

## Acts 20

Sunday 7/27/2008

The occasion demands that we look at the ministry. I teach the people in the Institute. We have a two-year program that really takes men and women to the next level, so to speak, of learning how to learn, not only to know the Bible, but to apply the Bible, not only to themselves but to the people that they work with. One of the things that I tell them all the time, and it becomes like a little watchword, there are several little watchwords, key phrases that we all say around here to each other. One of them that I've talked to them about is a vital thing in ministry, and it's also vital in your Christian life. That is the aspect of looking around, looking ahead, and looking behind.

You all saw World War II pictures where you see the fighter pilots wearing the leather jackets. Did you ever notice that they all wear silk scarves? The reason why they do that, and most people think it's because it's a flashy thing, a guy in a leather jacket with his patches on it, with his goggles and his helmet on, with a flashing scarf. You always see the picture of the Red Baron flying with his scarf streaming out behind him in the wind. That's not why they do it. If you know anything about the Army, or especially the World War II period of time, the shirts they wore back then were very heavy wool. A fighter pilot had to constantly be looking around to ensure nobody was coming and getting on his tail. His head had to be on a swivel. He had to be looking everywhere around to make sure, and they call it "check your six," that six o'clock, you know how they do it, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, and then six o'clock is your tail end. They're always looking around, making sure that no enemy plane is getting on. When they do that for eight or nine hours in a flight, it would actually rub the neck raw completely because of the wool against the skin. So they began to wear those silk scarves, which are very soft, and they protect your neck because in combat, a pilot had to always be looking around, looking ahead, and looking behind at what he was doing.

I don't know anything more important in ministry than the ability for a child of God to be able to look back, look around, and look ahead constantly in our lives so that we can always be evaluating where we're at and what we're doing. As I said last week, the job of you and I, in many respects, is to redefine ourselves as we grow in our relationship with the Lord. We've been together five years now; this is our fifth anniversary, and it's been a great time. We started with something like twenty-seven people, and the Lord has been good to us. We've had a lot of people saved and just a lot of people coming, and they're all good people. It's been a great ride so far, and I'm sure if the Lord carries His coming, it will go even greater, and we'll have even more fun.

I guess within the Bible itself, and I'm sure every pastor does this, I do it. Every pastor, I'm sure, looks at his own ministry, and with what he knows about the Bible, I would think that he would have to look at himself and define his ministry from within the scriptures. I know I do. As God gives me light on what I need to do and shows me how to be a better pastor and to do the things that He wants me to do, I'm constantly looking for things in the Bible that help me understand better how to do what God has called me to do.

We saw last week when we were in Romans 4, and we were talking about David. We talked about how real ministry, you becoming the man or the woman that God wants you to be, that you

really give God everything that He wants and really become the place where you fulfill God's will in your life. Real ministry starts in our hearts. It doesn't start with going to the Institute. It doesn't start by you sitting down and opening up your Bible. It doesn't start by coming over and sitting down and talking with me. It starts in your heart. In your relationship with God, God kindles that fire that develops in time to a forest fire that just cannot be quenched.

We talked about getting the aspect of how to get a shepherd's heart last week, how you have to get God's heart and God's mind. The great example of it in the Bible is Paul himself. Paul had such an understanding of what God had called him to do. Paul, by the way, is the one man in the Bible when God began to invoke His truth to the church and establish the church age. What God did was He called a man, one man, Paul, and He pulled that man aside. For three and a half years, He poured into him what He wanted him to know about the church and the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's job then, after he got that information, was to go back and distribute that information to all people that were wanting to build a relationship with God. This is why he takes three missionary journeys in the book of Acts. This is why all of the books in the Bible in the New Testament, for the most part, certainly the ones written to the churches, are written by Paul. That's what he did. He conveyed the message.

In seeing his message that he conveyed, his burden is so great that the Gospel that God gave to him to tell others, Paul takes it so personal that when he's talking about it in his writings, he calls it "my Gospel." Somebody reads that and says, "Well, it's like somebody gets up and says, 'Well, I appreciate the ministry that God has given me.'" And somebody comes up and says, "Well, it's really God's ministry." Yes, I understand that. But the bottom line is the picture of that is in Paul. Sure, it was God's Gospel, but God gave it to Paul and then gave him the charter to take that to everybody. He took that burden so personal. He took that responsibility to carry that Gospel of Jesus Christ so passionately that, in the fact that it was God's Gospel, it also then, through his passion, became his Gospel. That's exactly where we need to be today. We need to see the ministry of Christ with the same passion that it becomes our ministry. We saw that that starts by getting a shepherd's heart and what God does in our lives.

When I think of this church, I put it in the context of four passages. I really do. I don't know if you're a parent, but you ought to have promises that you claim every day for your kids. You ought to know your kids, see your kids, or, it doesn't matter how old they are, but every day you ought to be able to claim those promises for your kids. I do the same thing with this church. When I think about defining my own ministry, I have worked it down to four passages in the Bible that I think say everything that I want to say. Today, on Anniversary Sunday, I want to share those with you. This won't be a very long message because we have communion on the backside of it and all of that, but I want you to get this and understand this today.

I think that this is the failure of most churches. I think that it's the failure of most pastors. I think many Christians don't want to go to church anymore because churches have become a stereotype. They don't want to invest the time because they don't get anything back out of it. I understand that. I don't think that's right. I don't totally blame the people. I think that the churches have failed, pastors have failed. I think a lot of it has to do with many pastors don't understand what their strengths and what their weaknesses are and what their accountability factor is.

As far as my thinking, when I look at this, I put the church, this church, in four concepts.1.) A definition of this church from the New Testament.2.) A defining of me as a pastor.3.) The defining the attitude that we have in ministry.4.) Defining what you should be as far as a member of this church and what God wants you to accomplish.

When I think of this church, I think of it in that fourfold fashion. There are a lot of things I don't do well. I surround myself with people who do what I don't do better. Many pastors can't face that. Many pastors think they have to do everything. Many pastors think if they tell you that they can't do something that it's a sign of weakness on their part and you won't respect them. I just don't have that problem. I'll tell you what, there are a lot of things that I don't do well, and I don't try to pretend I do. I surround myself with people who have the strengths that are my weaknesses. I build those people into my life and into my ministry because the ministry is a team effort. Many pastors think that the ministry is a one-man show, and that's not true. There are many things that I don't do very well. I would be an idiot, and this church would be upside down in many aspects, if I thought that I was the one that could do it when I know that I can't do it. So what you do is you find people that can do it, and you allow them to see your heart and see what the ministry is, and then their strengths fill my weaknesses, just as many times my strengths fill their weaknesses.

