

From Paul the Preacher to Paul the Practitioner (Acts 20:19-24, 33-35)

Introduction

What makes a man credible is not his physical ability but his character. Paul's success as an Apostle and missionary was flowed from his devotion to truth, spiritual character, and commitment to serving God.

- Paul defends his exemplary life before the Ephesian elders.
- Paul tells them that he is not only a preacher of the gospel, but also the one who practiced what he preached.
- A practitioner is an expert or a specialist of things he has learned.
- For Paul, he learned that true success in life would come only through a life of character.

A Man of Humility (v 19)

Paul's life and ministry was characterized by humility. Despite his position and accomplishments, Paul was a humble man.

- In 1 Cor 15:9 he describes himself as "the least of the apostles" that he was not worthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the church of God.
- In Philippians 3:3-9 he describes all his gains were a loss for the knowledge of Christ.
- In Eph 3:8 he refers to himself as "the very least of all saints" and in 1 Tim 1:15 as the "foremost of all sinners."

A Man of Honesty (vv 20-24)

Sincerity or uprightness was the hallmark of Paul's life and ministry. He "kept back nothing that was profitable" to the people, whether they liked it or not (v 20). In verse 27, the same word is used, saying, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

- His obligation toward the church was to teach the truth of God which he did without fear or favor of men. In 2 Tim 2:15, Paul says his responsibility is "rightly dividing the word of truth."
- He did it publically and from house to house (v 20).
- He ministered both to the Jews and to the Greeks (v 21).
- His message had twofold thrust—repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (v 21).
- Both repentance and faith are essential to salvation and inseparable from salvation.
- In the midst of chains and afflictions, he carried his responsibilities faithfully forward (vv 22-24).
- Verse 24 was Paul's missions statement.

This spirit of honesty led Paul to declare anathema against the Judaizers who came with another gospel (Gal 1:6-10).

In the same spirit, he confronted Peter in Gal 2, where Peter went to compromise with the Judaizers.

A Man of Contentment (vv 33-35)

Paul's integrity was seen not only in his preaching and ministry, but also in his personal life.

- Paul never served God for material gains or monetary benefits.
- Philippians 4:11-13, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
- Paul even worked with his own hands. Although he had every right to receive support for his ministry (1 Cor 9:33-), it was his custom to support himself (2 Cor 11:7; 12:13; 2 Thess 3:8).
- He did so that he could offer the gospel without charge (2 Cor 11:7; 1 Cor 9:18).

Love of money has always characterized false teachers (Is 56:11; Jer 6:13; Tit 1:11; 2 Pet 2:3).

Conclusion

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ which Paul mentions here, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (v 35).