

Marks of Effective Ministry

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Text: Acts 20

Introduction

- How was Paul so effective in serving others?
- What were marks of his ministry to others? His life was marked by:
 - An Others Centered Disposition
 - A Priority of Faithfulness to God
 - A Watchfulness Over His Life and Doctrine

I. An Others-Centered Disposition

- The gospel had so changed the Apostle Paul's heart that he cared more for other people than his own life.
- He was a man of encouragement!

“After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia (verse 1).”

“he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement (verse 2)”

- Encouragement was a priority for Paul.
- Paul wasn't preoccupied with his own burdens and challenges, though he had many. He put his eyes and his heart on others. He sought to serve others. He thought not so highly of himself but instead served others.
- He had tears of love and concern for others. In v.19 he says that he served “the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials.” What were his tears for? Well we don't what all of his tears were for, but at least some of the time it was out of love and concern for their well being.

“For three years I did not cease, night or day, to admonish every one with tears (verse 31).”

- Let us allow the Spirit of God to move our hearts outward from our own concerns and towards one another in love.

II. A Priority of Faithfulness

“But I do not account my life of any value or as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (verse 24).”

- Paul didn't want to give up. He wanted to be faithful to finish the course, regardless of the cost!

“And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me (verses 22-23).”

Application:

- I am convicted by Paul’s humble view of his own life and of his willingness to suffer for the sake of his King.
- He did not hold his own desires or dreams as important; what was most important to him was faithfulness to his King.
- Paul’s testimony that he doesn’t count his life (or his desires) as precious to himself stands in stark contrast to where my heart can be at times
- What do we do with this disparity? How do we reconcile the gap with our desire to live for Christ and the simultaneous desire to have it easy?
 - We keep our eyes on the Lord!
 - We make Him our delight!
 - He satisfies us as we lift our eyes to Him!
 - What does that look like for you?

III. A Watchfulness Over His Life and Doctrine

“Pay careful attention to yourselves (verse 28)”

- This is God's call on every believer. It has particularly relevant application to pastors.

“O then, let us hear these arguments of Christ, whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless: Did I die for them, and wilt thou not look after them? Were they worth my blood and are they not worth thy labor? Did I come down from heaven to earth, to seek and to save that which was lost; and wilt thou not go to the next door or street or village to seek them? How small is thy labour and condescension as to mine? I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation; and was I willing to make thee a co-worker with me, and wilt thou refuse that little that lieth upon thy hands?” -- Richard Baxter, The Reformed Pastor
- Pastors do well to take heed of their life and doctrine, because they will give account. Each Christian does well to watch their life and doctrine closely, because we live out what we believe

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Re-read the text, Acts 20. What initial observations and insights do you have from reading this text?
- Read the Sermon Recap under point #1 above, "An Others Centered Disposition." In what ways would you like to grow in being more others focused?
- Read the Sermon Recap under point #2 above, "A Priority of Faithfulness."
 - What does it look like practically, for us in our day and age, to live lives of faithful sacrifice for Christ?

- In what ways do you the idols of comfort and ease can entice us away from sacrificial living for the kingdom of God?
- What does it look like for us to be "watchful" over our lives? How do you want to grow in this area?
- Consider taking time to pray that God would help us each to grow in our love for others and in our commitment to lay our lives down for the cause of Christ.