So there are lots of things that I don't do very well. But I'll tell you what my real calling is in ministry and what I do better than anything else in this world as far as I'm concerned. You may not agree, but that's between me and the Lord. I do one thing really well, and it's the thing that God has called me to do. I do it with more passion than anybody, and I'm sure that ten other guys that feel the same way I feel, they say the same thing that I'm saying. But in my heart and my mind, and you understand what I'm saying, I don't think there's anybody in the world that does it better than I do. Now that's not a prideful, boastful thing. That's just where my passion is. I do one thing better than anything else I do in life. I believe that, knowing my strengths and my weaknesses, I know what my job is. My job is to take young men and young ladies, moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, wherever you're at in life, and to teach people the Bible and prepare them for the ministry.

I know what to look for. I know what my job is. I also know what to look for in a person. I think Acts 8:29 is a great little passage. You don't have to turn to it. I'll tell you when we're going to turn to it. There's a story of Philip when the Spirit of God calls him out to go to the Ethiopian eunuch. If you remember that story, Philip's in a revival in Samaria. This Ethiopian eunuch is on the backside of the desert, and somebody gave him Isaiah 53. This guy is sitting on the back of that old chariot trying to figure out what Isaiah 53 is all about. Isaiah 53, by the way, is about Christ dying on the cross. It's a prophetic passage in the Old Testament. So the Spirit of the Lord picks Philip up and transports him to where, I guess he's maybe a couple hundred yards away, and he sees this old boy over there trying to figure this thing out. At that point, the Spirit of God says something to Philip that I've heard God say in my heart many, many times. Philip obeyed what that Spirit of God said to him, just as I've tried to obey it in my life. Because there God had a prepared sinner. That prepared sinner is an old Ethiopian eunuch who did not know Christ but

wanted to know Christ. In Philip, He had a prepared servant. That prepared servant is someone that God had prepared for the prepared sinner.

I believe that's all the essence of Christianity. I believe that God right now, the Holy Spirit of God, is preparing sinners. I believe at the same time, God wants to prepare servants. I believe the whole thing of the Bible in Christianity is God taking prepared servants and prepared sinners and getting the two of them together. The prepared servant takes the prepared sinner and shows him what life is all about in Christ Jesus. I believe that, it's just that simple. I believe just as Philip was standing there and he watched that Ethiopian eunuch sitting on the back of that chariot trying to figure out the Bible, the Spirit of God said to him,

*Acts 8:29*

*> And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*

The Bible says that Philip ran. When he goes up there, he sees that old boy sitting there and he says,

*Acts 8:30*

*> Understandest thou what thou readest?*

You know what he says back? He says,

*Acts 8:31*

*> And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?*

My job that God has called me to do, and that's the only thing I really do well in my life. I mean, I can't fix a car. I don't, I mean, I mow my grass, but the neighbors look, they cut it at an angle. It looks like Royal Stadium. Mine looks like a little oasis in the Sahara Desert. I mean, it's, you know, but I don't do, I don't, I'm not a decorator. I don't have the patience. I have tremendous patience for people. But if you take me fishing, I have no patience. How you sit there for hours waiting for that bobber to go down. When I fish, I fish with hand grenades. Action, immediate action. That's what life's about to me, see? I don't understand the concept of building a deer stand and then sitting in a deer stand for four or five hours hoping a deer comes by. Call in an air strike. Bring down fire and move them towards you. Then pick out the biggest one as he runs by. See, I don't have patience for that. I have patience for people. My wife says, "I don't know. You just put up with things." I can do that, you know why? Because that's what God's called me to do. That's what He's called me to do.

I realize that God's job is to prepare sinners. My job through ministry is to prepare servants. That's what I do. You give me a young couple that really wants to find God, or you give me a mom or a dad, or somebody in their middle ages, or even in their senior years. I don't care where you're at in life. I don't care what you've been through in life or what you've done. I only care where you're at right now and what you want to do from this point on. Because I know how to prepare young men and young ladies, moms and dads, to serve God.

The last couple of months, we've had some really hard sermons on Sunday, and it's by design. I mean, I think some of you think I just get in a bad mood for a month or two and then just take it out on you. That's not true. I understand within the context of what I have to do that I understand it, you know, you have to always be turning things over. You can't let people get satisfied. I look at the last couple of months, when I've been coming down low and laying it on, plowing the field. Since you seem to see people's attitudes about it, in my attitude, I know that I know how I am and I know how God's people are. It's easy for us to get lethargic and fall back into that thing because that's just what we do. But you see, I look at that, and last week was a great week. I picked up six new people last week that came in and said, "I want to invest the time one-on-one and I want to learn the Bible." To me, that's what it's all about. Sometimes you have to shake the tree for the ripe apples that don't want to fall on their own. You can't get to them. The only way you can do it is shake the trees.

Now there are four things that I want to talk about here. These are the four things that as I do my job, and I understand what my job is. My job is to give you the best shot of getting everything that you want and God desires for you at the Judgment Seat of Christ. I know some of you won't take it. I know the reality is that many of you, or maybe most of you, I don't know, will not follow through with it. But you know what? That's not my problem. My job is to make sure that I do the best job that I can do. That's why I've got four things that I constantly keep in my mind.

The first thing, and this is where we're going to turn here, is Acts 20. If you don't have a Bible, you can just look on with somebody next to you, or you can just listen. I don't read very well, but my Bible still has those big pictures in them that the kids have. Four things.1.) First thing I want to do on Anniversary Sunday is define this church.2.) The second thing I want to do is define me as a pastor.3.) The next thing I want to do is define our attitude in ministry.4.) The last thing I want to do is define what you should be.

Now the first thing that we're going to look at here is in Acts 20, and it's found in verse 17, and it's written down here in verse 30. I'll read it for you, and you can follow along.

## I. Defining the Church

*Acts 20:17-35*

- > *17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.*
- > *18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,*
- > *19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:*
- > *20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,*
- > *21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

> 22 *And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:*

> 23 *Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.*

> 24 *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

> 25 *And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.*

> 26 *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.*

> 27 *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

> 28 *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

> 29 *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.*

> 30 *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

> 31 *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*

> 32 *And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

> 33 *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.*

> 34 *Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*

> 35 *I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all, and they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the word which he spake that they should not see his face no more, and they accompanied him unto the ship.

