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Serving Well
Acts 20:13-38

March 12, 1942....It was a powerfully, emotional moment in time for General Douglas MacArthur. President Roosevelt had ordered him to leave the Philippines where he had been commanding a defense against the overwhelming and relentless Japanese military. By obeying the presidents order it meant he would be leaving his friend General Jonathan Wainwright and 36,000 men stranded on the Bataan Peninsula. Short on supplies and already on half-rations Macarthur had been eating what the soldiers were given, he had lost 25 pounds A crushing defeat in the Philippines seemed inevitable. As a military man, to leave his post at this difficult time tore him up inside. As he stepped onto PT-41 boat that would try to take him past the Japanese fleet MacArthur turned and gazed at the shoreline pocked with arterial shells and random fires raging, the smell of smoke, stench in his nostrils. Lifted his hat to say a final farewell. His biography records someone nearby asking, "What his chance of getting through sarge? The gruff reply. 'I dunno, He's lucky, maybe I in 5.'"

In our passage in Acts 20 some of that same emotion surrounds Pauls words as he says goodbye to some very close friends, elders, leaders from the church at Ephesus. It's a group of believers that have weathered through the shelling of persecution, the dust and blood of opposition and war and they meet for one final time to draw wisdom from their honored general, the apostle Paul. He knows they are vulnerable to the enemy, to discouragement, to the attacks of false teaching and spiritual oppression. Paul knows this will be his final farewell.

Turn with me your Bibles to Acts chapter 20:13. Paul is in a hurry, hoping to get to Jerusalem in order to celebrate Pentecost with the other

believers and delivers a love gift offering of money to the famine ravaged church. Paul has just completed a weeks stay in the town of Troas having encouraged them and having seen God move and work in power. The group heads south. Paul walks the first 30 mile leg of the journey choosing to cut across the peninsula on foot rather than taking the ship with the rest of the gang around the nose of land. Paul usually went with people, yet there were times, just like Jesus, where I think that Paul needed to spend time alone, just with He and His Lord. Especially as the spirit has let Paul what he is heading into is not going to be easy. I would want to spend some time alone too. Just God and me being convinced that even though this is difficult, this is what God is calling me to do. Taking a long walk with God might be a good thing for all of us to do when faced with a difficult challenge ahead. I seem to hear God's voice better when I'm alone.

Well, they meet up at the same time around the neck of land at Assos and set sail for Jerusalem. Sailing south, V. 16 says Paul decides to by-pass Ephesus stopping in Ephesus with all the friends and people he would need to see there would take too much time and so he puts in 20 miles south of Ephesus at a little town called Miletus. Lets pick up the reading at v.17 and read to the end of the chapter. (READ)

Here in Miletus Paul sends for the elders of the church of Ephesus. He wants to impart to them things they really need to know to lead the church there well. Paul knows that as the elders go, as the leaders of the church so go the church. He spent the most time of his ministry years in Ephesus and Paul's life has been a lesson to show them how to lead the flock of God. In v.35 Paul says "in everything I showed you.." I showed you. Paul is wanting to remind them of the character traits he modeled to them, the good ones that were needed to serve the people well and would enable them to finish well. He is reminding them how he served the Lord in the years they had together.

Paul was a guy they knew. It wasn't like he was a traveling evangelist and blew in for a weekend shot. I'm speaking at a men's retreat for a church in Oregon next month. These guys don't know me. I will bring God's word to aim at topics that are right where they live and breathe and struggle. I can use my best illustrations because they haven't heard them yet. I can even use some I can't tell hear because of people you know. I will speak and it will be fun but then I will leave. They can't possibly know me the way you folks do after 10 years. And I can't possibly know them the way I know all of you. I could pull the wool over those guys next month if I wanted to, but I couldn't do that here because you've know me too well. You know my weaknesses, my strengths and my walk and my heart. You have listened to me talk to my wife and kids and watched the life choices I make. You have seen me respond in stress and crisis and easy times. There is something easy about flying in for a weekend conference, but there is something deep about knowing and being known. Paul had to keep his words honest for these elders knew him well and Paul knew them also. Paul wanted to pass on the legacy of his life and to show these leaders of the church how to lead well.

