**PP** **Acts: To the End of the Earth**

**Part 56-Acts 20:17-38 *The Heart of God’s Servant*  11/5-6/2022**

12 years ago, I began to deeply study how the bible guides us in developing leaders in the church

I have a powerful bible software so I looked up the word ***‘lead’*** in the Gospels and found 10

places where the word was used, but in every place, it was put in a negative way

I tried the plural, ***‘leads’*** and found five places, two referring to the narrow and broad gate, two

to those who lead others astray, and one to Christ Who leads those who know His voice

So I tried ***‘leader’*** and found it once, referring to Christ but then none of the word ***‘leadership’***

I tried the whole NT, and found ***‘leader’*** once, **Romans 12:8**, ***“the one who leads, with zeal”***

Leadership principles are all through the bible, but rarely does it specifically teach on the subject

However, I did find scores of verses on servants, humility, loving, and faithfulness

I realized that those who lead must serve with a humble, teachable and faithful heart

We are about to see very simply the changes Jesus makes when He gets hold of a person’s heart

Our example is Paul, who initially **PP *‘was ravaging the church, and entering house after***

***house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.’* Acts 8:3**

Decades later the grace of God had utterly transformed him into a man with notable character

**PP 1-Paul had a Humble Heart (Pic)**

***“Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them: ‘You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;”* 20:17-19**

We learn in **Acts 20:38** that these Ephesian Elders would never see Paul again, and yet he takes

this last opportunity to encourage them and this is what humility looks like in a person

We could define humility as lying low to the ground, but the way it looks in a person, is to lift up

others around you, living in a way where you desire others to be honored more than you

**PP *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more***

***significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also***

***to the interests of others.”* Philippians 2:3–4**

Humble Christians are happy with the success of others, even if that success didn;t come to you

A humble heart looks to help the people in your life excel, succeed, be noticed and honored

**PP 2-Paul A Bold Heart (pic)**

***“how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 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.”* 20-23**

When I lived in Lynchburg, Va, there was a tree that looked out over the James River that you

climb and jump from and land in the water 35 feet below

I would stand on the branch, knees shaking, friends yelling ‘jump’, until finally my courage

overcame my fear

No matter how many times I jumped from that tree, I always had that fear sticking point

Boldness doesn’t mean fearless, but it does mean that Paul did not let it keep him from sharing

the message of ***‘repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ’* 21**

The Holy Spirit made it clear to him that he was headed toward ***imprisonment and afflictions* 23**

Yet he boldly continued to tell people about Jesus, and the key to his boldness is seen next

**PP** **A Single Minded Heart (pic)**

***But I do not account my life of any value nor 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. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God’”* 24-27**

I am personally praying that I will increasingly not value my life as ***precious to myself***

Paul had a single minded focus, to live out the purposes of God for his life, and that alone would

be a cosmic shift in focus for many of us wouldn’t it?

Years ago I rode the Multiple Sclerosis bicycle ride from South Jersey to Ocean City and back, a

150 mile ride

You stayed on the roads the event planners had marked so you stayed safe and not get lost

Paul knew that God had a course marked out for him, and he sought to stay on it until the end

That course was to ***‘testify to the gospel of the grace of God…proclaiming the kingdom***…

***declaring to you the whole counsel of God’***

A focused servant leader is powerful, especially one focused on the call of God for your life

**PP A Protective Heart (pic)**

***“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”* 28–30**

Church, the devil is always looking to tear the churches of Christ apart…always!

His strategy is often division, and it rises up from within from twisted doctrine and proud leaders

The elders of the church are responsible to protect from those who won’t spare the flock, who

think nothing of creating division in the church

Paul warns them what is coming, and they heed his warning, for decades later, Jesus would say

to this church, **PP *“you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who***

***call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false…you hate the works***

***of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”* Revelation 2:2, 6**

**PP** Paul had a humble heart, a bold heart, a single-minded heart, and a protective heart

Yet he had another character quality, and it was the greatest of them all

**PP A Loving Heart (pic)**

***“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.”* 36–38**

What a tender, intimate moment Paul had with these Elders from Ephesus

When we love each other like these men loved each other, goodbyes bring sorrow

He had been with them a total of 3 years (**20:31**), living life together with them

Upon their parting, they wept, embraced and were full of sorrow

It moves me to ask, do I, do you love the people in our church like this?

After all, there is a major difference between a friendly church and a loving church

If we are going to endure the difficulty that is coming for the church, must we not learn to love

each other in this same way?

Our mission to be witnesses depends on this: **PP *“A new commandment I give to you, that you***

***love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all***

***people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”***

**John 13:34-35**

The key is to look at and behold how Jesus has loved us and the Lord’s Supper has been given us

to help us see this in a transformational way

I want to remind you that what we are about to do is for those who have professed faith in the

shed blood of Jesus Christ

Let us shine the light on the love that God has for us as we prepare to eat and drink

**PP *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”***

**John 15:13**

I read about Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, a WWII pilot whose B-17 crashed down in in the

Pacific ocean, and he and his crew were adrift in rafts for nearly a month

With their rations gone, they all thought they would die, and Captain William Cherry led them in

prayer for deliverance and a song of praise, and Rickenbacker dozed off

Dozing, he suddenly felt and knew that a seagull landed on his hat, and able to catch it, they ate

it, used its intestines for bait, bones for hooks and catch enough fish to survive to rescue

Rickenbacker died in 1973, but until he did, every Friday evening at sunset on the Florida coast,

he took a bucket of shrimp and off the end of a pier, fed flocks of seagulls

He did this to remember that one seagull whose death saved the lives of he and his men

The Lord’s Supper is a meal of remembrance, of the greatest death in human history, that of

Jesus, God in flesh, Who provided the means to be saved and forgiven of our sins

Take the bread and eat

Take the juice and eat

Close in prayer