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Lord, today on our day of anniversary, as we look around, we look ahead, and we look behind. Lord, as we look behind, we see where we've come from. We've seen the folks, Lord, that You brought in and that have picked up the idea and gotten my heart in ministry. Men and women that are invaluable to me every day, working with people, helping me in every aspect of the ministry. Yet Father, help us to look

around us today and to see what You've given us here today. Do not forget that it's here because of Your grace and of Your goodness. There's not one person, not one person, Lord, that made all this happen. It wasn't me, it wasn't somebody here, or somebody there, it was all of us working together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God and yielding ourselves to Your Spirit that produced what we have today. Then help us, Father, look ahead. Lord, we ask You that You'll just always keep this church as pure doctrinally and always keep this church as close as I try to keep it to a New Testament church as I can. Lord, we'll thank You and praise You today and bless us as we enjoy this day and enjoy all the food and for all those that labor to do it, for Mark and Joe, Lord, and for all that he did in cooking it and getting it all ready, and for Steve and Nikki and all the ones, Lord, that helped cook the other side of it and do all of that, and for all the folks, Lord, to just labor and work and make this work possible. We thank You, Father, for all that You do now in Jesus' name, for a sake we ask of it, Amen.

This is a very moving passage to me. I don't know what you know about the Bible, and I don't want to confuse you when I say this. Those of you in Institute will probably pick up on it. We've talked about it before. But in reality, this is where your Bible ends in Acts 20. Do you know that? As far as the accounting of your Bible going through history, it ends in Acts 20. You say, "Oh yeah, but look, Bob, I got a lot of books out." Yes, I know you do, but all those books are written during the time of Acts. There are few of them afterwards. But as far as the history of the Bible and what takes place, it ends in Acts 20. In Revelation 1, 2, and 3, I've shown you many, many times how the book of Revelation shows you the seven periods of the church age. It starts with one church and winds up seven periods later with Laodicea and then the rapture of the church. If you look at Ephesians 1 and 2, you'll find that the first church that kicks off the church history is the church at Ephesus. That's the same church he's talking to here. In other words, in God's mind, Acts 20 starts church history. What happens to the events that happen after this, as Paul has already said, he goes down to Jerusalem, he gets thrown into prison, and he goes to Rome and gets killed. It's basically over. All you have are some of the Gospels written later on, and certainly John writes his books later on, but as far as the history is concerned and the events that take place, Acts 20, it's over. Everything is written in the Bible just about during that period of time or shortly thereafter or before this time.

The thing to me that is so sad is this, and you can see it. What you see here is Paul's love for these people. What you see here is a man who invested his life in a group of people and people who allowed him to, and then invested their life back into him. You can see the fact that they are never going to see his face again. He's leaving, he's saying goodbye, they walk him down to the ship, and the Bible says, the great thing that is there to stress is the fact that they'll never see his face again. The man that gave them God, the man that gave them the Word of God, the man that gave his life to them is now leaving to go where God has called, where he feels God has called him, and they know that they're never going to see him again. It's a very sad time for them, but what it does and what it shows me, it shows me the bond that they had together, the bond of ministry. One of the most moving passages in all the Bible that shows me the heart of Paul toward the church, but it also shows the people in the church's heart toward him, the bond of unity, the bond of ministry, the bond of serving God together.

As I said, when you come down through this passage, and now this is where the passage defines for me what the church is. He lists six things that this church ought to be. We're not going to go through them in depth today, but I'm going to go through them. I want to show you, now when I look at a church, this is how God defines a New Testament local church from the Bible. You won't find any big screen TVs, you won't find any smoke coming up behind the thing when the praise band gets up there. No, no, no. You find it, if you want it, and some of you young men down the line may build a church, or you may get into a church. These are the six things that you look for. If you don't find these six things, you're never going to build a New Testament local church. I have taken you to the greatest place in the Bible where it shows you that when the apostle of the church is getting ready to end his ministry to the churches, the last thing he says to them is tells them six things the church needs to be to carry on. It's the six things this church better be. It's the six things if you ever pastor a church that you ought to build into that church.

Let's look at them. This is a great deal. When I think of this church, and when I define this church, and when I give an account at the Judgment Seat of Christ for this church, it will be built on these six things.

> 1.) *Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.*

The first thing he says is in Acts 20:19, "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind." That may not look like much, but there's a lot to that. Because you can serve the Lord, but not have the right mindset about it. You know what the mindset of us serving God should be? It should be us being servants. That's what he says. When we serve the Lord, we don't serve Him because we're somebody great or somebody special. We serve Him because we are just saved sinners that God has shed His grace on, and we're trying to shed the grace on somebody else. I say it all the time, "The ministry is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread." We get the idea that the pastor is somebody that's above everybody else, and the deacons, and all the other groups that are within to make up the body of the church, are somebody that's untouchable, and they walk around lording it over everybody and everything. That's simply not true. The thing that made this church great was that they served the Lord with the humility of mind. Everybody had a servant's heart. It didn't matter who did what. It wasn't a foot race to see who could be closer to somebody else or get more notoriety. It wasn't a political thing where it all gets caught up in the politics that so many churches fall into. It was everybody working together with the same mind that was built around humility that gave them a servant's heart that they understood that it was greater to give to somebody than it was to get to somebody. That was the foundation of that church. You know what? That needs to be the foundation of this church. This church has no politics in it. The deacons have nobody special. They have the office because they help me minister the Word of God. They don't have any power. We don't have deacons meetings where we decide the fate of the world. I already know the fate of the world. It's in a mess. Somebody said the other day, "Are you going to listen to the president's State of the Union address?" I said, "I already know what state it is. It's in a mess. I don't need anybody to tell me." There's no politics involved. What we want to build here is a ministry that is based on giving to people, serving people, helping people, realizing that we're no better than the person that's out there. The thing that most pastors fail in is the fact that when they deal with somebody that maybe is not

where they would like them to be, they get the idea that "I'm going to stand up here on this top step. You're down here on the bottom flight, and I'm just going to yell and scream at you to get your tail up here where I'm at." That's the mindset of most ministries. Very few pastors will look at the person down there, recognize they're up here, and then simply walk down those stairs and put their arm around them and say, "Let me help you up these steps." You don't ever yell at anybody to get where you want them to be. You have to lead them where you want them to be. Of course, that's the aspect of serving God with all humility.