Paul relates things that happened in his own life not as a point of boasting, not as a sentimental reminiscing on old times but they are much more than that. Paul relates them because he wanted his life to be a lesson for those on how to lead the flock of God well. This passage connects well with our Adult Study in the book of Titus. It focuses on instruction to leaders, but I don't want the rest of you to turn off God's word this morning and fall asleep. Just reread last weeks lesson on Euthycus and that should keep you awake. We all need to hear these words as you need to pray these character traits into the lives of the elders. Myself, Kirby, Robin, Bill, Todd, Garry, Steve. And indeed these points of how to serve others well are transferable to all who would aspire to ministry, serving God. So elders heres what we need to be doing. And all of the rest of you should imitate as it applies to you as well.

Look with me at v.19 “you yourselves know from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time....serving the Lord.”

The first thing that Paul wants to say to these elders/overseers about his work, is that he was in the business of serving the Lord. That seems like a basic simple idea. Serving the Lord. But think about it. Serving. When you hear that word, what comes to your mind? Compliant, Deference, humility. Other mindedness, selfless? What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, “the Lord” Not just a lord, or even the more personal my lord, but “The Lord” What comes to mind? Authority? Power? Majesty? Sovereignty? Ruler? OK put them together Paul says he was about the business of Serving the Lord. Now you see that some of the necessary characteristics for leadership starts with a leader being first a servant and that in the church this servant is serving the Lord. So that means that when the Lord tells him something that he is to be about doing, or saying then he is going to do it. And he will do it with an amazing amount of confidence because of the One who has told him to do it, the One whom he is serving. What would it look like in our church if the elders operated that way. Serving the Lord (thanks to John Piper for these insights)

So what does Paul say that this serving of the Lord should look like? Most Christian leaders want to be called a servant leader just as long as they are not treated like one. Here Paul tells the overseers from Ephesus what it means to serve the Lord.

Look at v.19 the very next phrase after serving the Lord. How do we serve the Lord? It means to serve with all humility. It must take more than just partial humility to serve well. It must take more than humility only in certain areas. Paul says to be effective in serving the Lord serve in ALL humility. That kind of humility must start with a right view of who God is and who we are. It must start with a belief that God has absolute rights over every aspect in my life. It must start by affirming that God has the right to my life, that He can tell me to do whatever He pleases,

that there are no areas that are off limits to His holy probing. That he can tell me what is best for me and that is totally fine with me. The humility starts with realizing and being the moldable clay in the hands of the Master Potter.

After realizing in humility who I am in relation to God, true humility also realizes who I am in relation to other people. True humility that serves the Lord well recognizes that I am indebted up to my eyeballs because of how incredibly gracious God has treated me. Think about it in the opposite sense and you may see it clearly. This humility toward others is the opposite of someone who feels that everybody owes them something, owes them time, owes them pats on the back, owes it to listen to them, always feels that they are getting the short end of the stick of life. Now it may be a fact that lots of people owe them something, but if you are driven more by what others owe you than by what you owe others in a debt of love and service then You are probably less filled with the kind of humility that will serve the Lord. Humility says Rom1:14 "I am in debt to the Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and the foolish, to the friend and the enemy. As Jesus demonstrated Humility is not focused on my own rights, but takes on the form of a servant and becomes obedient unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2)

Paul's ministry of serving the Lord was marked not only by humility but by tears. V.19 Now what I have studied about Paul I don't take him for an overly emotional weepy kind of guy. But he certainly was a guy that had heart, and passion and a heart for people. Tears can come from different things, physical pain, terrific loss, frustrations, shattered expectations and discouragement. It can also come from overwhelming joy. In the absence of context, sometimes I have to ask people "tell me about the tears". I'm wondering if they tears of joy or pain. V.31 Paul repeats the tears saying "I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears." There is an intense passion for their faith that comes bleeding out as Paul serves the Lord with tears. Paul has to be

talking about far more than just an emotional weepiness. Paul says that we should learn from his example, what he has showed us, by getting intensely involved in people's struggles so much so that you cry over them as they struggle for faith, hope and trust in God.

