to those who hear you and see your life. You do not get assurance of salvation from the clothes you buy; the hobbies you keep; the job you have. Assurance of salvation comes as you spend time knowing and living for Jesus. You do not get assurance of salvation from how you kids turned out; the friendships you have. You get assurance of salvation by living for Christ according to the truth of Christ. This is a matter of eternity. As you resolve to live for Jesus, it ought to result in a continual and comprehensive change in the way you look at and use your time. As you resolve to live for Jesus, your prayer life, your sharing of gospel truth, your use of money, and the stewardship of your possessions should be transformed. It will be reflected in your relationships and interactions with others; others whom you know will be either eternally blessed or eternally damned.

Beloved, if we value our own souls and the souls of others, we need to make the necessary, Biblical, and reasonable resolves that will result in living the rest of our lives without regret because we are living our lives in light of eternity. And just what is living in light of eternity. It is telling people who God is and why Jesus has come to the earth as the Lamb of God who takes away our sins. Our mission is Acts 1:8, to be Christ's witnesses, declaring His teachings about God, man, sin and salvation to the remotest parts of the earth. This is the work of every Christian. This is God's work, a work that will take on one form in my life as a pastor and a complete different form for you as a student; as an employee; as a child; as a parent; as a spouse, as a friend. But our resolve must be to do this work of God; of rehearsing the truths of Christ before others. Paul had a resolve and passion for this work of God and the question for us is this, what is involved in a resolve for the work of God? If we would resolve to do the work of God, then there are three expectations that you and I MUST expect, look for, and be engaged in. These expectations are inferred by Paul in Acts 20:28-38.

- We must have the right pastoral expectations (Acts 20:28-31)
- We must have the right personal expectations (Acts 20:31-35)
- We must have the right public expectations (Acts 20:36-38)

We have already considered the pastoral expectations of feeding, leading and heeding by means of the Word of God. But what do these personal expectations look like? This is what we have been examining in the words and life of Paul as he gives his farewell speech here in Acts 20. And what we are noting specifically in the verses before us are the expectations we are to have for ourselves. If we would live in light of eternity; if we would live a life without regret, then we need to expect certain things to be developing and increasingly true in our lives. In Acts 20:32-35 there are four expectations I am calling you to consider and apply to your life. Last week we explored the first two; today we look at the last two of these personal expectations. Let me quickly remind you of the first two then move on to the last two. If you would resolve to do the work of God, then you must the right personal expectations; which first means we must be...

1. Committed to the Message of Grace (32)

And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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

Paul tells these church leaders that he commends them and their congregation to God and to the Word of His grace. The word “**commend**” literally means “to place something beside, to set alongside or set something before someone” In classical Greek “to commend” described anything being deposited with a friend for the purpose of safekeeping. The idea is to **entrust** someone to the care, safekeeping or protection of someone; and in our text, Paul is placing the elders in the majestic; powerful and gracious hands of **God** as well as to the **Word of grace**; that is the Word of God, that they in turn might be able to feed the flock of God.

Why did Paul commend this church to the word of His grace? Remember that the word of His grace is just another title for the “whole purpose of God” (v. 28); the “preaching of the kingdom” (v. 25); and the gospel of God’s grace (v. 24). It is the gospel; the message of Christ that is able to build up a church; that is able to convert sinners into saints. It is the gospel of Christ that is the power of God unto salvation. Paul entrusting this church and her leaders to the word of God’s grace is his own calling them to live in and live out the gospel. This is as call to evangelism; to live in light of and to live out the gospel. Remember that the word evangelism comes from the Greek word, “evangelion” (ευαγγελιον) simple means “gospel;” or “good message.” And what is evangelism, but the good news of presenting Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to sinful people, in order that they may come to put their trust in God through Him, to receive Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of the Church.”¹

We have been entrusted to and with this message of grace. How committed are you to knowing it? To living it? To proclaiming it? This is what makes a life of service to God and a life lived without regret possible; *God* and the word of His *grace*. But there is more; not only are we to be committed to this message of grace, but we must also be...

2. Committed to the Mindset of Grace (33)

I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes.

Here we considered that the mindset of grace is to be one serving; a commitment to giving rather than the expectation of getting. This is the mindset of ministry; that to serve God; to give to others is what brings a true satisfaction to life. Seeking after temporary things will empty a life; but giving the message of grace fills it. This is the mindset of ministry. This is the mindset of God’s kind of servant; one who knows he has not served God for the wrong reasons. So, we are to be committed to the message of grace and the mindset of grace. Now, looking the final two persona expectations for doing God’s work. We are to be...

3. Committed to the Ministry of Grace (34-35a)

34 You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. 35 In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak...

If you have not figured it out; to be an effective; truly effective in building up other in the Lord; it takes hard work. Ministry, serve to God requires a person commitment that says, “I will labor and strive with all that I have...” The language of Paul is clear in Colossians 1:28-29 when he wrote:

28 We (note the plural pronoun; “we – the church”) proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in

¹ Adapted from Don Whitney via “Spiritual Disciples for the Christian Life”

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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Christ. 29 (person commitment) For this purpose also I labor, striving (literally – “agonizing”) according to His power (energy), which mightily works (energizes) within me.

Beloved, it takes more than the gift of gab and good people skills to do serve in the church. Paul did back-breaking work as a tentmaker so that people could not accuse laziness or of taking advantage of others. He made tents in the morning and late evening hours, taught at the lecture hall of Tyrannus in the afternoons, and conducted a house to house teaching ministry throughout the week. To do God’s work there must be a willingness to work.