> 2.) *Kept nothing back that was profitable, taught publicly and house to house.*

Then he says the next one in Acts 20:20, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house." Now there's a great key. That's one of the greatest places in the Bible. You want to define what a ministry in a church should be? Hey, and you people around here, you give this church the test today. Give this church the test. Then when I get to mine, give me the test. When I get to the ministry, give it the test. Then when we get to the last one, it defines you. I'll give you the test. I thought that would have got a bigger laugh, but that's okay. Look what he says in Acts 20:20, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." You know, that's the job of a pastor. My job is to give you everything you need to get the job done. Everything that is profitable with you. Notice how they do it. "But have shewed you, and have taught you." So I show you things in the Word of God. Then I teach you things in the Word of God. But you notice the two aspects here? The first one is what? Publicly. The first one is publicly. You know what that is? That's Sunday morning and Thursday night and the Institute and what we do. The first thing for a man, a New Testament church that is divinely signed by God, the way it's supposed to be, when he comes down to the next thing, it talks about holding nothing back and giving you what's profitable. He does it two ways, publicly. That is when we have. Then the next thing he says, "house to house." You cannot be a pastor of a church. You cannot help anybody profit in the Word of God if you're not willing to invest your life with them one-on-one. It isn't just about publicly. Many churches today, if not most churches today, and I'm not putting down other churches. I've been in this business for almost thirty-five years. I know how the mindset works. I mean, this is not my first rodeo. I know how this thing works. The bottom line is this, most churches, the pastors will, if you went up to most pastors in most churches and said, "Would you spend an hour a week with me, help me figure out the Bible?" They would tell you, "No." They would probably give you to a brother so-and-so or somebody else, somebody that, but they themselves are too busy pastoring, whatever that means, to really get involved in your life. Well, my Bible says that a New Testament local church, if it's going to be built on the church at Ephesus, which is the great model in the Bible and the Testament for you and for me, that ministry of giving you what is profitable has to be done two ways, publicly and then house to house. Now, I may give you to somebody to disciple you and somebody to work with, but you know as well as I do, there's never a time that no matter who's working with you and helping you, you can't call me and come over because it has to be publicly and it has to be house to house, two aspects to it. You give to others to meet their needs and help them through what they need.

> 3.) *Testifying both to Jews and Greeks (evangelism).*

Now, look at the next thing, Acts 20:21. It's the next thing this church has to have, "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks." Now, that's evangelism, okay? This church needs to be evangelistic. It needs to tell people the story of Christ, and you do that very well in this church. Most of the people, you know, we don't get too many people to drive by and see our sign. If they do, they usually keep on moving, and that can be a good thing. But over the course of these five years, I have to say this, the people that have gotten saved and the people that have got into this church came because they saw the difference in most of your lives. I'd rather have it that way anytime and anywhere than any other way. You won't drive down on the street, see a big billboard that says, "Come to visit with us." You won't, I found it the best, you won't go to the movie theater and watch the bar codes come up and see Old Path Baptist Church with me pointing to come here. I found over the years the best witness and the best signs that I have. Why should I pay somebody \$1,400 a month to put a sign on one billboard when I have 150 billboards going all the time for nothing here? That's the way it's supposed to work. That's how most of the people have gotten here. That's how most of the people get saved. They come and then they go back and say, "Boy, you gotta hear this guy, he's nuts, man. Come on over here." Somebody else says, "Yeah, you're right, he's nuts, but I like the kind of nuts he's talking about. So let's keep on going." Or you get a mom comes, then a daughter comes, or a daughter comes, then a mom comes, then a dad comes, or this person comes, then a cousin comes, an uncle comes, and everybody says pretty soon you find yourself up to your eyeballs in the Bible. That's the way it works. It's the way it works.

> 4.) *Steadfastness ("none of these things move me")*.

Then the next thing, Acts 20:24. He says, Acts 20:23, it's starting with verse 23. Acts 20:23-24

> 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

> 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

In other words, people are saying that Paul's always in the middle of the controversy. And he was, he was. You know the next thing this church has to have? It has to have a steadfastness. It has to have the fact that it's so easy in the world that we live in for God's people to lose their focus. Churches lose their focus. I think that many, many churches, the people go there and they've been going for so long, they don't even know why they're going anymore. It's like the natural rituals of our life. We just do it because I go to work every morning. You find yourself going through the same routine where you get in your car, you drive the same route, you get the same coffee, you stop and get it at the same place, you take the same cup and you go to work, you come home, you go to work, you come home. Most people take church and the Word of God just like that after a while. So easy to lose your focus. Of course, within the ministry, there's always adversity, always adversity. Adversity sometimes in your family, some adversity in your life, sometimes adversity that you just have to go through. You know what? Steadfastness is something that is missing in many churches today. Steadfastness is making the hard decisions when you have to make them. Making the hard choices when it's not the popular choice. Staying

with what you know is true in the face of everything that's going around you in Christianity that nobody thinks is true anymore. I found many Christians can't make hard decisions in their own families. I found pastors can't make the hard decisions in their churches.

Somebody was telling me a story last week, Mark McGinnis was telling me that he and Steve went out to preach at his cousin's church. He's a nice guy, and he's been through several churches, and he keeps getting booted out of churches. I mean, if he's anything like Mark, I totally understand why he's getting booted out of churches. I'm not saying that's a bad thing. Wasn't it the story you told me where the guy went into church one day and there was some guy who just came in off the street who went up and could play the organ, played it beautifully. He walks into the church for, I guess it was a Sunday night or a Wednesday night church service. The guy hears this beautiful organ, and up there, the guy walks in, this guy's up there just, you know, he was walking along and he saw a church, he went in, and he obviously could play the organ. You know, he said, "What's your name?" And he says, "Bach." That would have been your first clue he could have played the organ, you know? So the guy played beautifully. You're the only one in here who knew who Bach was. I want you to know, you're the only one who knew who Bach was. So he says, "Well, why don't you just play for the service tonight?" Now, that's what I would have done, see. Now he might have been unsaved, but if I got an unsaved man walks into my church to sit down on the organ, if I can let him play the organ so I can preach to him afterwards, sit down and play, see. But the woman in the church who bought the organ, oh, she didn't like it. She says to that pastor, "I bought that organ. That's my organ." The pastor said, "Well, I thought it was God's," and that was his first mistake. She says to him, "You know what, son, I was here before you came, and I'll be here after you're gone." Sometimes as a pastor, you have to make the hard choice. Sometimes you do. Steadfastness. We come to the place today, we think that, you know, we just think that out there that everything is ours. We can do what we want to do with it. Sometimes you have to understand that this is, everything here is God's, everything. We're just stewards of it. The fact is you give something to the church, you give it up. It's not yours anymore. It's God's. This pastor felt like it was the thing to do. But you see, churches like to get in that control mode. They like to, they like people think that they like to take charge. If you've been in many churches, it's like a third world country, and everybody in the church is divided up in little church states. Every deacon is a little Gestapo guy, you know. The, you know, here's the ministry of music Nazi. Here's the friends and welcome Nazi, you know. Everybody's got the little thing and they just gotta clamp down.