I don't tend to be outwardly very emotional, but when I talk about people that I really care strongly about...my kids, my wife, and some of you it can get me right here, tighten my throat. Do you care for people? One who serves the Lord will have a heart that weeps with those who weep and rejoices with those who rejoice. If you never find yourself with a tightening throat intensity of love and concern for others, then perhaps you have held yourself so aloof from people, you need to discover what it means to feel again. Perhaps you should talk to God and go looking for someone who needs you. Ask God to help jar you out of your stoicism and see, really eye, open your eyes to what is at stake in the battle for faith and holy living in the lives of people right around you.

Serve the Lord with humility, with tears and then with TRIALS. Why does Paul remind the elders right here about the big target that seemed to be constantly on the back of Paul's coat? Why remind them about the dangers that Paul went through? Answer; because they too will have to go through them. There are people who get very angry when they hear what God has to say about their life and that there is only one way to deal with the sin and pain and brokenness and that is to turn to Jesus in faith and belief and total dependence. Elders are going to take some shots that others won't have to endure. Satan never takes a vacation and he knows that if he can pick off the leaders then he has made a major shot in the church. Do you pray for your elders in that way? Do you pray that they endure the trials and attacks and temptations that get salvaged at them? The more spiritually effective we are as a church the more we are going to draw the attention of the enemy. The evil one is content to leave alone those churches and leaders that are spiritually weak and proud and aloof and care little about the people of God and the kingdom

of God. But to those who are really serving the Lord...that leader is going to take some shots. Indeed ALL who make up their mind to follow Jesus fully are going to take some shots, count on it. II Timo 3 'Indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Get used to it. Serve the Lord with trials. James 1 says "Consider it all joy my brothers when you encounter, fall into, all sort of trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its full effect that you may be complete lacking in nothing.

Look at verse 20 In order to serve the Lord well and finish strong to the end, it is going to take some courage. "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable... teaching you, publicly, privately." V.27 Paul repeats, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose, counsel, of God." If you put those two verses together, it would seem there are parts of the whole counsel of God that are profitable for the flock of people, but not easy to teach about. A good elder does not decide what to teach because he will gather a large group to here him speak when he does. He will not decide on what to teach because it may be popular. An elder that is serving the Lord will teach the purpose and whole counsel of God because it ought to be taught and that by teaching it will be profitable. That takes some courage because there are parts of the whole counsel of God that are hard to understand. It may be tempting at times to shrink back from teaching the whole counsel of God because certain parts are not extremely complimentary to the stroke the ego of human pride. It may be easy to shrink back from telling the whole of Gods counsel because there are some parts that demand radical obedience and people don't like to have their sin exposed. It may be tempting to avoid certain topics because you might step on certain toes but that is cowardice and not courage. As elders Paul is saying we dare not water down the truth of God's word. We dare not stop speaking about sin and hell and judgment and repentance and holiness and a call to righteous obedience...because those are very key parts of the whole

counsel of God. I was told that on the side of a very large and popular cathedral in California there is the words of Romans 6;23 or at least some of the words the sign says “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” I wonder why they left off the first part that says, “The wages of sin is death...but the gift of God is eternal life.” The elder who serves the Lord must have courage when it is tempting to run to fear. Leaders, people, do not shrink back in fear from the message God has called you to deliver. Titus 1;9 exhorts the elders to hold firm to the sure word as taught so that you may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it.” The elders must be able to do their homework in the word of God and be able to give reasonable answers to back up sound doctrine and refute heresy.

Do you see how the elders are to be with the ability to teach, not only publicly but also privately v.20. There is not secret rites or hidden knowledge to learn in the Christian faith. Unlike secret fraternal orders, there is no special handshake that you learn after 5 years. Christianity has nothing to hide. Its open, public and above board. The elder who serves the Lord ought to be able to teach publicly and privately. This private refers to small groups ministry. It’s the ability to go to someone home and explain and help people apply the word of God in a more personally designed teaching of God’s word.

Notice in v.21 the impartial way the Elder who serves the lord will minister. The elder will not be favoring to one group over another. We have elders that we want to concentrate more of their ministry to the youth, or the older folks, or worship, or but the elder ought not to ignore or slight a certain group just because he doesn’t like them.

The elder ought to bear a solemn testimony. That word for testimony comes from the Greek word Martyreo. We get our English word Maryter. Someone who is intense earnest to give a witness in the matters of repentance and faith. The bible often calls us to repentance and faith. Both are needed.

Acts 3:19 Repent therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out. Acts 8:22 “Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that if possible the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.” Acts 17:30 “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent.”

