

## Tuesday Evening Bible Study Group Notes

### Servants

Scripture Reading: Acts 20.17-38

Key Verse: Colossians 3.23&24 *"Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ."*

There are three verses in the New Testament with the words *Serving the Lord*, and they are in the readings above. This is a word picture expressing another aspect of the relationship that we have with our God. Acts 20.17-38 contains Paul's last instruction to the leaders of the Church from Ephesus before he was taken into prison and then to Rome for trial. It provides good teaching on being a 'servant'. The passage falls into two parts. First, Paul's example, then his teaching to the elders. What can we learn from that experience?

#### **The Servant Must Have a God Given, Sense of Call.**

v24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul always considered himself an apostle, Romans 1.1, along with the eleven, Luke 6.13, albeit the least worthy, 1 Corinthians 15:9. They were men called to specialise in establishing the early Church, Ephesians 2.20, and the word 'apostle' means one sent to tell the good news. 1 Timothy 2.7. All Christians are called, Romans 1.6, 1 Peter 2.9, and some by their gifts and abilities, Romans 12.6-8, perform various tasks of service within the Church. All of us are called to serve in the ministry of the gospel. Ephesians 4.11&12.

We need to get this sense of calling to the service of the Lord in all we do. Our Key Verse was written about Christian slaves. Even they were to see their service to their earthly masters as

a service to the Lord. Even the most menial task is to be done as a service to the Lord. Mark 9.41 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might* Ecclesiastes 9:10.

#### **The Servant Must Have a Committed, Surrendered Will.**

v22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there.

Paul was a man committed to Jesus Christ and the task that his Master had given him. There is a cost to serving others, and those who place their foot upon the path of service, must count the cost of that service for the path takes us into many difficulties, and there are many personal costs, the least of them financial. Unless we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord we will not survive and arrive. Look up Proverbs 24.10, John 13.14-17. Then read carefully Psalm 37.1-6 and note in particular verse seven. The answer to perseverance in the face of difficulty is commitment.

#### **The Servant Must Have an Open, Loving Heart**

v20 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 to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was driven to share the gospel of Jesus Christ by the needs of the Ephesian people. He did this heart to heart. The tears he shed were not only because of his suffering, but for the needs and responses of the people. A Salvation Army officer once complained that the area of his work was hard and unresponsive. Booth answered in two words, 'Try tears.' It is not the physical tear, but the open, loving heart that moves people. See also Psalm 126.4-6, Colossians 1.25-29 & 2 Timothy 4.2

#### **The Servant Must Have an Active, Humble Mind**

v18 And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews.

There are a variety of words translated as serve, servant and the like, and they are instructive:

Diakoneo, means 'to wait on'  
Doulos, is 'a slave'  
Latreia, 'a public servant'  
Misthios, 'a hired servant'  
Therapon, 'an attendant'

It takes humility to put ourselves out in service to others, and to continue in it.

Look up these examples of fellow-servants who also worked with Paul. Titus, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Barnabas and Epaphrus- 2 Corinthians 8.23, Colossians 4.7-12, Timothy - 1 Thessalonians 3.2.

Paul says that he came with all humility of mind. In this He was like the Lord. Jesus, who was foretold as the suffering servant See Isaiah 52.13-15, Philippians 2.3-8. Meekness is not weakness, it is to be Christlike. Humility of service is the mark of true leadership. See Matthew 20.25-27.

#### **The Servant Must Have a Sacrificial, Giving Spirit**

v33 I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Paul's sacrifice extended to more than the sweat to provide for his daily bread, and that of his fellows, as they preached and taught. He felt keenly the opposition of the Jews who fought against him; the anguish of knowing that some would be lost in the persecutions to come and that heresies would arise from within.

Paul knew and understood these things. So should we -

Jesus I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow thee;  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou from hence my all shall be.  
Perish every fond ambition,  
All I've sought, and hoped or known;  
Yet how rich is my condition!  
God and heaven are still my own.

# Welcome

## Glen Park Gospel Church

Lower Road, Eltham North

Sundays 10.30 am

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