I told you a story. We went to do a discipleship up here in a little town in Indiana, or not Indiana, it was Illinois a couple of years ago, many years ago. This was a church where it was run by the deacon. The pastor had no say. He was told what to do. He wanted to really build this church. I told him, I said, "You know, let me bring a group of people in and let me show you how your church, how to disciple people. It'll change the whole dynamics of your church." Well, we got kicked out after the second night. The deacons came to me and he says, "We don't want you here anymore." I'm looking at the pastor. He didn't say anything. This is where he should have made a hard decision, okay. Six pastors, a standard revolver holds six rounds. He's just standing there, like, you know, and I'm looking at him like, "Now who's in charge here?" Well, that was a dumb thing. The guy says, he said, "We don't want you here anymore." I said, "Well, this will really

help your church." He said, "Our church don't need your help." He says, "We just talked today, we don't want." I said, "Well, what about reaching people?" He says, "We don't want any more people here. How are we going to control all these people? We get a lot of people in." That was just worry. That was just worry. Now that pastor should have stood up right there and took the shot and took the hard choice, but he couldn't do it. There's going to be adversity that comes. It's easy for us to lose our focus, and it takes steadfastness in this church. Paul says, "None of these things move me." What does that mean? I'm firmly planted on what I believe, what I know, and nothing that happens is going to change what God says and tells me to do.

> 5.) *Declared all the counsel of God.*

You know the next thing, Acts 20:27. Acts 20:27 says this, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." He says, "I'm free from the blood of all men." You know what? He taught all of the Bible. He just didn't preach what was popular. He just didn't preach what he thought people wanted to hear so he could keep the offerings up and keep the crowds coming. He preached the truth. As a pastor, there can be no greater admonishment to any pastor than to preach the whole counsel of God. Make sure your people understand how that Bible goes together, how it fits. Spend the time with them, getting them to the point where they understand not only what they're reading, but how to apply it and use it in their own life. The whole counsel of God.

> 6.) *Vigilant overseers, feeding the flock.*

Then the next thing, the sixth thing in Acts 20:28 and 31, and this is the great one, he says this, Acts 20:28-31

> 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

> 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

> 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

> 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Now there it is. You know what the next one is? The next one is to be vigilant. To realize that you and I have a job, a church has a job, is to be an overseer. We are to oversee, not to be lords over people, not to be dictators, but we're to oversee and be vigilant of what God has given us. Why? Because look what happened. Paul knew this would be true. He says in Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." I'm sorry, go back to Acts 20:29. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." You see, Paul knew that the moment he left, the moment the man who had the watch care of the flock, who loved it, cared for it, was vigilant over it, realized the bigger picture of what was going on, the moment he left, if he didn't have other men and women who could pick up the flock and do it just like he did, he knew what the

devil would do. One, you bring in the wolves from the outside, two, it starts from the inside. The attack of the church will always be from the outside or the inside. It's everything in life goes that way. He says that the church is to be vigilant. It is to look, realizing that we are, this church is to be, my job is to build shepherds who look over the flock, overseers, but who love the ministry as much as I do, who love the people as much as I do, and who will take and do the work and make sure the job gets done.

## II. Defining the Pastor

Now, the next passage I want to look at, that one here defined the church. Now, let's work on me. 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9. If you look in the front of my Bible, my study Bible that we go through, you'll find this verse in the front of my Bible. It's a verse that I have given myself accountability to, and it's a great passage for me. If you ever become a pastor, or someone who has responsibility for people, it'll be a great verse for you.

*1 Thessalonians 2:8-9*

*> 8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

*> 9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*

Now here we see the real motive behind Paul, and it really needs to be the real motive behind me. It really is the verse that defines whether I'm a successful minister as far as the Word of God is concerned. That's really the key. But I want you to notice the aspect here in verse 8. I want you to notice that Paul's burden here. He says, and I love this phrase, "affectionately desirous of you." The motive behind Paul, before I get to the main point here, the motive behind Paul is he wants everybody to understand and to see the big picture. He wants everybody to understand that God saved you for a reason. God allows you to live for a purpose. God saved you and put Himself into your world that you might accomplish something for Him. Paul understands that. Many people then, as I'm sure many people today, do not understand that. We still think our life's our own. We still think we can do whatever we want to do. We give God whatever time is left over. We'll give God with our life, whatever's left over. We fail to see the big picture. Paul saw that big picture. He was desirous. He was moved to the point that he wanted everybody. His burden was he wants everybody to see and understand what God wants to do in your life. Of course, the reality is he knows that won't happen. He knows the reality of people. He also knows that there's only one way to build people. This comes back to my responsibility in verse 8. It says, "Not willing to impart the gospel to you only." You see, what I do when I fulfill that is I preach to you. I preach to you. I give you what the Word of God says on Sunday morning. I talked about this a few minutes ago. I give you this. I get up on Sunday morning and I preach. Thursday night we preach. We go through the things in the Bible, and I impart unto you the Gospel of God. That's my job. That's a pastor's job.

But I want you to notice, Paul takes it one step further. "Not willing to impart the gospel of God to you only. But also our own souls." Why? "Because ye were dear unto us." The second part of

my job is to take what I have, the intimacy that I have with God, and share it with you. Make my life, your life, make us one together in the ministry for Christ. Realizing that we've got a job to do. That job doesn't get done just because I stand up here on Sunday morning or Thursday night and preach to you. That's not where the work gets done. The work gets done when you take the time and I take the time for us to mold our lives together around that book. Now let me help you understand the Bible. Learn the scripture. Impart the burden and the fire that I have for people in the ministry. That's the only way you learn it. You may learn the Bible by reading it and going to the Institute, but you don't learn the fire and the passion of ministry without getting with somebody who already has the fire. That's how it happens.