The whole counsel of God is not an easy believism where one speaks a few words, walks the isle and that it. No. God wants to set you free. All those problems you are struggling with inside, God wants the word of God to come in and set you free from the habits and attitudes that have wreaked havoc all these years. Repentance is taking a look at the way you have been living, looking at all you have depended on and changing your mind. That is what repentance means to change your mind. It means to stop thinking the way you have been. It means to stop acting the way you have been. Instead step out in faith. Trust the that the Lord who is in you when you believe will work through you. That desire and strength to repent comes from God and He is the one at work in you. But you must join His side in agreement. Time and time again we are called to repent and stop our old ways and change our minds and beliefs. That is so closely connected with faith it is impossible to separate the two. The Christian life is an adventure always on the verge of danger. That is why it is called faith. By its very definition we can't see all the outcomes, all the results, we can't see the path. But we in faith trust the one who is leading, the One who is guiding, the one who is directing. The Christian walk begins by repentance and belief. And that begins your walk. It is called a Christian walk and not a Christian step, because a walk is more than just one step. When faced with a situation by the faith and strength and power of God you choose right, saying I've done this wrong in the past but now I'm choosing to live rightly. That's one step in a series of many steps, hundreds of choices to follow and choose God and trust that God is going to lead you right and give you the power to take the next step. Pray.

Acts 20:13-38

Spending time alone may clarify God's mission truth for me. V.13 Paul purposely chose to walk alone rather than join the rest of the gang for a faster ship trip. Surprising. He walked across the nose of land just south of Troas to 20 miles south to Assos. The others sailed 40 miles around the peninsula Sea sick? Possibly. He almost always brings people along with him on the trip. Perhaps, he just feels like spending some time walking and thinking and praying alone. A lot easier to do on the road than on a boat load full of people. Why? He knew his time with them was short. He wanted to get to Jerusalem as fast as possible v.16 yet alone time. (READ into this) time with God. Prayer. Doesn't say that but the

surprising things cause us to read into the text. Not a main point but an observation.

Its evident that Paul was trying to maintain a schudule. Some people, Christian are afraid of doing any planning. They realize that god is in chage of our lives and want to be available to do his will, so much so that they do no planning at all. The apostle plans ahead and yet even in that planning is open to God stepping in to change wherever they want.

The freighter had stopped in Miletus which was very close to Ephesus. Though he had not planned on this delay, Paul made use of it and sent word requesting the elders to come down and meet with him for a final chat.

Hugnes p275 General MacArthurs departure from the phillipines. Illtr.

Even in the urgency of mission time alone, down time away from people, where all that is left is you and God, is something worth considering as valuable to do.

Why is Paul defending himself and what he did. Is there an accusation implied? Was it a follow my example of servanthood. Look what is coming for them.

Is he highlighting the fact that he can say goodbye with no regrets and challenging others to live life in the same way.

Even my physical life is less important then doing what God has called me to do, my God given mission.

Do I know my mission? Am I ready to make that more important then my very life itself. Do I live my life driven by mission? Write it out? What am I supposed to be doing. Ask Jesus. What is it? When I find that out am I wiling to give up whatever to do it? Even if others want to protect me. Parents who may not wants there kids to spend their life in Tibet. Could be tough, might not get the hospital care, Might get hurt...even killed.

Phil 1 For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Is that the kind of dedication and sacrifice that I respond to the things that I know that God has revealed.

Why didn't Paul stop in Ephesus?

Of the 50 days of Pentecost, 16 of them had already past. Had Paul stopped in Ephesus he would have had to visit many families and change ships and might even be trouble locally for him. It was all more time then Paul could afford right then. Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem to give the

gift of money and celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Not sure why celebrating this Pentecost was so important to Paul, perhaps he wanted to bring the gift of money in time for the occasion or perhaps we wanted to celebrate this ancestral custom as Christ had brought new meaning to the day.

Called specifically to equip believers. Am I doing it? Where?
For this time it's the passion of my kids. A passion for worship.

v.19 It is still appropriate to serve the Lord in humility.
Everyone wants to be called a servant leader, but nobody wants to be treated like a servant.

We are to be bold in our teaching repentance and faith in Jesus.

v.22 Obedience in the face of the unknown.
The spirit the one who directs.

