

Articles and Sermons :: Live and Serve in a Christ-Like Way by Zac Poonen

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When Paul called the elders of the church in Ephesus to bid farewell to them, notice what he told them in Acts 20:17-35. He reminded them that he had been with them for three years (verse 31) and that he had preached to them night and day. Three years is more than 1000 days. And so if Paul actually preached twice every day, as it seems to imply here, he must have preached over 2000 sermons there.

Ephesus was the place where they had once had a great revival and where Christians had burnt their old books of magic and witchcraft costing nearly half a million rupees. It was also the place where handkerchiefs that had touched Paul's body were used to heal the sick and deliver the demon-possessed. God did some amazing miracles through Paul in Ephesus on a scale that hadn't been seen anywhere else (See Acts 19:11,12,19). At the end of all this, what does Paul remind the elders of? Does he remind them of his sermons or the miracles? No.

Paul tells them to remember the humble way he had lived among them, from the first day they had seen him (Acts 19:19). Even if they forgot his sermons, they could never forget how he lived among them. His life had made a permanent impact on them. They could never forget his compassion and his simplicity. They'd remember that he had worked hard with his own hands as a tentmaker to support himself and his coworkers so that he would not be a burden to them and also to be an example to other Christian workers (Acts 19:34,35). They would never forget that during all those three years, Paul never desired money, or gifts, or even a new set of clothes, from any of them (verse 33)!

Paul also reminded them how he had proclaimed the WHOLE counsel of God to them uncompromisingly (Acts 20:27). He hadn't been a man-pleaser, seeking popularity for himself. He had preached repentance and every other unpopular subject, if it was profitable for his hearers, even if some got offended thereby (Acts 20:20, 21). These are the things Paul pointed out to them.

If you pastor a church for three years like Paul did at Ephesus, and then leave, what will your flock remember you for? Will they remember you as an impressive preacher or as a humble man of God who showed them by your life, what Jesus was like. Will they think of you as one who drew them closer to God and challenged them to be more Christlike or as one who taught them how to distribute tracts? Whatever our gift or calling may be, it must flow from the inner spring of a Christlike life.

One who has the gift of healing must exercise it the way Jesus exercised it. Jesus was a humble Man Who lived simply, mingled freely with all people, had great compassion for the sick, and didn't take any money from anyone, either before or after healing them. He healed people freely. But I have never met even one "healer" like that in my entire life. If you come across someone like that, please let me know, because I'd love to meet him. But I haven't met such a man yet. Instead, I've met a lot of money-loving preachers who pretend to have the gift of healing and who deceive people with psychological tricks! The sad thing in all this is that undiscerning, young men follow these deceivers and begin to seek for such a ministry themselves! And thus the next generation is led astray too. This is what saddens me.

If we're called to an apostolic ministry, or a prophetic ministry, or an evangelistic ministry, or a shepherding ministry, or a teaching ministry, whatever ministry it be, we must exercise it in a Christ-like way. The Spirit of Christ must motivate us in every calling.

If you feel you're called of God to pastor a church, then do it the way Jesus would do it. And may the lasting impression you form on your flock be of a man who was radiant with the glory of Jesus.