Most pastors are discontent to get up on Sunday morning and preach and maybe Wednesday night and whatever else they do, but they are not willing to give of their very souls. I mean, they're not, and I love the fact that he says souls because that's the thing that's saved and sealed. It shows the fact that it's nothing in the flesh, that it ain't about going to ball games and nothing wrong with that. It's about the domain emphasis on this, their soul to my soul, the things that are redeemed and saved, we give to each other. We allow each other the intimacy of our ministry together that you might find exactly what God wants you to do. We live in a day today where the church doesn't understand the concept of building people. Let me tell you something. You build a church one person at a time, one family at a time. The day of this mass evangelism where everybody just gets saved and starts going to church, I'm not sure it ever did work, but it surely won't work today. You want to build a work? You have to be able to not only get up and preach the Gospel, you have to be willing to invest your soul in the lives of somebody else because you build a church one person at a time. You build a church one couple at a time. You build a church one person at a time as you take that person and allow them to see Christ in your life and you develop Christ in their life.

This idea today that all the churches today for the most part, all this stuff of contemporary Christianity, let me tell you something. You'll find it hard to find and look anywhere on this planet to find a better way of building a church that's found in the church of Ephesus. You'll never find a better process. If you want to be a pastor, you'll never find a better verse or never passage that'll tell you what you need to do than 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9. All we've done today is because we don't have and we're not willing to invest the real time because it takes so much time and it's so much work, we'd rather just bend the church down to the world to get people to come in. We'll change the services to fit your lifestyle. We'll bend everything that we do so that you feel as comfortable here as you do in a bar someplace. We'll bring in the same music, we'll bring in the same dancers, we'll bring in the same this, we'll bring in the same that because we want you to be comfortable here so you'll come back. Well, the job of the church, first of all, is not to make you comfortable. I love you to death, and if you don't know that, then I got a heart for people, you're dumber than a stump, you ain't gonna figure anything out. But the bottom line is, I don't care if you come back or you don't. I have no ulterior motive for you other than to get you to serve God. I know this ministry isn't for everybody. I know I'm not the kind of preacher a lot of people like. I know that. I understand that I don't walk around worrying about, I know I've got a job to do, I know what I'm doing, I know how to do it, and I believe that God will bring me to like-minded people that will want to give their life to God and allow me to do what I do best.

Now, in the process of that, sure we get a lot of revolving door people coming through. That's great, that's great. But you have, at the end of the day, you have to decide for yourself what you want to do for God and how you want to accomplish it. But if you want to see the Laodicean church period at its best, just look at contemporary Christianity today. Look at the parallels of people. You have to be willing to invest your life. I have to be willing not just to stand up here and preach to you, but I have to be willing to invest my life with you, whatever it takes to sit down and help you, wherever level you're at, to help you get to where God wants you to be. That's the job, that's my job. That is the defining passage for me.

### III. Defining Our Ministry Attitude

Now, the next one, the defining passage for our ministry. We talked about the defining passage for the church, talked about the defining passage for ministry, I mean, excuse me, for me. Now we're going to look at the one for the ministry. This is found where we looked at last week in 1 Samuel 16:7. This is when we were talking last week about David, one of the greatest examples in the Bible, one of the greatest concepts in the Bible. The Lord, it says down there, when Samuel is looking for a king, this is 1 Samuel 16:7. Remember the story last week that he had seven boys pass before him, and he never found one that was the king, he found he got one that was a shepherd, that was David. Nobody thought David was going to be the guy. He was a little run of a guy, probably five foot four, 110 pounds soaking wet. When he walks in there, everybody thought to himself, "This couldn't be him," but God said, "This is him." He establishes one of the great principles of ministry. Because in 1 Samuel 16:7, it says this,

*1 Samuel 16:7*

*> But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

You know what that tells me? That tells me that your life and this ministry always have to start with an inward spiritual aspect first, before it can ever go outward. You can't do anything outwardly for God until you first do something inwardly for God. God doesn't look, God doesn't look on your ability. Some of you have some tremendous ability. Some of you could really be used in a great way for God. The problem is not what God sees on the outside, the problem is what God sees on the inside. God's never impressed with what we think we ought to be impressed about. He always looks deep down into the heart of a man or a woman, and that's what He looks at, and that's where He makes His call from.

I love the life of David. I love watching his life through the biblical process. You know the apex of David's life as a young man, and we're going to get into this, and next week we get back in Romans, is the fact when he fought Goliath. Here's a case where you find this great principle, and it's a principle that I translate into an understandable thing when he says, "God looks on the inward, man looks on the outward." I always put it in this way: "It's not the size of the dog in the fight, but it's the size of the fight in the dog." That is so true. Here's the little guy, he saw probably was seven foot five, 268 pounds maybe, I mean a giant of a guy. He should have went

out and fought him, but he didn't. Little David goes out and fights him. Yet when you look at that process, there's a great story here because they're questioning whether David can do it or not. David steps up and says, "I'll fight Goliath for you." He wasn't even afraid. Saul was afraid for David. He says, "Well, you're just a youth. He's a man of war from his youth." You see how the world looks at it? Saul was looking at how big he was. God was looking at how tough David was. God wasn't looking at how big he was. He was looking at how big the fight was in David. In fact, when you go on and go on in this story, you'll find that David goes down to that brook and the Bible says he picks up five smooth stones. I heard a pastor preach one time, and he said, "Well, David was a great man, but David lacked faith in God just like we all did. He was afraid that maybe he couldn't get Goliath with the first one. So he picked up five stones in case he missed." No, no, no, no, no. That's not the David of the Bible. No, you go through the Bible, you'll find that Goliath had four brothers. He picked up one for Goliath and four for the brothers that they wanted to make this a family event. He was going to take all five of them down. That's the confidence that he had. You know what he says? He says, "Oh, I'm not afraid. You know what? When I was a shepherd," ah, them ringing words. "When I was a little shepherd watching my father's sheep," ah, what a great parallel story. "You know, there came in among the sheep, a lion and a bear, and they tried to steal. One of them took a little lamb out of my father's flock." He says, "I grabbed that lion by the mane and just threw him sideways. I took that bear and just whipped him out." I'll tell you what, Daniel Boone would have been proud. I mean, I just whipped him. He says, "You know what? That Philistine is going to be just like those guys." Now you read that passage and you don't maybe get all the input. You know what that tells me? That tells me there was a process in David's life. You have to learn to fight the lions and the bears of life before you tangle with the Goliath of life. It's a process of building in your life. But what God looks for, what kind of fight is in you this morning? How easy is it for you and I to bail out when the push comes to shove? How movable are you and I when we should be steadfast?