Paul wants to finish strong.

v.27 The will of God
I Thess 5:18 Giving thanks always
This is will of God keeping oneself unstained by the world.

The specific will of God pours out from the general will of God.

Application for Elders: Be on guard from distortion of truth from the inside and the outside. Must know the truth. Must also teach the truth. Example the truth and lovingly confront the truth. Sometimes they just flash out in a Bible study but still they must be confronted in love.

The elders need to teach the whole general will of God. Do I know it and do it? From their the specific will of God.

Facing problems and pain. Max Lucado. P.94 Barbara Johnson story. We can decide how we will react to the pain that will inevitably come to us all in response to "oh your so lucky, your so blessed. You have it all together." Pain will happen to all its inevitable, but misery is optional.

How do some people make their problems worse?

How does this passage teach us Christian leders ought to think and act.
How can our leaders put this in practice?
Serve the Lord with humility. Don't shrink in fear from what God has called you to do. His message. Be on the alert for bad teachers, teachings and influence. Don't be coveting stuff other people have.

Swindall p.54 Opening illutr. MacArthur being ordered to leave troops in Philipines. "gut wrenching to leave "I will return"

Paul remembers the days of ministry years earliar with the elders of Ephesus. Paul slowly takes them back to when he lived and worked among them. They had traveled down to Milatus 35 miles to meet with Paul.

Characteristics that marked Pauls ministry:

He endured the tests of

- 1) laziness. "from the first day I was with you the whole time" I stuck it out through the tears. Some of us give us and quit when it gets tough, when its not fun anymore. When we are busy or overwhelmed we quietly asked to be excused and give up on our promised commitments. Not Paul from the very moment he arrived in the city, he diligently worked among the people.
- 2) Pride: He "served the Lord with humility" and in doing so safeguarded the effectiveness of the church as a whole.
- 3) Discouragement: he ministered with "tears and trials" never giving up or giving in.
- 4) Fear: I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable. He was not intimidated by others.

Paul's ministry was based on solid doctrine. V.21 testifying...of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." He didn't water down the truth

Paul's ministry was free of deception and personal politics. V.26 I am innocent of the blood of all men. I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

Did you notice as Paul reflects back on his ministry what was not mentioned? Large growth figures. Impressive building programs. Instead he mentions qualities of the ministry that he hopes the elders will continue his legacy for the future.

Paul does not waver from his passion v.25 "to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." Nothing else mattered, not his reputation, his comfort, or even own safety. He died to self so that he could live for Christ...even if it meant Jerusalem and chains for him.

Paul warns of blind spots v.28 "Be on guard yourself. Strange advice for a healthy church? No. Don't take good health for granted for tomorrow. If the elder neglect their spiritual role the flock may stray from the Lord and truth. The peril of internal corruption. And from amony your on

selves. Beware of external attack as well. False teachers, cult leaders who love to invade growing churches v.30.

Beware about the peril of financial greed. V.31,33-35 Even as he speaks Paul is traveling with several men for safety and reasons of accountability, He wants these Ephesians elders to emulate financial responsibility. None of these warnings from Paul would happen apart from the grace of God in their lives. So Paul commits them to the Lord. V.32.

Paul says goodbye. Never again would he see them again but would write them a letter Ephesians.

Two principles for today:

1) Reflecting on the past calls for honesty and objectivity so we can learn from it.

2) Enjoying success includes constant awareness of perils. Spiritual health for today is no guarantee of spiritual health for tomorrow. We need to consistently sustain the character traits that foster holiness.

Abandon: Webster: to give oneself over unrestrainedly” Bungee jumpers abandon themselves from a leap off a bridge. This may be reckless abandon. Do you think that Paul exercised reckless abandon when he abandoned himself to God and sailed into a life threatening future at Jerusalem? In his mind it wasn't reckless at all, for his perspective of God eliminated the risk. God is far more reliable than any parachute cord and far stronger than any bungee cord. Paul view of God Romans 8:35ff. Ephesians 3:20. Pauls' attitude about life and death was based on his knowledge of God Acts 20:24, Romans 14:7-8, Galatians 2:20 Philippians 1:20

p.61 Swindall for self diagnostic exam based on Pauls healthy ministry model. How do you rate you level of effort in your ministry? In what way is pride affecting you attitude? Etc.