James Boice observed, “*It is a scandal to the ministry that so many ministers are lazy. They can be because in most churches they do not have anybody to supervise them, at least not very well...So if the minister is not thinking about God and remembering that he is answerable to Him, it is very easy to waste a great deal of time. There are always easy things he can do rather than working hard.*”

Beloved, Psalm 100:2 says, “**Serve the Lord with gladness...**” Your job is not what defines you. Your parenting is not what defines you. The clothes you wear; the car you drive; the friends you hang out with are not to define you. If you are a Christian; then Christ defines you. You belong to Him. You are literally His slave 24/7/365. You are to serve God and you serve God first by or through serving His people. We are not to say, “Let’s pray about it...” No, get serving and pray as you serve. Beloved, we must be committed to this ministry of grace; faithfully serving, even when our schedules are full; even when we feel like quitting; even when our hearts are breaking; even when our children keep us up all night; even when we got in a fight with our spouse; even when we’re grumpy; worn out; and feeling used up. Our example is Christ; who did not give up but went to the cross. Our example is Paul who agonized, did everything in his power to serve the body of Christ. This is a commitment to the ministry of grace. But there is one more personal expectation we can glean from our text. We are to be committed to the message; the mindset; and the ministry of grace. Finally, let us be...

4. Committed to the Modesty of grace (35b)

35 In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Paul set the example for these men; giving himself to the ministry; but his own example was that of Christ. Jesus had said, “**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**” This statement has been called “the supreme beatitude” because, unlike the other beatitudes, it tells us how to be *more blessed!*² Beloved, anyone can call himself a Christian...but if you want to discern the real thing, look for the modesty of grace. And what is the modesty of grace? It is *the humility of Christ*. A true Christian lives with a radically different orientation in life; the same kind of orientation our Savior exhibited. What was that orientation? It was that living life is not about self but about *others*. It is not about what you can get but how you can give. Consider Philippians 2:3-5

² Dr. Earl V. Pierce

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...

What is to be our motivation for doing all things without selfishness or empty conceit? Our motivation is Christ. As we humbly serve; as we give of ourselves as best we can as Christ gave Himself; we become visible manifestations of the character of Christ.

How many of you know that such modesty and humility is hard work? But Paul modeled this. He said it would be hard work. What would be hard work? The mindset of ministry; the personal expectation of giving rather than of getting; of expecting yourself to serve others rather than to be served. What is the example of Christ? In Mark 10:45 we read:

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

To be like Christ is to have the expectation to serve rather than to be served. Our culture is filled with generally half-hearted greetings and questions. What do we usually say upon meeting one another? Something like, “How are you doing?” And there is a generally expected response, which is? “I am fine...or okay.” We are so used to greetings like this that we answer often without much thought. But let me give you a question with which we believers ought to be greeting one another; one that reminds us of the mindset and modesty of ministry; of our own personal expectation to be humbly serving one another. The question we ought to be greeting one another with is not, “How are you doing?” but rather, “How are you serving? How are you serving the Lord?” How would you respond to that? Does that question keep you accountable? Does such a question keep you humble?

Our goal as Christians is to be like Christ and Christ declared that we will be happier, more joyful and spiritually sound if we focus on humble giving rather than on getting. That is Christian modesty; recognizing that to be a Christian is to be focused on others. Does this describe your heart and actions? I pray that it become increasingly so; that we would exemplify the modesty of grace, engaging ourselves in the ministry of grace; intent on cultivating the mindset of grace so that we might effectively proclaim the message of grace.

I know that Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders and pastors here in our text; but all four of these expectations apply to each one of us. If we want to do an effective, legitimate work here at Hope; this is what is expected of us; a commitment to the message; the mindset; the ministry and the modesty of the grace of God.

As we close; let me remind you of some practical considerations that will help us develop these expectations within us. I shared these last week, but we do well to hear them again as they will help us live a life without regret:

1. Living a life of no regrets begins when we understand that God’s revelation equates to great responsibility.

The more we come to know God’s Word, the more we realize God’s expectation on our life to love Him with ALL our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Resolved to Live – As a Witness for Jesus

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2. **Only right recognition of God results in right submission to God.**
Until we see Him as Sovereign King self will seek to rule.
3. **We will never accomplish what God wants until we know who God is.**
Until we are vested in the Word of God; we will not know the Will of God.
4. **Acknowledgment that God is good and has promised good things for His children.**
When we practice this truth, we see even the difficult and trying things of life as God's working all things for our good.
5. **Sometimes we fail to see ourselves as blessed because we are too focused on someone else's blessings.**
The only person we are ultimately to compare ourselves to is Christ; in whom we have every spiritual blessing.
6. **Procrastination is sabotaging the good plans of God for you.**
We miss out on many blessings because we put off what God has commanded us to do.
7. **Delayed obedience to God is immediate disobedience to God.**
Enough said.
8. **What you fear will ultimately control you.**
So do not fear what others think or what others could do; but fear God so that He is the one controlling you.
9. **If you were to stand before God today, would everything be right between you?**
Are you living your life with a view to pleasing Him?
10. **If you are not dead, God is not finished with you.**
Never forget that your life and all it contains is not your own; you belong to and are to be serving God in every area of your life.

Soli Deo Gloria

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