#### IV. Defining the Church Member

Lastly, now we've looked at here, now we've looked at the church. We've examined and defined that. We've looked at me on Anniversary Sunday. We've looked at the ministry now that it's inward and not just outward. Lastly, and I think this is my favorite part. What do I look for in a person? More important, what does God look for in a person? Defining you as a member of this church. Defining what you should be. Here is one of my all-time favorite passages. When I look at a man and I look at a young lady and I see somebody that comes into this church, I'm just like Steven back there many times, and I've heard it so many times where God says, "Go join thyself to that person." I've had God say to my heart, "You give that guy, you give that girl everything they need. You give them whatever it takes. I don't care. You give them and work with them. They're profitable unto the ministry to Me. They've got the right heart. They won't waste it like some of them will. They won't take it for a while and then go back to the world. They will do with it what I have called them to do, and I'm telling you right now, go join thyself to that person's chariot." I've heard it a million times.

Now look at Philippians 2:25. This is about you and me. Verse 19 says this. We'll pick it up in verse 19.

*Philippians 2:19-25*

> 19 *But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.*

> 20 *For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.*

> 21 *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

> 22 *But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.*

> 23 *Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.*

> 24 *But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.*

> 25 *Yet I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

Now I know I did this once, but allow me just for a short second to take this back to the Lord in prayer. Because I think this is so important for you. Father, You know under the sound of my voice today that there are men and women in this room that need to be and have the ability to be everything that God wants them to be. But Lord, for whatever reason, they've shunned You, they've shunned the Word of God. Oh, they make a running stab and they come to church on Sunday most of the time, but Lord, there's no fervency in their heart. Now Lord, I've done my best on Anniversary Sunday to define for this church what the church should be, what I should be, what our aspect and attitude in ministry should be. Now Lord, allow them to see through this great passage what they should be. Because I'm always, I'm like the Marine Corps, Lord, I'm always looking for a few good men and ladies. Help us today. We'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, Amen.

Now I want you to look at this. Look at Philippians 2:19-20.> 19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

> 20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Now let me just set the background. Paul in Ephesus said goodbye to the church at Ephesus. He goes down and gets on a boat, goes down to Jerusalem. When he goes down to Jerusalem, he gets into a firestorm. He gets put in jail, in time they ship him to Rome. When he writes this passage in Philippians, he's in jail and he doesn't get out again. He knows there's no way he can get back to the church at Philippi to help them. What he says here, as far as I am concerned, is the greatest statement anybody can say about another Christian or a pastor can say about a young man or a young lady in their ministry. There's no question about it that Paul was God's guy and Paul was the man that God was using, but Paul was out of it now. He sends to this church, Timothy, and he makes one of the greatest statements. He says about Timothy, "No man likeminded." He says, "For I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state." You realize that's one of the greatest compliments a pastor can give anybody in his church. You realize the way that what goes along with that statement? You realize the standards that Paul had in ministry? You realize the no nonsense when it came to dealing with ministry and the people?

Paul, I'm sure, had as good a time in life as anybody, but when it came down to people in the ministry, it was all focus and it was all business. When he dealt with somebody, he did it by the book. In his life, at this stage of the game, he says about Timothy, "I have one guy that is likeminded that I know he will do for you naturally, exactly as if I were there myself."

Now that's what I'm looking for in the ministry. I'm just going to be honest with you. I'm looking for that. I'm looking for a young man or young lady that when I can't get there and I can't be there or I can't do this and I can't get that, somebody that I can say in my heart, what a confident statement that is on what Paul's relationship was with Timothy. You think Paul just made that statement blatantly because he was trying to impress the church at Philippi? I guarantee you, Paul had worked with this young man. He had trained this young man. This young man had been with him in ministry. Well, look what he said. Look what he said. Philippians 2:22, "But ye know the proof of him." Ah, prove all things. Ah, let's see what it says. "But ye know the proof of him that as a son," oh, the proof of him was that what God had done in his life. The proof of him was the fact that he was saved. No, no, look at the proof of him. The proof of him. "As ye know, the proof of him that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." There's his proof. You can be saved and God will teach you all kind of things. It's the man you line yourself up with. That is the proof of your ministry because if you get my heart, I get your heart, we become likeminded. Somebody says to me, "You got somebody I can send over here to do this or do that or accomplish here to get this done?" I can say, "I have a guy who is absolutely guaranteed that he'll do it as good as I could do it." I'd like to have a church full of that instead of what I got a church full of. Don't take that in the wrong way. It just kind of flew out of there. But you know the proof of him, that as a son with a father, he had served me in the gospel. You know what that constitutes? That constitutes the relationship that Paul and Timothy had. The one-on-one, how God got Timothy, gave him to Paul. Then God said to Paul exactly what God has said to me a thousand times. "You give that kid whatever he needs. Show him, work him, train him, kick him in the rear end, keep him honest, but you give him everything because he's profitable to Me." At the end of the day, when Paul couldn't get where he wanted to go, and if I know Paul's heart, this was a sad time for him. It was a time that he longed to be out there. He wanted to go to that church. His whole life was people. But there comes a time in your life, it'll come a time in my life when I can't get there anymore. Who will I send? You? You? Who will I send in that day? You? Who will I say? "I have somebody that had been so close to me, worked with me, got everything I did, knows the ministry inside and out, knows the Bible, knows how to apply it. I can guarantee he'll do the job that needs to be done." There is no greater testimony in all of the Bible that a man can say about another man in the ministry than what he said about Timothy. I'm just telling you the truth.

But as the commercial on Silly Putty says, "Wait, there's more." Philippians 2:25. "Yet I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus." Now watch this, "my brother and companion in labour and fellowsoldier; but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants." Six things that I look for in a man or a woman. This is a great passage. These are four defining passages, ladies and gentlemen. This is exactly what we need five years in on Anniversary Sunday. We need to define our church from the Bible so we're not like the rest of them. We need to define me so I ain't like the rest of them. We need to define the ministry so we don't lose our

focus. We need to define you. You need to walk out of here today understanding where you're at and decide what you want to do with it. Epaphroditus, wow. Six things, six things about this man. When you can play this with Timothy, you got what God looks for in a man and you got the character qualities that it takes to be the kind of Timothy that you need to be.