The struggle to be an authentic church is just as demanding now as it was back then. The spiritually powerful we become the more intense the attack will come. The forces of evil are not concerned with culturally captured bland churches that are having no effect on the world.

What is holy belongs to God and bears his His nature.

Boice: Paul looks back and points out effective parts of his ministry not in a boastful way, but by way of legacy passing on to these men Characteristics that ought to be present in any ministry.

Humility: George Whitfield. Spoke to thousands yet humble p.345

I Cor 4:7 “Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”

He served with tears: He mentions it twice here...but I don't think that Paul was a weepy kind of guy. Some people are inclined to be more emotional. I don't think he was prone to outbursts of emotion, except perhaps in prayer. He had a great empathy and identified with those he ministered to. Romans says “Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” Paul struggled with them in their struggles and grieved with their griefs.

He preached diligently: publicly, privately, spoke to everybody, comprehensive v.20

He had a proper set of priorities: v.24 Phil 3:13-14 “Forgetting what lies behind and straining to the prize, I press on to the goal to win the prize of the which God has called me heaven ward in Christ Jesus.”

Paul kept his eyes on the prize.

Do you have your priorities in order? Most of us value our lives more than our witness. Most of us value the prize of men far more than the praise of God.

Paul labored without greed. V33ff. He wasn't lazy, even when nobody was looking over his shoulder.

Charge to the elders: Keep watch over your flock. Be diligent. Watch out for enemies

The word Paul uses for elder here is not presbyteros which means older ones lit. But he uses word for overseer episkpos, we have our word bishop. He is speaking of all the elders of a local church as overseers. That means they have a responsibility for the oversight of Christians in their area.

Epi = over

Skopio = “to look” to scope out the situation. One who looks over, or keeps watch over someone else. Paul is saying if you are overseers, people who have been elected to this responsible position in the church, then make sure that you do the job you were elected to do. He spells it out.

- 1) Keep watch over themselves: Keep their own lives upright. Keep their own relationship with God strong.
- 2) They are to look out for the flock. Paul does not frequently use the flock and shepherd word picture, but its strong in the OT where most of the people were pastoral. Jesus used the metaphor a lot in his teaching. “I am the good shepherd. The shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:11. Paul is telling the leaders to imitate Jesus. Take care of the sheep, don't let them wander away, watch out for their health, defend them from enemies. The reason is that the flock is not theirs, but they are caring for someone else's sheep.

Those sheep are God's sheep. It is a flock that Jesus has purchased with his own blood.

Paul then prays for the Ephesian elders. We don't have the words, but if we look back over the previous paragraphs, we can probably get the gist of what he prayed for them. For in v.32 Paul says "now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace. How did that happen? He probably prayed for them. Almighty God I commit into your care these men who are the leaders in the church in Ephesus. Keep them by the power of your Holy Spirit the the scriptures by which you speak to the church and through whom you have chosen to operate. Keep them from danger. Preserve them from within and without. Fill the church with people who know your Word and because they know you world and live in close fellowship with you, let the grow in grace and not succumb to the temptations of the world. May they determine by the power of the Holy spirit to obey you and walk after you.

Paul speaks of an inheritance. If we are faithful to the task, there will be laid up for us in heaven an inheritance where moth and rust don't destroy. "Matt 6:20)

At first glance it seems strange that Paul would begin to talk about himself again. (I have not coveted anyone's silver) He had already given his testimony, spoken directly to the elders. Paul had just urged the leaders to deny themselves for the sake of God's kingdom. He just said God is going to give you an inheritance. Then he said, I'm urging you to do what I have done myself. I have not tried to build an earthly fortune. I haven't been in the religion business to become wealthy. The reason I haven't done all that is because my eyes are set upon the inheritance laid up for me in heaven.

That would make a huge difference if we could learn to think like that. Its hard. The world bombs us with its values and thinking that say, "Hey you only go around one. How is the time to make it. If you don't lay it all up for yourselves now you are going to miss out and you'll never have it.

When I gave up my engineering management job 14 years ago, We figured we would miss out and sacrifice. But the housing market was so low in Dallas we could pay cash for a home that in the bay area would just be a down payment. Etc. Never thought. Boy I wish I could have... maybe drive a newer car. But that Honda keeps running and gets me from point a to point b. what else. House far more then I dreamed. God provides a van at an incredible deal.

By contrast, the word of God says. You can lay it up now, but when you die it will be gone forever; but if you live for God now, you will have

treasure forever. It really is true, you can't take it with you into heaven, but if you are obedient to God and faithful in serving him, spiritual treasures will be there when you get there that you can enjoy and bask in for all eternity. Compared with those spiritual things for which we sell our souls for here, they are nothing. They are literally the refuse of this disintegrating world. Lay up treasure in heaven as Paul did.

Hughes p276

Paul's unshakable commitment to God and his people. V.18-19

Commitment means different things to different people. To the girl of your dreams, "I would climb the highest mountain, swim the widest stream, cross the burning desert, die at the stake for you. Ps. I will see you on Saturday if it doesn't rain. No Paul wasn't like that if he agreed, committed. If he said he'd do it and be there He was there. Totally committed to his fellow believers. I never stopped warning you day and night in my tears.

Paul's commitment to sharing God's word: v.20-21

v.27 I have not hesitated to proclaim the whole will of God. He boldly proclaimed the whole truth. He would not be intimidated "v.20 "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable. V.21 Paul did not preach easy believism but "repentance toward God and faith in Jesus as necessity for salvation

Paul's concern for self was second to his concern for God's plan. V.22ff.His commitment to Christ superceded self interest. Ever since his conversion, that had been the pattern of his life.

James Calvert Figi Island missionary p278 Hughes.

We should determine to finish the course whatever the cost. A man or woman who never does anything except what can be done easily will never do anything worth doing at all. What might that kind of attitude mean for the church.

At first glance it seems strange that Paul would begin to talk about himself again. (I have not coveted anyone's silver) He had already given his testimony, spoken directly to the elders. Paul had just urged the leaders to deny themselves for the sake of God's kingdom. He just said God is going to give you an inheritance. Then he said, I'm urging you to do what I have done myself. I have not tried to build an earthly fortune. I haven't been in the religion business to become wealthy. The reason I haven't done all that is because my eyes are set upon the inheritance laid up for me in heaven.

That would make a huge difference if we could learn to think like that. Its hard. The world bombs us with its values and thinking that say, "Hey you only go around one. How is the time to make it. If you don't lay it all up for yourselves now you are going to miss out and you'll never have it. Paul approached ministry with a giving attitude. V.33-35 in a nutshell it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul Jackson:

Recount of past Olympic event highlights.

My country did not send me to the Olympics to start the race, but to finish the race. Christian life has a lot more in common with a marathon. When you were a kid your parents said "hey you finish what you start" You start college. Remember when you said I do and the chills and excitement. Then you realized that marriage has a lot more to do then feelings. Do you remember when your wife or you had a baby and remember when reality set in. It's a whole lot easier to start. Remember when you first came to Christ how excited and enthusiastic then you realized that following Christ is not something you did for a day, year. Then you got hurt, people disappointed, you got some blood on your leg.

How do I finish well? V.17

By developing daily integrity. V.18-20 Paul had a big target on his back. Often opposed, beaten. They misrepresented his character. His integrity is questioned so he must defend. "I was with you the whole time. " Live very long and your reputation will be challenged. Some will misunderstand you. Others will understand you and not like who you are and what you do. Paul said. You know me. I was with you for years. You have observed me, know my strengths and weaknesses. Its great to go to PK and have guest speakers here but you don't really know them. The beauty of the local church is that we know the elders.

I have done what God has called me to do.

To run with courage and conviction. 22-27. If you knew this will happen tomorrow. Would you run out with a heart full of joy for Christ? Paul knew it. Not knowing the details but he knew the big picture.

How did Paul found strength? V.24 He found a cause much bigger then he was. What drives patriots into battle? Because a reason, a purpose a cause bigger then myself.

This God holds all the answers for tomorrow and can be trusted. Paul demonstrates an awareness that god is who He is.

Guard the purity of God's people and God's word. Watch out for yourself. Spiritual hygiene begins at home in your heart. Don't deceive yourself and hope and pray that your children will follow Jesus if you do not walk

in obedience. Knowing that there are children who will not follow. God has no grandchildren.
We didn't die for this church. This isn't our church. Jesus died. He bought it. Its His church.