> 1.) *My brother.*

The first thing he says is "my brother." Now I know we use that term loosely today because we're all brothers and sisters in Christ. Well, let's put it in a Bible definition. Proverbs 17:17 says that there are friends and then there are brothers. Proverbs 17:17

> A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 24:10 says, Proverbs 24:10

> If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

The ministry has to be built around men and women who understand that with this job, with ministry and working with people, there comes adversity. There come hard times. There are times that you as somebody who's ministering in this church have to make the hard decision. You have to make a decision that's not popular, maybe in your own family, maybe within the people you're working with, and maybe that person won't like it. Maybe your own family won't like it. But you know what? You have to make up your mind if in the ministry you are going to be a brother to me or you're just going to be a friend. Now that's what it comes down to. I love you all. You're all my friends, but I have to say based on what I'm talking about today, you're not all my brothers. You are in Christ, but not born in the adversity of it. No, no, no. Tell yourself, if I had to go back in combat again and had to go down there, I want to tell you something right now. There are some of you I'd be proud to have you in the foxhole next to me.

You ever notice that when you talk to these old World War II vets, you ever notice the guys that I talked to last week or last month? I heard a guy speak that jumped with the 507th 82nd Airborne on Normandy. He was 90 years old, sharp as a tack. He was going through talking about how that when he jumped out there in the middle of the night in D-Day invasion, that the Germans had flooded the things and he went into the water over his head and he almost drowned. He said, "I was down there swapping around." He said, "I had to cut off all my equipment." He said, "I lost my weapon. I lost everything I had." He said, "It's about to drown." And I got out there on the bank. He said, "I took about five, ten minutes to catch myself, catch my breath." He said, "You know what?" He said, "He's not all by myself." He said, "Here came a guy that from another company that I knew and he came crawling through the bushes and we talked there for a little bit." He said, "Well, we better go start this war." The guy said, "Well, I can't." He says, "I lost my weapon, but I know where I lost it. I'll be right back." He said, "Well, I'm going to come back down that water and got his Tommy gun and come back out." He said, "From that day forth, until we were relieved, him and that guy fought side by side." You know, that's the story of it. That's the story of it. That'll tell you when you go to basic training, you know, in the Marine Corps, at least in the army, at least back in my day, this race thing didn't exist. When I was stood there in basic training, you had blacks, you had Hispanics, you had Japanese, you had Chinese, you had everybody in the world. You know what? You don't want to hear the N-word or the

racial slurs. Boy, you heard them back then. You know what he told you? He got you there and everybody in there is about as diverse a group of people. He called every epithet of what we call as the forbidden words today that there was. He used it in the sense that there are no this and there are no that and there are no this and there are no that. And you're not this and you're not that, giving the epithets of race, you know? Oh, I can't say it the way he said it. For somebody, even though you'd taken the right spirit, somebody take the tape and cut it off and next to it I'll be on the internet, you know? But he cleared, he said, and his point was this. He says, "You're not black, you're not red, you're not white, you're not blue, you're not green, you're a Marine." He says, "You look at this guy, you think he's a blank blank? You look at him and think he's a blank blank?" He says, "No, he's not. He's the man that's going to save your life and you're going to save his life." He says, "Look at that man next to you. You think he's a blank? You think he's the best? You think he's that? You think he's that? He's your buddy and your buddy's going to save your life some night and you're going to save his." That's the way Christianity ought to be. That's exactly the way it ought to be. That's exactly, we're soldiers, we're in a battle, we're in a warfare. Most of God's people today, if I had to go back in that mess, I'd just as soon have a good German shepherd next to me as some of God's people. He won't chicken out when the bullets start flying. My brother, born for adversity.

> 2.) *Companion.*

Then he says, "and companion." Ah, there's Amos 3:3, Amos 3:3

> Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

There's the likemindedness. But notice it isn't just a companion, not the Royals game and the Wizards game and the Chiefs game, though those things are fine. It isn't just a deer hunting buddy or a fishing buddy, and those things are fine. It isn't a golfing buddy, those things are fine. It is a "companion in labour." The ministry, 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, 1 Corinthians 3:9

> For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

We build what God has for us.

> 3.) *Fellow soldier.*

And he says, "you're a fellow soldier." We cover each other. The bonds of combat. I talked earlier, you meet these old guys and it'd be 60 years later and they'll see somebody and they'll break down and weep and cry because of what they went through together. Those bonds last for years. They die with those bonds. They die realizing that there was a man or somebody in their life that they shared some tough time with, that they were a fellow soldier and they went through the hell on this earth as close as it ever gets. They went through the battle and the combat and it was just them that got them through. Christianity's the same way. They had a headquarters company that gave them their orders. I got a headquarters company that gives me my orders. They had an objective and a mission they had to fulfill. I also have a mission and an objective I must fulfill. God built them into a company and sent them out, built us into a company. You know what our church is about the size of? It's about the size of a good rifle company. That's about the size that it is. Not a battalion. It's the size of a good rifle company. A good rifle company can do the work of a good battalion if everybody understands what they're doing. I'm a

line officer. I'm not good behind the desk. I like to be the first one off the chopper and the last one off the battlefield. I'm a line officer. I love to smell napalm in the morning. I'm a line officer. I realize the battle out there, what needs to be done and the men and women it takes to get it done. Fellow soldier.

> 4.) *Messenger.*

But then he says, "you're a messenger." You know why? Because you have a message that God wants you to give. You have a message.

> 5.) *Ministered to my wants.*

And then he says, "that ministered to my wants." Now, this is a great concept and I don't want to get into this because we don't have time to develop it. But you better learn in ministry how to give whoever you're working with their wants plus their needs. Everybody that comes in and talks to me has needs and they have wants when it comes to the Bible. My job is to understand. My job is to understand how to give them their needs and still accomplish giving them their wants. Putting the two concepts of it together. That's how it works. That's how it gets accomplished. Going above and beyond, realizing and understanding.

Okay, four aspects to our ministry at Old Path. Four aspects. We talked about the church. The church and the aspect of the fact that defining our church. We talked about the passage that defines me as a pastor. The passage that talks about defining our ministry. And the passage that talks about defining you and me. God's been good to us in these five years, and we're going to move on down the line if Jesus doesn't come. More battles to fight, more things to accomplish, and I'm sure God will bring us more people. I'm always looking for men and women that want to do it by the book. That I can help develop into everything. But these are the things I want you to think about. These are the four things that are constantly in my mind when it comes to building a church. Now we're going to have the Lord's Supper now and then just take us a few minutes, and then we're going to break and go over there, and everybody knows what their job is. But let's have the.